Texas Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2026 - 2028

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House Bill 619 Background

House Bill 619

House Bill 619 (HB 619), passed during the 87th Legislature, Regular Session (2022), added §302.0062 to the Labor Code requiring the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to prepare a Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan to improve the quality of the infant, toddler, preschool, and school-age child care workforce in Texas, and to update the strategic plan every three years.

HB 619 requires the collection of demographic and workforce data from a representative sample of child care facilities in state, and requires that a workgroup, composed of child care programs, child care workers, and community stakeholders, assist in the development of the plan.

HB 619 directs TWC to include the following within the Strategic Plan:

1. Recommendations for Local Workforce Development Boards (Workforce Boards) to improve, sustain, and support the child care workforce
2. Recommendations for increasing compensation for and reducing turnover of child care workers
3. Recommendations for eliminating pay disparities in the child care workforce
4. Recommendations for increasing paid opportunities for professional development and education for child care workers, including apprenticeships
5. Best practices from Board and other programs designed to support child care workers
6. Recommendations for increasing participation in the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS)
7. Recommendations for public and private institutions of higher education to: a) increase the use of articulation agreements with school districts and open-enrollment charter schools, and b) assist in the education and training of child care workers
8. Specific recommendations for improving the infant and toddler child care workforce
9. A timeline and benchmarks for TWC and Workforce Boards to implement recommendations from the strategic plan.

TWC's Goals, Strategies, and Action Items are structured based on items that are actionable for TWC within existing resources.

The legislation also requires TWC to submit the plan to the to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives no later than December 31, 2025.

TWC submitted the first Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan in December 2022 which covered goals for 2023 – 2025.

HB 619 Strategic Plan Stakeholder Feedback

TWC contracted with Social Finance, Inc. (SFI) to assist in the development of the 2026-2028 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan and collection of stakeholder feedback through three data collection methods:

- **Child Care Director Survey:** A representative sample of approximately 3,000 licensed programs yielded 1,129 responses (953 complete). The survey provided statewide, representative data on demographics, compensation, benefits, staffing, program operations, and workforce challenges. The survey findings helped refine focus group questions and workgroup discussion. Appendices B, C, and E include additional detail on the 2024 Texas Director Survey (Director Survey), provided by SFI, including survey administration, sampling, and their analysis process.

- **Focus Groups:** Three virtual groups (15 child care program directors total) offered qualitative depth to the research questions. Separate sessions for rural, urban, and home-based child care programs ensured wide-ranging perspectives. Focus group findings informed Workgroup discussions.

- **Expert Workgroup:** TWC, with the assistance of SFI, formed the 2024-2025 HB 619 Strategic Plan Workgroup (see Appendix A for a list of Workgroup members). The Workgroup consisted of 18 child care experts representing 16 organizations with experience in the industry as child care business owners, directors, educators, policy advocates, and community stakeholders. The Workgroup met four times (September 2024 – August 2025) to discuss key industry issues, review data collected from directors through the Director Survey, and draft recommendations for TWC's consideration.

These three components were iterative and reinforced each other. The mutual reinforcement ensured recommendations reflected not just research findings but also the expertise of child care industry practitioners.

TWC Child Care Funding and Regulated Child Care Capacity Data

Child care is overwhelmingly a privately-operated industry. Almost 90 percent of the child care industry is funded primarily by families through private-pay tuition. The federal government, through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides financial assistance to eligible families that meet income, work, education, and job training requirements. However, this federal funding, covers a relatively small portion of the entire child care market. Texas' regular annual allotment of CCDF is approximately $1.3 billion.[1]

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[1] https://acf.gov/occ/data/gy-2025-ccdf-allocations-based-appropriations

In BCY26, TWC's annual allocation of $1.4 billion will provide financial assistance for approximately 150,000 children per day, which equates to only 12.5 percent of the entire licensed capacity of privately-operated child care programs in the state.[2] While $1.4 is a very significant amount of funding, it is still a relatively small portion of the entire child care market in Texas. Families pay for the vast majority of child care services in Texas:

- Private child care programs have a total licensed capacity of about 1.2 million child care slots;[3]
- TWC plans to serve about 150,000 children per day, or about 12.5 percent of the total licensed capacity

Families enrolled in TWC's CCS program can select any regulated child care program who has an agreement to serve CCS referrals (any program can sign an agreement, as long as they agree to the CCS program parameters and payment rates). Approximately 50 percent of all regulated child care providers participate in the CCS program.

Most child care programs participating in CCS have relatively few CCS children enrolled in comparison to the total number of children they can serve (their licensed capacity). When comparing total licensed capacity of CCS providers to the number of CCS children in care:

- 31.5% of CCS providers (2,303 providers) have fewer than 5% CCS children in care
- 29.7% of CCS providers (2,170 providers) have between 5% - 20% CCS children in care
- 27.9% of CCS providers (2,038 providers) have between 20% - 50% CCS children in care
- 7.5% of CCS providers (545 providers) have between 50% - 75% children in care; and
- 3.5% of CCS providers (256 providers) have more than 75% children in care.

For 60 percent of CCS programs, CCS enrollments account for less than 20 percent of their licensed capacity. [4]

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[2] https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/wf/policy-letter/wd/05-25-ch1-twc.pdf , and WD 05-25, Change 1, Attachment 1, Board Contract Year 2026 Child Care Allocations, Distributions, and Average Children Served per Day Targets

[3] https://data.texas.gov/See-Category-Tile/HHSC-CCL-Daycare-and-Residential-Operations-Data/bc5r-88dy/about_data; HHSC CCL Daycare and Residential Operations Data November 2, 2025 dataset, accessed November 3, 2025

[4] November 4, 2025 Child Care Capacity Report with 4514 providers out of 7508 providers who accept CCS reporting current referrals as less than 20 percent of their total capacity

Figure 1: Programs by CCS Enrollment Level Relative to Licensed Capacity[5]

Under the current child care industry business model, a child care program's income is primarily generated through revenue from families. TWC's CCS program is relatively small in comparison to the overall market. The recommendations in this report are focused on strategies and action items based on the size and scale of TWC's existing CCDF funding, and the CCS program.

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[5] November 4, 2025 Child Care Capacity Report with 2303 providers reporting fewer than 5% referrals, 2170 providers reporting between 5% - 20% referrals, 2038 providers reporting between 20% - 50% referrals, 545 providers reporting 50% - 75% referrals, and 256 providers reporting more than 75% referrals based on reported capacity; total number of provider from the November 3, 2025 HHSC CCL Daycare and Residential Operations Data reporting 13,304 licensed centers, licensed child-care homes, and registered child-care homes

Executive Summary

Below is a summary of the Goals, Strategies, and Action Plans discussed in this Strategic Plan.

Goal 1 – Support the Current Child Care Workforce

Strategy 1.1 – Improve access to and affordability of health and wellness benefits

- Action Item 1.1.1: Increase knowledge on health coverage through Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs).
- Action Item 1.1.2: Educate child care programs on affordable benefits options available to their workforce, such as plans on the Health Insurance Marketplace.

Strategy 1.2 – Support Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to direct Child Care Development Funds towards teacher retention incentives

- Action Item 1.2.1: Collect and review data to support the development of best practices.

Strategy 1.3 – Improve strategic use of Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) data to support child care programs in making data-based decisions

- Action Item 1.3.1: Increase awareness of TECPDS information.
- Action Item 1.3.2: Develop TECPDS report request system.

Strategy 1.4 – Facilitate formal partnerships between child care centers and Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

- Action Item 1.4.1: Continue to collaborate with Texas Education Agency (TEA) and encourage LEAs to participate in pre-K partnerships.
- Action Item 1.4.2: Assist with the development of HB 2 implementation guidance regarding prekindergarten (pre-K) partnerships.

Goal 2 – Support a Pipeline of Qualified Child Care Workers

Strategy 2.1 – Develop an updated career map to working in early childhood education

- Action Item 2.1.1: Align to national standards.
- Action Item 2.1.2: Increase accessibility of the visual.
- Action Item 2.1.3: Solicit feedback and adapt.
- Action Item 2.1.4: Identify landscape of stackable credentials.

Strategy 2.2 – Support early childhood training as part of an aligned, integrated, systems approach across high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges

- Action Item 2.2.1: Create communication plan to increase awareness.

Strategy 2.3 – Collect compensation data to inform career pathways

- Action Item 2.3.1: Conduct additional, targeted data collection.

Strategy 2.4 – Conduct needs assessment to understand and address barriers facing new home-based child care programs

- Action Item 2.4.1 Gather information from home-based child care programs.
- Action Item 2.4.2: Incorporate broad perspectives.
- Action Item 2.4.3: Partner with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to address barriers.

Goal 3 – Professional Development

Strategy 3.1 – Improve access to training opportunities for employees

- Action Item 3.1.1: Ensure training meets teacher needs and available funds are prioritized to address barriers.
- Action Item 3.1.2: Ensure participating trainers and teachers are registered in TECPDS.
- Action Item 3.1.3: Continue to learn about best practices from other states.

Strategy 3.2 – Offer relevant and targeted support and training to address workforce needs

- Action Item 3.2.1: Ensure existing trainings to address challenging behaviors are promoted.
- Action Item 3.2.2: Conduct outreach via CLI to raise awareness of offerings and better understand demand and gaps.

Strategy 3.3 – Create a standardized and customizable director competency framework, supported by accessible director training

- Action Item 3.3.1: Utilize the upcoming TECPDS director competency framework to clarify career development and progression pathways.
- Action Item 3.3.2: Determine the feasibility of transferring the Director Certification currently overseen by Child Care Regulation (CCR) to the Children's Learning Institute (CLI).
- Action Item 3.3.3: Increase awareness about the new director certification.
- Action Item 3.3.4: Tailor professional development trainings to local needs.

Research Summary

HB 619 requires TWC to use the following data in creating the Strategic Plan:

- Demographic data of child care workers in Texas, including the:
  - Race, ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment of child care workers, and
  - Ages of the children the worker serves.
- Compensation data for child-care workers disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment.

HB 619 also directs TWC to obtain the data above for a representative sample set of child care facilities in Texas, and to use these data in developing the Strategic Plan. To this end, SFI developed and administered the Director Survey, which asked directors about their experience in the field, including challenges they currently face to maintaining a stable and high-quality workforce. The survey also asked for educator-level data on the demographic characteristics, educational experience, and compensation for a representative sample of child care programs across the state.

The Director Survey was sent out to a random and representative sample of more than 3,000 child care programs across Texas, and more than 950 directors completed the survey. The Director Survey collected data from child care directors at child care programs (including center- and home-based) across the state to learn:

1. the characteristics of the child care program and how it serves children in the local community;
2. the director's experiences at the child care program, and
3. demographic, education, and compensation of the staff serving as teachers or in a direct care capacity, including the director and all early childhood educators who work at the child care program.

For simplicity, the report refers to home-based owner-educators as "owners," and refers to other center-based and home-based educators as simply "educators."

To complement the survey and explore emerging themes in greater depth, SFI also conducted three virtual focus groups with a total of 15 child care program directors. SFI selected participants from among survey respondents using a criterion-based sampling strategy to ensure representation across program types, geographic regions, and certification statuses. Each focus group had a different population focus: one included rural center-based directors, one included urban center-based directors, and one included rural and urban home-based program directors. These sessions provided a forum for participants to elaborate on survey responses and engage with peers on key topics covered in the survey. The focus groups also surfaced insights into how individuals on the ground experience state systems and policies, and where TWC could make improvements to better support the workforce.

Appendix B includes additional detail on the Research Methodology, provided by SFI, including survey administration and sampling, focus group topics, and SFI's analysis process. Appendix E includes the Director Survey text.

The Director Survey and focus groups collected data from child care directors at licensed child care programs (including center- and home-based) across the state to learn:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of child care workers?
2. What are the major challenges that child care program directors are facing in maintaining a stable and high-quality workforce?
3. What compensation and benefits do child care workers receive?
4. What are the educational and professional development experiences and preferences for child care workers?
o How can the Texas Workforce Commission, given its resources and mandate, best improve and support worker recruitment, training, and retention?

Appendix C describes the full research findings, including how survey and focus group findings answer each research question.

Terminology

- **Child Care Director Survey:** Survey of child care program directors conducted by Social Finance.
- **Child Care Development Funds (CCDF):** Federal funds allocated from the Texas Workforce Commission to local workforce development boards to be used to strengthen the early child care workforce through activities such as mentorship and professional development.
- **Children's Learning Institute (CLI):** Organization housed at The University of Texas Health Science Center – Houston who oversees several statewide programs supported by Texas Workforce Commission to provide learning solutions supported by documented research.
- **Child Care Services (CCS):** CCS provides scholarships (financial aid) to eligible families for children that help pay for a portion of or all costs of child care.
- **HB 2:** Bill that passed in the 89th Texas legislative session that includes several early elementary components including new restrictions for tuition-based Pre-K in public schools.
- **Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB):** Organizations charged with overseeing and implementing regional child care workforce strategies.
- **LWDB TECPDS Specialist:** Workforce Development Letter 10-23, Change 1 requires LWDBs to designate at least one contractor or Board staff as a TECPDS Specialist to provide TECPDS support to local child care programs and Texas Rising Star staff, as well as validate TECPDS records.
- **Quad Agency Child Care Initiative:** House Bill 4903 that passed in the 89th Texas legislative session created a Quad Agency Commission to reconcile regulations between the four child care agencies in Texas.
- **Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS):** Statewide workforce and trainer registry to support the early childhood system, managed by CLI.
- **Texas Rising Star:** A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for child care programs participating in TWC's CCS program. There are three levels of quality certification (Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star) which is tied to graduated enhanced payment rates for children receiving child care scholarships.
- **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):** State agency that oversees the provision of workforce development services in Texas.
- **TWC Mentors:** Mentors working in local workforce development areas to provide technical assistance to child care programs in achieving and maintaining Texas Rising Star certification.
- **Workgroup:** Members of the four statewide workgroups facilitated by Social Finance over the course of our work.

Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan – Goals, Strategies, and Action Plans

The goals and strategies outlined below considered input from the Workgroup as well as data from the Director Survey and focus groups. TWC's Goals, Strategies, and Action Items are structured based on items that are actionable for TWC within existing resources. Some of the recommendations are aimed at TWC's Child Care Services (CCS) program, while others are aimed at supporting the child care industry as a whole.

It is important to note the scale and scope that CCS-focused recommendations have on the overall child care industry. The CCS program provides financial assistance (subsidies) to eligible low-income families. A family's income may not exceed 85 percent of the state's median income (SMI), which in Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (FFY25), for example, is $59,657 for a family of two, $73,694 for a family of three, and $87,731 for a family of four.[6] In FFY26, TWC's goal is to support an average of approximately 150,000 children per day.[7] These families may select any child care program as long as that program is permitted or licensed by Child Care Regulation (CCR), agrees to the Local Workforce Board's child care payment rate, and meets TWC's requirements for participating in the Texas Rising Star quality rating improvement system.

TWC's CCS program has children being served by approximately 50 percent of all regulated child care programs. However, CCS children represent only about 12.5 percent of the entire licensed capacity of child care programs in the state. Private pay parents pay for the vast majority of child care services. Any CCS-focused recommendations will only impact a subset of the entire child care market since CCS payments account for a small portion of all child care industry revenue.

Goal 1 – Child Care Program and Workforce Support

Strengthen child care and early learning programs to be more effective and efficient, and a better place to work through continued support for the TECPDS and identifying opportunities to stabilize the child care workforce and promote the hiring and retention of high-quality early educators.

Strategy 1.1 – Improve access to and affordability of health and wellness benefits

Rationale

Child Care Director Survey respondents cited lack of healthcare coverage as a key driver of employee turnover. Respondents indicated only 37% of full-time child care center teachers and 14% of full-time home-based child care teachers receive health insurance benefits through their employer. While the survey results are concerning, the data are limited: Survey response data do not include details on the types and costs of health insurance provided to employees, or information about access to or cost of

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[6] https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/ccel/docs/bcy25-income-limits-twc.pdf
[7] https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/wf/policy-letter/wd/05-25-ch1-twc.pdf

health insurance outside of employer-sponsored plans. However, survey respondents ranked offering more benefits, such as health insurance, as one of their top three suggestions to reduce turnover.

Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) can make it more affordable for directors to offer health insurance benefits to their teachers, in some cases reducing total premium costs by up to 50%, by allowing small employers to purchase insurance in a large-group market,[8] which is limited to employers with at least 50 employees. This reduction in premium costs to employers and employees could in turn support employee retention. In addition to health insurance, MEWAs can make it more affordable for directors to offer other important benefits, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

Action Items

Explore expanding the child care workforce's access to affordable health coverage through two Action Items:

- **Action Item 1.1.1: Increase knowledge on health coverage through MEWAs.** TWC will explore opportunities to disseminate information about MEWAs through TWC's child care business coaching and statewide Family Child Care Network (FCCN). Steps may include:
    - Working with Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) to train TWC's business coaching team on the process for setting up a MEWA to support child care programs who want to explore cooperative benefits purchasing.[9]
    - Developing guidance and a communication plan to proactively push out this information to child care directors, including a standing website page with best practices and frequently asked questions for reference.
    - Conducting outreach to child care programs through in-person or virtual group trainings and networking events where child care directors can connect with other child care programs to identify potential partners for a MEWA. Highlight successful MEWAs so that child care programs can learn from each other.

    Implementation/Timeline:
    TWC approved funding for Business Coaching through February 14, 2027, with an option to renew through November 13, 2030. TWC approved funding for the Family Child Care Network through May 31, 2026, with the option to renew through March 23, 2030.

- **Action Item 1.1.2: Educate child care programs on affordable benefits options available to them, such as plans on the Health Insurance Marketplace.** Child care programs may not be aware of the options available to their employees through the Health Insurance Marketplace or

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[8] Wilson Insurance. (2023). How MEWAs Can Save Employers & Employees Big Money.
[9] TDI has relevant forms and consolidated information on forming MEWAs available on their website at https://tdi.texas.gov/forms/form3mewa.html.

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how to support their employees to enroll in one of these plans. TWC's business coaches and FCCN staff can approach conversations on benefits with child care programs by raising awareness of affordable options that are available to them and helping them to understand the best choice for their business and employees.

Implementation/Timeline:

TWC approved funding for Business Coaching through February 14, 2027, with an option to renew through November 13, 2030.

TWC approved funding for the FCCN through May 31, 2026 with an option to renew through March 30, 2030.

Strategy 1.2 – Support Local Workforce Development Boards to direct Child Care Development Funds towards teacher retention incentives

Rationale

Child Care Director Survey respondents identified low compensation as a key challenge to hiring and retaining teachers. While low wages are a fundamental challenge, bonus payments tied to retention are a valuable tool for rewarding employee tenure. Directors in the focus groups noted how federal Covid-stimulus funding provided a much-appreciated ability to reward tenured staff and improve retention. Despite the end to Covid-stimulus funding, Workgroup members identified several LWDBs that spend a portion of their CCDF quality funds allocated by TWC on retention bonuses for child care workers, but there has been no coordinated effort to identify which bonus strategy has the greatest effect on retention.

Action Items

TWC will work with LWDBs to identify effective practices for retention by:

- **Action Item 1.2.1: Collect and review data to support the development of best practices.** TWC will review LWDB's Child Care Quality Annual Expenditure Plans to identify LWDBs that are distributing retention incentives (see Appendix D). TWC will work with LWDBs to develop a set of best practices outlining successful retention incentive strategy components for LWDBs. Included in the communication to LWDBs, TWC can highlight their support for retention incentives as an effective use of CCDF.
  Implementation/Timeline:TWC will continue supporting and guiding LWDB quality staff in Fiscal Years 2026-2028. TWC will continue to host monthly office hours and quarterly Communities of Practice for LWDB staff, in addition to the annual Quality Strategic Planning meeting to provide updates and share best practices.

Strategy 1.3 – Improve strategic use of TECPDS data to support child care programs in making data-based decisions

Rationale

TECPDS is a critical tool for tracking and supporting educator development. However, there is a lack of awareness of TECPDS and its features – approximately 11% of survey respondents reported not using TECPDS, with 64% of this group indicating they were unaware of the resource (see Table 6). Programs located in rural areas and home-based programs reported much lower usage and awareness rates than urban or center-based programs. Over a third (38%) of respondents who reported not using TECPDS are directors at home-based programs, with 24% of respondents working at rural programs despite making up only 27% and 11% of the survey sample, respectively. Workgroup and focus group members noted they found the system cumbersome to use and indicated it may be another factor contributing to decreased engagement. Incomplete data limits TECPDS' effectiveness in informing workforce strategies from a state perspective and hampers the ability of child care program directors to effectively support their employees' professional development and career progression.

Table 6: Director indications of why they report not using TECPDS[10]

Reason	Percent
Unaware of this resource	64%
Unclear on the benefits of having an account	20%
Don't know how to make an account	13%
Too time-consuming to create an account	4%
Other	7%

CLI reports large ongoing increases in new account creation since September 2024, when TWC implemented the points-based Texas Rising Star measure that acknowledges staff who participate in the Workforce Registry. In September 2025, CLI reported a 69% increase in Texas Rising Star educator accounts and 67% increase in Texas Rising Star administrator accounts since September 2024.

Action Items

TWC will continue to work with LWDB TECPDS Specialists to increase awareness and use of TECPDS. TWC can then identify and amplify opportunities for directors to use TECPDS data to drive strategic decision making for their organization.

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[10] 122 survey participants indicated that they did not use TECPDS. 114 answered this follow up question.

- **Action Item 1.3.1: Increase awareness of TECPDS information.** TWC will work with TECPDS to develop and distribute a data-focused business glossary to define and explain the employee data available to child care directors. The business glossary will also describe analysis directors can perform with the available data and how they can use the results. This will support directors in understanding the full set of available data and how existing TECPDS data can help directors support their staff. Accessing these data allows directors to identify training competencies that staff may lack or that might expire soon so directors can offer necessary supports, such as developing customized training plans that align with the needs of both the program and its staff. CLI will continue to train LWDB TECPDS Specialists to educate child care directors on how to access and analyze the data.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

- **Action Item 1.3.2: Develop TECPDS report request system**. TWC will work with TECPDS to develop a process or TECPDS feature for LWDB TECPDS Specialists and program directors to request custom reports on attributes such as employee demographics (tenure in role, child care age group, etc.), education level, and professional development achievement (certifications, credentials, etc.). LWDB TECPDS Specialists and program directors could save the request query to re-run, as needed. The report request system can support directors in tracking and planning their employees' specific training and professional development to support employee development.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

Strategy 1.4 – Facilitate formal partnerships between child care centers and Local Education Agencies

Rationale

Pre-K partnerships offer potential benefits such as stabilizing enrollment and providing children and families consistency between the school day and before/after-school care. Pre-K partnerships can also enable child care programs and partnering schools to pool resources and expand availability of training, coaching, and resources for teachers.

TWC's Pre-K Partnerships Department provides comprehensive support to licensed child care programs and local education agencies (LEAs) interested in establishing pre-K partnerships. In order to increase pre-K partnerships statewide, TWC will continue to collaborate with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to support the development of pre-K partnerships.

Action Items

TWC will continue to support pre-K partnerships using the following Action Items:

- **Action Item 1.4.1: Continue to collaborate with TEA and encourage LEAs to participate in pre-k partnerships.** TWC will continue to strategize with TEA on how to encourage LEAs to enter into pre-K Partnerships with licensed child care programs.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC's Pre-K Partnership Department will continue their work in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028.

- **Action Item 1.4.2: Assist with the development of HB 2 implementation guidance.** The TWC Pre-K Partnerships Department will continue to work with TEA to develop guidance for HB2's pre-K partnership-specific provisions.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC's Pre-K Partnership Department will continue their work in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028.

Goal 2 – Support a Pipeline of Qualified Child Care Workers

Offer information and resources to remove barriers and increase entrants of prospective child care workers into the field

Strategy 2.1: Develop an updated career map to working in early childhood education

Rationale

Workgroup members noted that the current TECPDS Career Pathway is complicated and difficult to follow, especially for individuals that have never worked in child care. The data indicate limited understanding of career progression opportunities, including trainings and credentials, to result in lower retention and lower uptake of professional development opportunities.

Action Items

The Workgroup suggested that TWC fund TECPDS to develop a map that illustrates viable paths to a career in early childhood education and career progression. This could include information for individuals ranging from high school students entering the workforce to adults considering a career change.

- **Action Item 2.1.1**: **Align to national standards.** TWC will work with TECPDS to explore aligning the career map to the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Profession and Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators developed by Power to the Profession.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

- **Action Item 2.1.2**: **Increase accessibility of the visual.** TWC will work with TECPDS to update the TECPDS Career Pathway to streamline the career map visual, with the goal of making sure potential entrants to the child care workforce can "find themselves" in the diagram. In

particular, the visual could demonstrate which roles tend to hold certain degrees/certifications, compensation data collected through TECPDS (see Action Item #10), and where incremental qualifications could translate to upward career progression.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

- **Action Item 2.1.3**: **Solicit feedback and adapt.** TWC will work with TECPDS to convene focus groups (end-users) to collect feedback and identify opportunities for improving usability and relevancy of the Career Pathway. In collaboration with other agencies, TWC can leverage an improved career map to market the field to new entrants.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

- **Action Item 2.1.4: Identify landscape of stackable credentials.** Building on the success of TECPDS' collaboration with existing programs, TWC will work with TECPDS to identify complementary child care qualifications that can be "stacked" on top of the CDA certification. These qualifications can help educators build their skill set and advance along the career.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

Strategy 2.2 – Support early childhood training as part of an aligned, integrated, systems approach across high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges

Rationale

Potential new entrants to the child care workforce space may not understand the credentials they need, what programs/supports are available to them to attain those credentials, and how attaining those credentials could translate to career progression.

Meanwhile, child care programs may lack awareness of the importance of training opportunities, as indicated by the Child Care Director Survey:

- 48% of teachers had attained their Child Development Associate credential. For comparison, in order to score a 3 on the Texas Rising Star staff qualifications measure, 75% of a child care program's teachers must meet the one of the qualification criteria (which include the Child Development Associate credential).
- Of those programs that did not participate with staff in the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship, which provides funding for teachers to obtain their CDA or college degree, 69% of them said it was because they didn't know it was available.

Starting in 2022, TWC provided three rounds of funding to support Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in planning, implementation, and expansion. In addition to providing the third round of RAP

funding for expansion, from 2023 – 2025, TWC used Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five funding to create a landscape analysis of current early childhood training programs and degrees and to support credential and degree attainment. This work included funding for three Institutes of Higher Education to create and define credit pathways to support educational attainment for early childhood educators.

Action Items

TWC should identify existing work to support new (where needed) stackable, aligned programs that build skills and experience in child care that are accessible for both high school and community college students as well as individuals early in their child care career.

- **Action Item 2.2.1**: **Create communication plan to increase awareness.** TWC will continue to develop content and an outreach campaign to increase awareness about the early childhood profession. Content will include supports for providers to obtain skills, such as Registered Apprenticeship Programs and free courses through AgriLife. TWC will explore developing a communications plan to ensure individuals and child care programs are aware of these programs, including information similar to that shared in the "Earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) through Career and Technical Educate (CTE)" Guidance Document and on the Early childhood professions webpage. As part of these communications, TWC can continue to document and share information on scholarship opportunities for relevant degree programs and encourage LWDBs to do the same for opportunities in their respective workforce areas. *Implementation/Timeline:*
TWC will develop the communication plan in Fiscal Year 2026.

Strategy 2.3 – Collect compensation data to inform career pathways

Rationale

Workgroup members highlighted a lack of transparency around wages and data that are not sufficiently contextualized to local markets where wage differences can be significant. Individuals looking to enter or advance in the child care workforce lack clarity on how obtaining further professional development should increase their compensation, and are therefore not fully incentivized to do so.

For example, our survey data show the median hourly wage for teachers without a degree is $14, increasing to $15 for teachers with a CDA or associate degree and $16 for those with a bachelor's degree. However, this is based on statewide data and may not accurately reflect the wage premium one could expect in their specific job market. For example, SFI's analysis shows the median hourly wage for teachers in rural areas is $12 compared to $14 for those in urban areas.

Action Items

Leveraging existing and future research efforts, TWC should conduct a compensation review for the child care industry and establish typical salary and compensation ranges for the child care workforce.

Action Item 2.3.1: **Conduct additional, targeted data collection.** In addition to using data collected in the current Child Care Director Survey and future Child Care Director Surveys, TWC will work with TECPDS to conduct more frequent, targeted (i.e., shorter and focused on specific topics) representative wage surveys while exploring data collection functionality already being planned, designed, and/or implemented by TECPDS, e.g., for their career trajectory study.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC, in partnership with CLI, will complete this work by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

Strategy 2.4 – Conduct needs assessment to understand and address barriers facing new home-based child care programs

Rationale

A full understanding of the barriers facing new home-based child care programs in Texas is currently lacking. This gap makes it difficult to design effective interventions that would help increase the supply of these critical services. Focus group members shared that the administrative burdens child care programs face are significant barrier for home-based child care programs, as they often have no support staff. These child care programs also reported that many of the resources and trainings available to child care workers are often more relevant to center-based child care programs. More research needs to be done to expand upon these learnings and to develop a more complete picture of the challenges faced by home-based child care programs.

Action Items

TWC should conduct a needs assessment to assess barriers and identify ways it could support new child care programs in the home-based child care market. TWC can implement this in several ways:

- **Action Item 2.4.1 Gather information from home-based child care programs.** TWC will use existing channels, such as the Family Child Care Network, to gather data from home-based directors to understand the current landscape and challenges facing home-based programs.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC approved funding for the Family Child Care Network through May 31, 2026, with the option to renew through March 23, 2030.

- **Action Item 2.4.2**: **Incorporate broad perspectives.** To help inform the next CCDF State Plan, TWC will work with HHSC CCR to seek information from a wide range of relevant groups, such as:
  - People that attended HHSC CCR's orientation but did not open a facility
  - Home-based child care program directors that closed their program in the last 3 years
Implementation/Timeline:TWC will work with HHSC to collect this information in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2027.

- **Action Item 2.4.3**: **Partner with HHSC to address barriers.** Following this assessment, TWC will work with HHSC CCR to generate solutions to address remaining barriers to becoming a home-based child care program.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  Based on the information collected in Action Item 2.4.2, TWC will work with HHSC on generating solutions in Fiscal Years 2027 – 2028.

Goal 3 – Professional Development

Provide information and resources to existing child care workers to improve service quality and encourage professional growth

Strategy 3.1 – Improve access to training opportunities for employees

Rationale

Workgroup members and focus group participants consistently highlighted the lack of career progression opportunities for early childhood educators. Insufficient access to these key professional development opportunities results in a population of educators who feel underprepared to fulfill their responsibilities and address the challenges they face at work. High attrition rates lead to a greater number of newer, less experienced teachers, who require additional training, further exacerbating the issue.

Child Care Director Survey respondents identified cost as the top barrier to accessing professional development and noted that they often face logistical challenges such as inconvenient training times, distant locations, and the absence of substitute coverage, all of which hinder their ability to enable staff to participate in professional development (see Table 7). These barriers are particularly acute for home-based child care programs, who also report limited clarity on employer obligations for training support.

Table 7: Barriers identified by directors for their staff to access professional development opportunities[11]

Topic	Home-Based	Centers
Cost	70%	56%
Location of trainings	28%	34%
Time of trainings is not convenient	30%	23%
Lack of access to substitute teachers / caregivers	25%	33%

[11] Participants were given a choice of 12 barriers, in addition to a free response option, and were asked to select their top 3 barriers. Table 10 is based on the top 3 responses from each program type. The survey question and full table can be found in the appendix of this report.

By reducing cost, time, and geographic barriers to training opportunities, employers and LWDBs can increase child care teachers' access to professional development activities, and support their continued advancement and persistence in their child care career.

Action Items

TWC will take multiple approaches to increase the number of training opportunities employees pursue in order to promote professional growth, improve teacher retention, and increase quality of child care services.

- **Action Item 3.1.1: Ensure training meets teacher needs and available funds are prioritized to address barriers.** TWC requires LWDBs to use data, including stakeholder feedback, to determine how to use their CCDF quality funds. TWC provides guidance on data-driven decision making to LWDBs in the Child Care Quality Strategic Planning & Expenditures Guide. TWC will continue to explore opportunities to improve engagement with training by supporting LWDBs to follow best practices to ensure trainings are accessible and topics are of interest to teachers, including:
  - Requesting that LWDBs continue to collect data from child care programs (e.g., conduct an annual survey) before setting the training calendar for the year to identify 1) training topics of interest and rough magnitude of demand for those topics and 2) day, time, and location preferences. TWC will provide guidance to LWDBs on offering different locations and schedules and tracking engagement through these different offerings to understand better what works for teachers.

  - Supporting LWDBs when dedicating CCDF quality funds to offer trainings at no cost and to subsidize costs related to transportation and substitute teachers to mitigate this access barrier for teachers.

  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will continue supporting and guiding LWDB's quality staff in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028. TWC will continue to host bi-weekly office hours and quarterly Communities of Practice for LWDB staff in addition to the annual Quality Strategic Planning Meeting to provide updates and share best practices.

- **Action Item 3.1.2: Ensure participating trainers and teachers are registered in TECPDS.** TWC will continue to go through LWDB TECPDS Specialists to encourage trainers to register in Texas Trainer Registry and training participants to register in TECPDS so training certifications can be issued and stored electronically.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will provide ongoing support for LWDB TECPDS Specialists in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028.

- **Action Item 3.1.3: Continue to learn about best practices from other states.** TWC will continue to participate in multi-state communities of practice and events. These cross-state

opportunities can enable TWC to leverage learnings from other states to identify new workforce strategies and professional development approaches that might work for Texas.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC will participate in cross-state opportunities as they arise in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028.

Strategy 3.2 – Offer relevant and targeted support and training to address workforce needs

Rationale

Workgroup meetings, focus group discussions, and the Child Care Director Survey all identified specific training topics that are of interest to educators:

- **Infant and toddler**: There is a growing shortage of qualified educators for infants and toddlers in Texas, a concern echoed by stakeholders across focus groups and workgroups. In the Child Care Director Survey, directors reported that just 5% of their teachers held an infant/toddler certification.[12] Further, focus group members noted that the expansion of public pre-kindergarten programs for 3-year-olds has meant that a disproportionate share of children receiving private care are infants and toddlers.
- **Challenging behaviors**: Workgroup and focus group participants indicated that educators are not equipped to effectively and appropriately manage challenging behaviors. This issue emerged as a top concern in both focus groups and responses from the Child Care Director Survey, with some directors citing it as a driving factor for why people are leaving the profession.
- **Role-specific and practice-based training:** Focus group participants and Workgroup members highlighted some factors that create quality training: role-specific training (i.e., directors benefit from leadership and business training, while teachers need practical support for managing daily classroom challenges) and practice-based training rather than theoretical sessions that lack regular, meaningful updates.
- **Other:** Common topics identified in the Child Care Director Survey included child development and curriculum design (see Table 8). Workgroup members also identified training to work with parents of children, especially those with special needs.

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[12] Infant / toddler certifications noted include Infant-Toddler Specialist Certification (4%), Program for Infant / Toddler Care Certification (1%), and First3Years Infant Mental Health Endorsement (0%).

Table 8: Director-identified top areas of need for professional development for staff[13]

Topic	Home-Based	Centers
Addressing Challenging Behaviors	40%	77%
Child Growth and Development	65%	45%
Supporting Children with Special Needs	25%	40%
Learning environments, planning framework, curriculum, and standards	32%	30%

By equipping educators with effective strategies and support systems, TWC can support improved classroom environments, enhanced job satisfaction, and a likely reduction in workforce attrition.

Action Items

TWC and CLI recently enhanced their support for infant and toddler trainings. TWC established an Infant Toddler Specialist at each LWDB who connects teachers to available trainings, such as CLI's Elite Teacher Program and drop-in Professional Learning Communities. TWC should continue to support the uptake and scale of these training opportunities by:

- Encouraging 1) TWC mentors to continue to work closely with the LWDB's Infant Toddler Specialist and 2) LWDBs to emphasize infant and toddler as a training area of focus.
- To do this, TWC should work with LWDBs to identify and share out ideas for how LWDBs could amplify the impact of their Infant Toddler Specialist's expertise. For example, one LWDB is taking steps to replicate CLI's Elite Teacher Program for the child care programs in their region. In addition to encouraging LWDBs to emphasize training in this area, TWC should also work with CLI to support further expansion of CLI's Elite Teacher Program.

Beyond leveraging the work of Texas' ITSN supports and resources, TWC should also continue to work with LWDBs to align professional development opportunities with areas of interest from child care programs.

- **Action Item 3.2.1: Ensure existing trainings to address challenging behaviors are promoted.** TECPDS currently offers filtering to help child care programs find trainings to address challenging behaviors. Additionally, the Texas Early Learning Council's Strategic Plan includes two Action Items dedicated to challenging behaviors:
    - Action Item 2.4.7: TELC will identify and promote current training and coursework that provide(s) professional development around behavioral problems, mental health, parent engagement, and inclusivity, leveraging existing inventories.

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[13] Participants were given a choice of 15 areas of need, in addition to a free response option, and were asked to select their top 3 areas. Table 11 is based on the top 3 responses from each program type.

- Action Item 2.4.8: TWC and TEA will offer trainings for early learning professionals to address challenging behaviors, children with special health care needs, and child development and brain development. Training topics include restorative discipline, teacher-student interactions, and inclusive practices.

TWC will work with CLI to ensure these resources are cataloged in the TECPDS Texas Trainer Registry. TWC will also continue to work with LWDBs to disseminate information about the Texas Trainer Registry catalog to child care programs and how child care programs can leverage the consultant directory to match staff with specialists or trainers to support them.

Implementation/Timeline:
TWC will work with CLI to catalogue resources during Fiscal Year 2026. TWC will continue to work with LWBDs on disseminating information in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028.

- **Action Item 3.2.2: Conduct outreach via TECPDS to raise awareness of offerings and better understand demand and gaps.** TWC will work with CLI to conduct trainings with each of the LWDBs that demonstrate the platform for child care staff and the local LWDB's TECPDS Specialist. These trainings could be a mix of virtual and in-person. TWC and CLI will outreach to increase awareness among other educational specialists such as behavioral consultants to encourage them to utilize TECPDS resources to make their services available to users of the platform.
Implementation/Timeline:
TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

Strategy 3.3 – Create a standardized and customizable director competency framework, supported by accessible director training

Rationale

Focus group participants and workgroup members have expressed frustration over the lack of a clear, standardized pathway to becoming a child care program director. Many educators are unsure of the qualifications, skills, and training needed to advance into director roles, which limits career progression. One focus group member remarked, "We need sustainable career paths. Pathways for the staff to grow without forcing them to leave child care because they want to make a livable wage."

At the same time, current directors often lack access to professional development opportunities specifically designed to build their leadership and management capacity—skills that are essential for fostering positive organizational culture, supporting staff, and improving retention. Research indicates that administrator leadership capability in early childhood education settings can have a significant affect on organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and quality of care.[14] Greater clarity on director

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[14] NAEYC. (2015). Expanding the Lens—Leadership as an Organizational Asset

competencies paired with increased access to and awareness of relevant training offerings is expected to result in more trained, prepared directors that better support their teachers; and will retain skilled educators in the industry by offering a viable leadership trajectory.

TECPDS is in the process of developing a director competency framework as well as a structured career development and progression roadmap for aspiring and current directors. This director roadmap will illustrate how teachers can become and progress as a director and enable TECPDS and TWC to work with training child care programs to ensure that available trainings align with this framework.

Action Items

To implement this recommendation, TWC should continue to support TECPDS to clarify the director pathway, while also working with LWDBs to ensure professional development offerings address local needs.

- o **Action Item 3.3.1: Utilize the upcoming TECPDS director competency framework to clarify career development and progression pathways**. TWC will work with CLI to ensure that directors' perspectives are incorporated into the framework and roadmap (e.g., competency-based progression and relevance for both home-based and center-based programs).
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will work with CLI to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027

  Action Item 3.3.2: Determine the feasibility of transferring the Director Certification currently overseen by Child Care Regulation to CLI. Analyze the existing CCR Director Certification's requirement to the new TECPDS Director Competency Framework (Action Item 3.3.1). Determine if the CCR Director's Certification requirements should be updated. Determine how the verification and issuance of the certification could be transferred from CCR to CLI, and at what cost. This transfer could support an alignment between the new competency framework in TECPDS.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will work with CCR and CLI to review this in Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

- **Action Item 3.3.3: Increase awareness about the new director certification.** Following this change and TECPDS's completion of the director career pathway, TWC will work with CLI to make child care programs aware of these updates and support LWDBs to use the tools and trainings that are available to them.
  Implementation/Timeline:
  TWC will work with CLI and LWDBs to accomplish this by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

- **Action Item 3.3.4: Tailor professional development trainings to local needs.** TWC will continue to collaborate with LWDBs to understand demand for additional director or leadership trainings as a path to help prevent teacher burnout and improve retention by building a

supportive workplace. This includes determining local demand and funding needs, location and format (including potential need for virtual options), and outreach to encourage director enrollment.

Implementation/Timeline:

TWC will continue supporting and guiding LWDB staff in Fiscal Years 2026 – 2028. For LWBD's professional development funded by CCDF quality dollars, TWC will continue to host monthly office hours and quarterly Communities of Practice for LWDB staff in addition to the annual Strategic Planning Meeting to provide updates and share best practices.

Appendices

Appendix A: Workgroup Members

Chuck Cohn — Angels Care and Learning Center, Capital Area

Lisa Colyer — West Central Workforce Solutions

Jenna Courtney — Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST)

April Crawford, Ph.D. — Children's Learning Institute at UT Health Houston

Bertha Gallardo — Las Palmas Medical Center

Anna Haller — Creative Minds CDC, Gulf Cast

Karen Hughes — Vogel Alcove, Dallas

Kim Kofron — Children at Risk

Lyn Lucas (substitute for Kim Kofron) — Children at Risk

Jenny McClure (substitute for Jenna Courtney) — Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST)

Jerletha McDonald   Arlington DFW Child Care

JoAnne Mengelkamp — Baylor Scott & White

Pattie Rosenlund — Easterseals, Rio Grande Valley

Melanie Rubin — North Texas Early Education Alliance

Julie Talbert — Heart of Texas Workforce Solutions

Wendy Uptain — Employers for Child Care Task Force & Early Matters Texas

Jennifer Vincent — Child Care Regulation

Murriel Webb — Braswell CDC, Metroplex

Appendix B: Research Methodology

HB 619 requires TWC to use the following data in creating the Strategic Plan:

- Demographic data of child care workers in Texas, including the:
  - Race, ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment of child care workers, and
  - Ages of the children the worker serves.
- Compensation data for child-care workers disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment.

HB 619 also directs TWC to obtain the data above for a representative sample set of child care facilities in Texas, and to use these data in developing the Strategic Plan.

To focus the data collection, SFI set out to answer five research questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of child care workers?
2. What are the major challenges that child care program directors are facing in maintaining a stable and high-quality workforce?
3. What compensation and benefits do child care workers receive?
4. What are the educational and professional development experiences and preferences for child care workers?
5. How can the Texas Workforce Commission, given its resources and mandate, best improve and support worker recruitment, training, and retention?

To answer these questions, SFI conducted the following research:

- **Literature Review:** SFI completed upfront and ongoing desk research to refine our understanding of key challenges facing the child care industry and to identify state- and national-level child care best practices and policy approaches to addressing workforce issues and improving quality in the child care industry.
- **Survey:** SFI administered a survey of child care program directors which provided input from a representative, statewide sample. Drawing from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission's Child Care Regulation database, SFI selected a random sample of approximately 3,000 licensed programs. SFI received 1,129 responses and 953 respondents completed the entire survey. The survey instrument was designed to capture detailed information on workforce demographics, compensation and benefits, staffing patterns, and access to professional development. It also included modules on director and teacher characteristics, program operations, and turnover dynamics.
- **Focus Groups:** To complement the survey and explore emerging themes in greater depth, SFI also conducted three virtual focus groups with a total of 15 child care program directors. Participants were selected from among survey respondents using a criterion-based sampling strategy to ensure representation across program types, geographic regions, and certification statuses. Each focus group had a different population focus: one included rural center-based

directors, one included urban center-based directors, and one included rural and urban home-based program directors. These sessions provided a forum for participants to elaborate on survey responses and engage with peers on key topics covered in the survey. The focus groups also surfaced insights into how state systems and policies are experienced on the ground, and where improvements could be made to better support the workforce.

Literature Review Methodology

SFI's review and research focused largely on literature from the past two years to update learnings from the prior strategic plan—for example, lessons from states' use of American Rescue Plan Act funding for the child care sector, such as a large child care grants initiative in Kentucky (Powell & Dade, 2023). SFI collected, reviewed, and synthesized published studies, policy reports, news articles, and data sets on the child care workforce, with a particular focus on Texas but also drawing on policy experimentation and lessons from other states. SFI identified relevant literature using the following data sources and protocols:

- Other state strategic plans on child care and the workforce
- Recent publications from leading education and education workforce organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley (CSCCE)
    - Internet searches for recent systematic reviews on the child care workforce, including work from think tanks and gray literature such as conference papers, policy documents, and reports
- Reports and publications from organizations focused on children and families such as Child Trends and the Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Data sets including Lightcast, a labor market analytics tool used to analyze occupation demographics, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, used to analyze state and national occupation wage data
- To identify further sources, especially those addressing innovations not yet published in formal research journals, we conducted searches that included key phrases such as "early childhood education policy innovation," "child care innovation," "U.S. child care workforce," "child care employment data," "child care economy," and others. From these reviews, newspaper articles, and studies, we followed citations and references to expand the depth of information included in the literature review.

SFI tabulated the sources collected and included in the literature review in an Excel document capturing the author, title, publishing organization, date of publication, and the geographic focus of the content (i.e., a specific state or national). SFI also analyzed each source to capture a high-level summary of its content and takeaways, with relevance to this project noted. SFI assigned each source a priority rating synthesizing its applicability, credibility (strength of evidence), and insightfulness. SFI also incorporated key insights and data in narrative form into an informal report, categorized by topic areas.

Director Survey Methodology

SFI's survey of child care program directors was a key instrument in answering the research questions. It provided the broadest and largest set of data regarding the issues investigated and surfaced key follow-on questions that SFI explored in focus groups.

The survey instrument gathered detailed information about child care programs and their workforce across Texas. Conducted with a representative group of program directors, it allowed for population-level estimates of the current child care workforce in Texas and provided updated estimates for comparison against the 2023–2025 strategic plan's survey. SFI asked each director to provide information on themselves and their employees to capture key data including demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, and educational attainment), wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities (both through the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) and other educational and professional development activities). These results provided insights into the experiences and compensation of child care workers and allowed for analysis of differences by demographic factors. Additionally, the survey collected information about the ages of children in each program and the ages of children taught by each teacher. Questions in this survey instrument were adapted from the prior Director Survey for the 2023 – 2025 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan, which allowed us to align question wording, content, and structure to ensure comparability and measure changes over time. The contents of the survey are summarized in Table 9 below and the full survey and findings can be found on the Social Finance website.

Table 9. Survey Instrument Modules and Questions

Module	Question Focus
Child Care Operation Information	Ages of children the operation serves, accreditation status, type of operation, times of care, size of staff, roles of staff
Benefits & Pay	Benefits offerings (insurance, paid time off, retirement accounts, child care, bonuses, etc.)
Professional Development (PD)	Staff access to and experience with TECPDS, Early Childhood Professional Development Scholarships (ECPDS), and Children's Learning Institute (CLI); how PD hours are obtained (e.g., trainings hosted by the operation or trainings attended on their own, paid or unpaid PD, relevant PD options, barriers to PD accessibility)

Workforce Pay & Turnover	Challenges to hiring, factors that would reduce turnover, general challenges and feedback
Director Information	Demographic characteristics, education and credentials, language ability, years of experience, work hours, compensation, online professional development accounts
Teacher Information	Demographic characteristics, role, ages of children served, education and credentials, language ability, years of experience, work hours, compensation

Informed Consent and Institutional Review Board Approval

An Institutional Review Board (IRD) reviewed all study protocols, including survey instruments, a process designed to ensure the ethical protection of human subjects in research. SFI selected BRANY IRB, an IRB that is fully accredited and in good standing with the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP). The IRB was chosen based on its expertise in supporting social-behavioral research and the cost of its services. SFI team members involved in the data collection process completed Human Subjects Research training through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Human Research Protections or through comparable training programs, ensuring all met the latest standards for protecting research participants.

The Director Survey included an informed consent process approved by the IRB. To ensure that survey respondents understood how their data would be used and that participation was voluntary, the consent form described the purpose and objectives of the study, the risks and benefits of participation, the expected duration, contact information for questions, and a description of data security and confidentiality protocols.

Sampling Strategy

SFI used the Search Texas Child Care Program database from the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Child Care Regulation (CCR) as our sampling frame. As of September 19, 2024, this database contained program characteristics and contact information for

14,907 licensed programs in the state. [15] While the database included child care program addresses and phone numbers, email addresses were available for only a subsample of licensed programs. SFI worked with TWC to obtain contact information for the remaining programs. Where needed, SFI scraped additional contact information from program websites.

From the list provided by Texas HHSC CCR, SFI drew a random sample of 3,000 child care programs to survey. The random sample was intended to be statistically representative of all licensed child care programs in the state. To assess representativeness, SFI compared characteristics of the sample to the full population of child care programs, including program type (center- or home-based), geographic distribution (by county), program capacity, and age groups served.

In order to confidently draw conclusions from the survey results, SFI ensured that the respondents were broadly representative of all child care programs across the state, as shown in Table 10 below. The survey sample reflects the distribution of programs across urban and rural areas, center-based and home-based settings, and aligns with the average Texas Rising Star rating and program capacity. Program capacity dips slightly for survey completers, likely due to fewer larger centers willing to complete the teacher roster for all staff members. The one notable difference is that our surveyed sample includes a larger share of programs that accept CCS scholarships. However, this variable is changing over time. For example, 9% of the sample reported active CCS participation, despite conflicting data from the HHS child care database. While SFI aimed to make the survey accessible, including Spanish-language translation and an option to complete the survey over the phone, there could still be other differences between our surveyed sample and the population sample driven by language barriers or comfort in responding to a survey.

Table 10: Survey representativeness across key characteristics

	All survey respondents	All survey respondents	Survey completers	Survey completers	Population sample	Population sample
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N
Accepts CCS Scholarships	60%	1,129	60%	953	51%	12,503

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[15] Texas Health and Human Services Commission Child Care Regulation. (n.d.). *Search Texas Child Care* [Data set]. Retrieved September 19, 2024 from https://child care.hhs.texas.gov/public/child caresearch

Texas Rising Star rating (if certified)	2.03	714	2.02	601	1.99	6,789
Children capacity at program	89	1,129	85	953	89	12,502
In an urban locale (vs. rural)	90%	1,129	89%	953	91%	12,503
Is a licensed center (vs. home-based)	73%	1,129	72%	953	73%	12,503

Conducting the Survey

SFI first piloted the survey with several child care directors selected from Workgroup members to gather feedback on outreach language, consent protocol, survey question clarity, length, and content. SFI compensated the pilot participants for their time in accordance with IRB protocols and were not included in the final survey sample. After incorporating the pilot participants' feedback, SFI conducted survey outreach using multiple methods to ensure a high and representative response rate. Every respondent with a valid email address received a survey invitation in both English and Spanish, with instructions to complete it online.

- *Programming in Qualtrics:* The survey was a web-based instrument programmed in Qualtrics. Qualtrics allowed SFI to build in data quality controls and checks, including skip patterns, forced response options, and a confirmation question following income or wage entries. It also provided easy functionality to track sample responses and manage follow-up messages, including SMS reminder integration for respondents who consented to receive text notifications.
- *Compensation:* SFI compensated respondents for their time. Final compensation was approved as part of the IRB process. SFI provided a $50 Visa gift card for survey completion.

The survey outreach strategy included multiple elements to increase response rates, including:

- Email reminders, with varied messages based on whether recipients had opened the survey link
- Targeted follow-up phone call reminders to those who did not respond to the initial invitation or follow-up emails, prioritizing program directors with characteristics underrepresented in the early response sample

For example, if fewer program directors from rural areas responded relative to their share of the overall population, SFI focused phone outreach efforts on contacting those individuals. This supported the

goal of achieving a final survey sample that was representative of the broader population. The survey opened on February 25, 2025 and closed on May 2, 2025

Data Cleaning and Analysis

After SFI completed survey data collection, they cleaned, structured, and organized the response data for analysis. The data cleaning processes included:

- Correcting incomplete responses or those with typos that were inconsistent relative to other responses from the same respondent.
- Dropping or top- or bottom-coding values that were out of range (e.g., an exorbitant number of employees or a very high reported income).
- Ensuring all variable and value labels were complete and clear.
- Ensuring that all variables were stored and formatted appropriately (e.g., as date, numeric, or string variables).

Data cleaning protocols and decisions were clearly documented. SFI conducted data cleaning and analysis in Stata, writing code and accompanying specifications that documented each step and its assumptions, ensured reproducibility, and allowed for auditing.

After cleaning and structuring the data files for analysis, SFI created necessary variable constructs from the underlying data, such as aggregated income and summary variables on employer benefits. SFI then calculated descriptive statistics for each key variable, populating tables with the mean, standard deviation, confidence interval, minimum and maximum values, and sample size. For earnings figures, SFI also calculated the median.

In addition to overall results, SFI disaggregated certain variables to show subgroup-level outcomes. For example, SFI disaggregated compensation data by demographic characteristics, including race and ethnicity and educational attainment. SFI also broke out results by other key child care program characteristics, such as center versus home-based setting, rural versus urban location, whether the program accepted tuition subsidies, and program size. Focus Group Methodology

SFI conducted three virtual focus groups with child care program directors. These sessions provided critical insights into the experiences of key types of program directors. The focus groups helped unpack and contextualize survey findings by exploring the reasoning behind responses—such as challenges in staff hiring and retention, or changes in pay and benefits. Additionally, the format enabled us to gather multiple perspectives simultaneously, facilitated idea-sharing among participants, and helped us identify areas of convergence and divergence.

The moderators emphasized clear, open communication and created an environment that welcomed sensitive questions and encouraged the free expression of varied viewpoints. Prior to each session, SFI prepared participants by providing an overview of topics and setting conversation norms. SFI avoided jargon and technical terms that could hinder shared understanding and full participation. Moderators positioned participants as experts from whom SFI hoped to learn and encouraged them to share

openly. Throughout the discussions, moderators worked to ensure that all views were represented and that time was managed carefully to allow space for both planned and spontaneous topics.

Focus Group Methodology

SFI developed a semi-structured interview guide with a series of core topics, questions, and follow-up prompts, while leaving flexibility for discussion based on participant responses. SFI designed topics to elicit insights not captured by the survey and to address priorities identified by TWC. SFI also incorporated findings from the literature review to inform the protocol. Focus group topics included:

- Perceptions of the strengths and challenges of the Child Care Services (CCS) subsidy program
- Key changes needed to strengthen the child care system and support the workforce
- Successes and challenges in staff recruitment and retention
- Approaches and considerations for staff pay and benefits
- Feedback on child care system processes and structures (certification, credentialing, reimbursements, state agency interactions, etc.)

Informed Consent and IRB Approval

The focus group protocol went through the same IRB review and approval process as the Director Survey. SFI conducted the informed consent process in the same manner as the Director Survey.

Sampling Strategy

SFI selected a convenience sample of focus groups of rural-based, urban-based, and home-based programs from the cohort of directors who completed the Child Care Director Survey. Within each focus group, SFI sought to include participants representing programs across various certification statuses, Texas Rising Star ratings, and counties.

Conducting the Focus Groups

SFI held focus groups on April 17, April 18, and April 25, 2025. Each of the three focus groups had eight confirmed participants per time slot and five individuals ended up attending each group.

- *Facilitation and Language*: SFI used a secure video connection to conduct the focus groups. Each session was led by a facilitator and a note-taker, and SFI recorded the sessions for analysis (with participant consent). If holding sessions only in English had risked limiting the range of perspectives, SFI were prepared to organize a Spanish-language focus group.
- *Compensation*: Participants were compensated with a $75 Visa gift card for their time. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes. Final compensation was approved by the IRB as part of the focus group protocol.

Data Analysis

SFI's primary goal in analyzing focus group data was to identify common themes and points of divergence among participants. Special attention was paid to parts of the transcripts that featured spontaneous comments, differing opinions, changes in participant viewpoints, specific versus general

remarks, emotionally charged statements, and topics of particular interest to participants. SFI analyzed focus group themes alongside survey data to deepen our understanding of responses and generate policy-relevant insights SFI discussed with the workgroup.

Appendix C: Research Analysis

HB 619 requires TWC to use the following data in creating the Strategic Plan:

- Demographic data of child care workers in Texas, including the:
    - Race, ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment of child care workers, and
    - Ages of the children the worker serves.
- Compensation data for child-care workers disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment.

HB 619 also directs TWC to obtain the data above for a representative sample set of child care facilities in Texas, and to use these data in developing the Strategic Plan.

Research Question 1: What are the demographic characteristics of child care workers?

Key Themes

1. The Texas child care workforce is predominantly female, racially and ethnically varied, and more likely to be bilingual than the national average.
2. Home-based child care programs have some demographic differences from licensed centers, for instance they have higher Black representation and are less likely to speak English as a first language.

Survey Findings

Survey data show that the Texas child care workforce is predominantly female, racially and ethnically varied, and more likely to be bilingual than the national child care workforce.

The child care workforce in Texas is overwhelmingly female, consistent with national patterns—97% overall and 97% in center-based settings, with a slight drop to 89% in home-based programs.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Texas child care workers reflect the state's broader racial and ethnic makeup. Hispanic or Latino individuals represent 41% of the child care workforce—closely mirroring the Hispanic/Latino share of the Texas population (~40% per U.S. Census Bureau estimates).[16] White (non-Hispanic) individuals account for 38% of the workforce, a proportion roughly consistent with their statewide representation (~39%).

Black or African American individuals are overrepresented in the child care field, comprising 20% of the overall workforce and as much as 36% among home-based child care programs. In contrast, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native individuals remain underrepresented compared to the general population, although that could be partly due to survey

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[16] U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: Demographic and Housing Estimates – Texas*. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov.

response bias for those groups and more limited measurement precision for smaller subgroups from the survey.

Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity of Teachers in Texas, by Program Type

Race/Ethnicity of Teachers

Race/Ethnicity	Overall (N=7,448)	Centers (N=7,230)	Home-Based (N=151)
Hispanic or Latino	41%	41%	34%
White	38%	38%	30%
Black or African American	20%	19%	36%
Asian	3%	3%	1%
Middle Eastern or North African	2%	0	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
Another race (please specify):	0%	0%	0%

■ Overall (N=7,448)   ■ Centers (N=7,230)   ■ Home-Based (N=151)

As summarized in Table 1, 95% of teachers report speaking English and 25% report speaking Spanish. Among home-based child care programs, Spanish language use is more prevalent at 29%, and English language use drops to 85%, compared to 95% in centers.

This trend likely reflects the bilingual nature of many home-based child care programs and the communities they serve. Nationally, only about 13–15% of child care workers speak Spanish, making Texas's workforce substantially more bilingual than the national average.

Table 1: Language Spoken by Teachers, by Program Type

	Overall	Centers	Home-Based
Teacher speaks English	95%	95%	85%
Teacher speaks Spanish	25%	25%	29%
N	7,991	7,761	157

Research Question 2: What are the major challenges that child care program directors are facing in maintaining a stable and high-quality workforce?

Key Themes

1. Inadequate compensation and expired relief funding
Directors across all settings cited low wages as the most significant barrier to recruiting and retaining staff. Temporary pay increases made possible by COVID-stimulus funding have ended, leaving programs unable to compete with higher-paying sectors such as retail, warehousing, and Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

2. Inability to meet workforce needs with program resources
Many directors reported a growing gap between what job candidates expect—such as higher wages, more non-wage benefits, and manageable workloads—and what programs can offer. This disconnect contributes to staff burnout, turnover, and difficulty attracting qualified applicants.

3. External conditions undermine workforce stability
Directors pointed to several external factors that strain their ability to maintain a stable workforce, including declining or unpredictable enrollment—particularly among home-based child care programs affected by the expansion of public Pre-K. Geographic and economic dynamics also play a role: rural programs lose staff to nearby cities, while staff in urban settings face long commutes and high cost-of-living challenges that limit staff availability. Across all settings, directors noted an increase in challenging child behaviors (such as hitting or biting), which contributes to staff burnout and turnover and exceeds what programs are trained to manage.

Survey Findings

Operational Challenges

When asked to identify the single greatest challenge facing their operation, 35% of home-based child care programs and 46% of centers cited enrollment as the top concern. In addition to enrollment, center-based child care programs frequently cited workforce instability as their primary challenge, including difficulties retaining staff (26%) and managing inexperienced employees (20%). Hiring and retention issues were less common among home-based child care programs, many of whom reported not actively hiring or not having staff beyond the primary caregiver. Instead, the most-often cited

challenge of home-based programs after enrollment was obtaining non-tuition funding (26%), such as the unpredictability or insufficiency of financial supports beyond parent fees. See Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Primary Challenge to Operation, by Program Type

Primary Challenge to Operations

Y-axis: % of Respondents Indicating as Primary Challenge

Child Enrollment: Home-Based 46, Center 35
Staff Retention: Home-Based 8, Center 26
Unskilled or Inexperienced Workforce: Home-Based 5, Center 20
Obtaining Non-Tuition Funding: Home-Based 26, Center 10
Other: Home-Based 16, Center 8

Legend: ■ Home-Based (N=274)   ■ Center (N=797)

Hiring Challenges

The survey found that across all program types, low wages was the most commonly reported challenge in recruiting and hiring staff—identified by 58% of centers and 34% of home-based child care programs. However, for home-based child care programs, as noted above, directors often work alone or with one to two staff, so the most frequent response (45%) to this question was simply "N/A". 15% of center directors identified their primary hiring challenge as not receiving applications from qualified candidates, with many expressing concern that interest in entering the child care field is declining. The next most-cited hiring challenge—10% of centers and 8% of home programs—was simply that people do not want to work in child care. See Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Primary Challenge to Hiring, by Program Type

Primary Challenge to Hiring

Bar chart showing % of Respondents Indicating as Primary Challenge by category, comparing Home-Based (N=280) and Center (N=803):

- Wages are too low to attract qual. staff: Home-Based 34, Center 58
- Do not receive applic. from qual. cand.: Home-Based 3, Center 15
- People do not want to work in child care: Home-Based 8, Center 10
- No major challenges: Home-Based 4, Center 7
- N/A: Home-Based 45, Center 5
- Something else: Home-Based 6, Center 5

Legend: ■ Home-Based (N=280) ■ Center (N=803)

Focus Group Findings

Child care programs across rural, urban, and home-based programs are grappling with workforce challenges. Directors reported that while COVID-stimulus funding temporarily helped improve compensation and stabilize staffing, those gains are quickly eroding with the loss of federal support. Programs now struggle to remain competitive with other industries offering better pay and fewer demands, such as retail and warehousing.

"It's really hard because everybody has jobs in warehouses…making $20 an hour and child care can't offer them that."

In rural areas, the geographic mobility of staff exacerbates these issues, while in urban settings, long commutes and burnout further strain staffing. Home-based child care programs reported distinct challenges, including regulatory burdens and a concentration of children with behavioral needs. Across all groups, directors stressed the widening gap between what programs can offer and what prospective or current employees expect—particularly wages, workload, and work environment.

Rural Licensed Centers

Program directors in rural communities emphasized the difficulty of offering competitive pay without raising tuition fees—an approach that risks pricing families out of care. Many rural child care programs cannot match the salaries and benefits offered by public preschool programs, Head Start, or even non-care-sector jobs like retail. The absence of benefits such as health insurance adds another barrier to recruitment and retention. Staff often leave for higher-paying opportunities in nearby cities, leaving rural programs with few options. Temporary pay raises made possible through COVID-stimulus funding helped during the crisis, but the expiration of that funding has left programs with unsustainable operating budgets and renewed staffing instability.

Urban Licensed Centers

Directors in urban settings cited the increasing behavioral needs of children—such as hitting and biting—as a growing challenge that contributes to teacher burnout and turnover. Staff absences are frequent, and some long-tenured educators have exited the field entirely, replaced by younger, inexperienced applicants seeking wages that child care programs cannot afford to pay. For example, some candidates requested $19 per hour with no experience—wages well above what many programs can sustain. Directors also highlighted commute-related issues, particularly in affluent areas where staff must travel long distances to work, compounding fatigue and contributing to absenteeism.

Home-Based Programs

Home-based child care programs faced a distinct set of challenges. Directors reported that staff hired online were often overwhelmed by the extensive training requirements needed to meet state licensing standards. Frequent changes to licensing policies created an additional layer of stress, as directors struggled to stay compliant while actively caring for children. Like their center-based counterparts, home-based child care programs faced high turnover and absenteeism. Competition with local warehouse jobs—offering $20 per hour—made it nearly impossible to attract or retain staff. Many home-based programs serve children with higher needs, often those expelled from center-based care for behavioral reasons. However, staff in these settings typically lack access to adequate training and resources to support these children effectively. Additionally, the expansion of public pre-kindergarten programs for 3-year-olds has reduced enrollment in private home-based care, particularly for older children. This shift has resulted in an increased proportion of infants and toddlers—who require more staff attention and have stricter caregiver-to-child ratios—thereby reducing overall enrollment capacity and increasing per-child costs.

Research Question 3: What compensation and benefits do child care workers receive?

Key Themes

1. Wages and other compensation are insufficient and low compared to other sectors

Focus group and survey findings indicate that child care wages remain low across all program types. Directors reported difficulty competing with other sectors where entry-level positions offer higher pay with fewer responsibilities. They overwhelmingly identified increased pay, access to health insurance, and more paid time off as the top strategies to reduce turnover.

2. Benefits are limited across the field
Access to benefits such as paid leave, health insurance, and discounted child care is generally low and varies by setting and staff role. Availability is substantially lower in home-based programs compared to center-based settings, and in rural child care programs compared to urban child care programs. Most benefits are available only to a minority of staff surveyed, with full-time teachers having the comparatively highest access.

3. Compensation is limited but supplemented by small, creative incentives
While base pay remains low across the sector, directors are using creative strategies to boost staff satisfaction, including sign-on bonuses, attendance rewards, and small-scale appreciation efforts. However, these approaches remain relatively uncommon among child care programs—e.g., 22% of programs surveyed offer retention bonuses and only 7% offer sign-on bonuses. These incentives are often personalized and non-monetary—such as flexible schedules or workplace recognition—which help sustain morale in the absence of competitive wages.

Survey Findings

According to our survey results, median salary for a child care director is $45,000 a year. Median wage for teachers is $14/hour. There are modest increases in earnings correlated with higher education levels. Program characteristics also influence pay, with rural and home-based settings typically offering lower compensation than urban and center-based programs. Directors see the largest salary increases when advancing from a CDA or associate degree to a bachelor's degree, while teachers experience similar but smaller wage gains.

Director Compensation

Figure 3 below summarizes results from the survey data on director compensation. Educational attainment is correlated with director compensation. Median salaries increase with each additional level of education, with the most notable jump occurring between directors who hold a CDA or associate degree and those with a bachelor's degree. This suggests that formal education continues to serve as a key lever for upward mobility in early childhood leadership roles.

Participation in state-supported programs also appears to influence pay levels. Similarly, while median salary tends to increase with higher Texas Rising Star quality levels, directors at non-Texas Rising Star programs report higher median salaries than those at Entry Level and Three-Star programs. This may reflect differences in business models, funding sources, or administrative burdens associated with quality rating participation.

Geographic location is another determinant of compensation. Directors working in rural programs earn less than their urban counterparts. Home-based child care programs, who often serve as both caregivers and administrators, report the lowest median salaries of all director types.

The data also indicate a connection between compensation and program size. Directors of larger programs—those with higher enrollment capacity—tended to report higher salaries than those overseeing smaller programs, likely reflecting greater administrative responsibilities and revenue potential.

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Figure 3: Director Median Annual Salary, by Selected Characteristics

Note: Salaries <$1,000 and >=$500,000 were excluded. Capacity is determined by the number of children the program can serve. Under 26 is small, 26-100 is medium, over 100 is large. N = 844 (overall), 526 (under BA), 317 (BA or above), 102 (rural), 742 (urban), 196 (homes), 648 (centers), 259 (Hispanic), 195 (Black), 394 (White), 215 (small), 324 (medium), 305 (large).

Teacher Compensation

Figure 4 below summarizes key results from our survey data on teacher compensation. The results indicate that wages for child care teachers in Texas mostly fall between $12 and $16 per hour. Median wages increase with educational attainment, showing similar gains between earning a CDA credential or associate degree and progressing to a bachelor's degree. Teachers with a bachelor's degree earn roughly $2 more per hour than those without.

Program characteristics do influence pay. Teachers in programs that do not accept Child Care Services (CCS) scholarships report higher median wages ($15.00) compared to those in CCS-participating programs ($13.50). This difference may be influenced by the fact that non-CCS programs serve higher-income families and have the ability to charge higher tuition. Median wages also tend to increase with higher Texas Rising Star quality levels, although non-Texas Rising Star programs report the highest wages overall.

Geographic and operational factors also play a role. Teachers in urban settings, center-based programs, and larger programs earn slightly more than those in rural, home-based, or smaller programs. In terms of job role, advancing from assistant teacher to lead teacher results in a modest pay increase, suggesting limited wage differentiation between these positions, or other factors driving those differences (i.e., location, program size, and program type).

These patterns highlight a structured but low wage scale for Texas child care teachers, with modest rewards for higher education and certain program characteristics, but relatively small incentives for role advancement.

Figure 4: Teacher Compensation, by Selected Characteristics.

N = 6,600 (overall), 5,218 (under BA), 980 (BA or above), 762 (rural), 5,838 (urban), 136 (home), 6,420 (center), 947 (floater), 1,754 (assistant), 3,745 (lead), 234 (small), 2,242 (medium), 4,124 (large).

Benefits

Survey results indicate that access to staff benefits in the child care sector varies significantly by program type, geographic location, and staff role. In general, rural programs report slightly lower availability of benefits across all roles compared to their urban counterparts. The most pronounced differences emerge when comparing center-based programs to home-based child care programs, with the latter offering fewer formal benefits.

The survey specifically asked about a range of employee benefits. Generally, the most commonly reported offerings included:

- Paid vacation/holidays (74% of center directors; 27% of home directors)
- Paid sick leave (46% of center directors; 12% of home directors)
- Health insurance (38% of center directors; 4% of home directors)

- Free or discounted child care (58% of center directors; 7% of home directors)

In addition, the survey asked respondents about other benefits such as dental insurance, vision insurance, life insurance, retirement accounts, health savings accounts, and free meals. These benefits were reported less frequently, particularly among home-based child care programs and rural programs.

There is a decline in reported benefit access from full-time teachers to program directors, and an even sharper drop for part-time teachers. Owner-directors, particularly in home programs, not having staff or formal benefits for themselves likely drives the lower rates of benefits for directors. There was a drop in responses to the question about benefits for part-time staff—possibly indicating that these roles are either rare in some settings or that no benefits are provided to part-time workers. See Tables 4 and 5 below.

When asked for suggestions on how to reduce staff turnover, directors identified three top priorities:

1. Increasing pay to ensure teachers and caregivers earn a living wage (89% of directors)
2. Offering more benefits, such as health insurance (52% of directors)
3. Offering more paid time off, i.e., paid vacation or sick days (38% of directors)

Table 4: Percent of Workers Receiving Benefits in Urban & Rural Child Care Programs

	Urban Director	Urban Full-time Teachers	Urban Part-time Teachers	Rural Director	Rural Full-time Teachers	Rural Part-time Teachers
Paid vacation/holidays	61%	74%	41%	63%	72%	36%
Paid sick leave	37%	41%	22%	36%	40%	20%
Health insurance	29%	34%	10%	32%	36%	14%
Disc./free child care	45%	65%	58%	40%	47%	50%
N	953	722	561	114	90	66

Table 5: Percent of Workers Receiving Benefits in All Centers & Home-Based Child Care Programs

	Center-Based Director	Center-Based Full-time Teachers	Center-Based Part-time Teachers	Home-Based Director	Home-Based Full-time Teachers	Home-Based Part-time Teachers
Paid vacation/holidays	74%	78%	43%	27%	46%	21%
Paid sick leave	46%	44%	24%	12%	15%	5%
Health insurance	38%	37%	12%	4%	14%	2%
Disc./free child care	58%	68%	62%	7%	25%	15%
N	780	706	568	287	106	59

Focus Group Findings

Compensation and benefits for child care workers in Texas remain limited, but directors across all settings find innovative ways to enhance employee satisfaction and retention. Many programs use small-scale bonuses—such as sign-on, performance-based, or attendance-related incentives—and cover occasional costs like professional development or staff gifts. A few programs, especially in urban areas, have successfully implemented broader benefit packages, including health insurance and free tuition for employees' children, by leveraging collaborations with other child care programs. Support for these types of monetary benefits varies between the state and local level or are just initiatives of the programs themselves. Non-monetary supports such as flexible scheduling, positive workplace culture, and personal gestures from directors also play a role in staff satisfaction. Despite limited resources, directors consistently emphasized the importance of showing appreciation and creating supportive work environments as a strategy to retain committed staff.

> *"[Teachers] get bonuses and incentives for being there every day for the month...and we started a teacher of the month program."*

Rural Licensed Centers

Directors of rural programs described offering a combination of modest financial incentives and personalized, non-monetary benefits. Some programs provide quarterly performance bonuses and sign-on bonuses to attract and retain staff. Directors frequently pay for small gifts out of pocket, such

as purchasing pizza to celebrate staff birthdays, in an effort to recognize and appreciate their teams. Non-financial benefits, such as flexible scheduling and guaranteed time off during nights, weekends, and holidays, were highlighted as essential offerings. In one example, a program had successfully transitioned to a four-day workweek, using substitute staff to ensure coverage without increasing workload for regular employees. These creative strategies reflect the directors' commitment to retaining staff despite financial constraints.

Urban Licensed Centers

Urban center directors reported a wider range of benefits, with some programs able to offer more comprehensive compensation packages. One program provided health, vision, and dental insurance as well as free tuition for the children of staff members. This was made possible through a collaborative model in which several programs joined together to secure affordable healthcare coverage. Other strategies included referral bonuses and full financial support for employees pursuing Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, particularly for staff who demonstrated motivation and commitment to the profession. Monthly or quarterly bonuses tied to attendance or performance were also common, helping to reinforce staff reliability and morale. While these benefits are not universal, they reflect a growing trend among urban programs to explore more sustainable and attractive compensation models.

Home-Based Programs

Directors of home-based programs also reported using a mix of financial and non-financial strategies to support staff. Some offered staff benefits such as a 50% discount on child care services, paid vacation, and paid time off. One director described a vacation policy in which families are not charged during a staff member's vacation, although they must continue paying during their own vacations to maintain their child's spot in care. Another program offered families one week of free tuition each year, effectively covering the cost of staff vacation time. These approaches reflect the operational flexibility and client relationships that are often unique to home-based programs, allowing directors to balance staff needs with family expectations.

Research Question 4: What are the educational and professional development experiences and preferences for child care workers?

Key Themes

1. Many child care programs have experience, but formal education and credentials remain limited
The average child care worker has seven years of experience, 29% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and 19% are currently enrolled in a degree or credential program. The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is the most common, but less than half of teachers hold it, with particularly low rates among home-based child care programs.

2. Use of professional development systems is inconsistent

Though Texas offers professional development platforms like TECPDS and CLI Engage, usage is uneven—only about half of respondents report widespread staff use. A significant share of child care programs are either unaware of staff participation (22% TECPDS; 15% CLI Engage), indicate no staff have accounts (16% TECPDS; 18% CLI Engage), or only a minority of staff have accounts (10% TECPDS; 11% CLI Engage), indicating a need for better onboarding and support.

3. Cost and accessibility are major barriers to professional development

Child care programs identified cost, training location, and inconvenient timing as primary barriers to accessing professional development. Center-based child care programs also cited a lack of substitute staff as a key challenge, while home-based child care programs emphasized needs in child development and behavioral support.

Survey Findings

Survey response data reveals that many child care workers have valuable experience, and opportunities remain for furthering formal education, credential attainment, and access to ongoing professional development. These formal learning opportunities are particularly pronounced among home-based child care programs, who often work alone with limited access to external resources.

Current Workforce Profile

According to survey respondents (see Table 2), child care workers:

- Have an average of 7 years of experience overall, and 9 years for staff at home-based child care programs.
- Have an average tenure of 4 years in their current teaching role.
- Are enrolled in a degree or credentialing program in 19% of cases.
- Hold a bachelor's degree or higher in 29% of cases.

Table 2: Teacher experience and education

	Overall	Centers	Home-Based
Avg. years of early childhood education	7	7	9
Avg. years tenure as teacher	4	4	4
Teacher is enrolled in a degree or credential program	19%	19%	19%
Teacher has a bachelor's degree or higher	29%	29%	30%

N (range)	5,316-6,929	5,163-6,716	105-151

The most common formal credential—the Child Development Associate (CDA)—is held by 48% of teachers overall. This figure drops to 23% among home-based child care programs.

Other credentials, including state teaching certifications, Montessori credentials, and program-specific training like CIRCLE or First3Years endorsements, remain rare—each under 10% attainment. See Table 3 below for the full list of credentials.

Table 3: Teacher credentials

Credential	Overall	Notable Differences
Child Development Associate (CDA)	48%	Centers: 50% Home-Based: 23%
Child Care Director's Credential	11%	Centers: 10% Home-Based: 31%
Montessori Credential	8%	Centers: 9% Home-Based: 2%
Texas Teaching Certification	7%	N/A
CIRCLE Foundation Training – Pre-K D EC Technical Certificate	7%	N/A
Child and Youth Care (CYC) Certification	7%	N/A
Child Care Professional (CCP)	6%	Centers: 5% Home-Based: 15%
State Teacher Certification	4%	N/A
CIRCLE Foundation Training – I&T	4%	N/A

Infant-Toddler Specialist (ITSN) Certification	4%	N/A
Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Certification	1%	N/A
Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC)	0%	N/A
Infant-Toddler Specialist (Texas ITSN) Certification	0%	N/A
Family Life Educator Certification (CFLE)	0%	N/A
First3Years Infant Mental Health Endorsement	0%	N/A

N = 1,322 (1,240 Centers; 52 Home-Based)

Access to Systems and Tools

Texas has invested in professional development tracking and training platforms such as TECPDS and CLI Engage, but awareness and use are uneven:

- Just over half of respondents reported that a majority of their staff use TECPDS (52%) and CLI Engage (56%).
- About 1 in 10 report that only a minority of staff have TECPDS (10%) and CLI Engage (11%) accounts.
- A slightly higher percentage report that no staff have TECPDS (16%) and CLI Engage (18%) accounts.
- However, many also indicated that they were unsure of staff utilization (22% for TECPDS; 15% for CLI Engage).

This suggests a mismatch between what these tools offer (or what teachers perceive they offer) and what teachers are seeking, and highlights a need for clearer guidance, user onboarding and adoption support, and strategic communication around how these systems can support career advancement.

Professional Development Needs and Barriers

Child care programs identified several priority areas for additional training, with some variation between home-based and center-based settings:

- Top Areas of Need (see Table 9)
    - Addressing challenging behaviors was the most cited need by center-based child care programs.

- o Child growth and development was the most common priority among home-based child care programs.
  - o Supporting children with special needs and curriculum planning also ranked highly across child care program types.
- Top Barriers to Access (see Table 10)
  - o Cost remains the most significant barrier for all child care programs.
  - o Additional constraints include:
    - Location of trainings
    - Inconvenient timing
    - Lack of substitute teachers, particularly for center-based staff

Table 9: Top Areas of Need for Professional Development Opportunities, by Child Care Program Type.

Topic	Home-Based	Centers
Addressing challenging behaviors	Top-3	**Top Answer**
Child growth and development	**Top Answer**	Top-3
Supporting children with special needs	N/A	Top-3
Learning environments, planning framework, curriculum, and standards	Top-3	N/A
N	291	809

Table 10: Top Barriers for Accessing Professional Development Opportunities, by Child Care Program Type.

Topic	Home-Based	Centers
Cost	**Top Answer**	**Top Answer**
Location of trainings	Top-3	Top-3
Time of trainings is not convenient	Top-3	N/A

Lack of access to substitute teachers/caregivers to attend training	N/A	Top-3
N	286	791

Research Question 5: How can the Texas Workforce Commission, given its resources and mandate, best improve and support worker recruitment, training, and retention?

Key Themes

1. Simplify access to TWC programs and reduce administrative burdens
Directors across settings value TWC's funding, training, and support resources/initiatives but find the agency difficult to navigate due to unclear requirements, frequent policy changes, and complex application processes. Simplifying reimbursement systems, streamlining Texas Rising Star documentation, and improving communication—especially for home-based and rural child care programs—would enhance program effectiveness and reduce strain on staff.

2. Expand and tailor training opportunities to meet a range of needs
Participants called for more flexible, affordable, and relevant professional development offerings, including online options and content that reflects challenges in supporting children with varying and complex needs such as autism, ADHD, and behavioral supports. Rural and Spanish-speaking child care programs emphasized the need for accessible CPR/first aid certification and more CDA training in Spanish, respectively.

3. Strengthen CCS and Texas Rising Star to better support program stability and workforce retention
While CCS and Texas Rising Star were widely viewed as essential, directors noted limitations tied to long waitlists, unreliable technology systems, and under-resourced mentoring supports. Suggested improvements include raising CCS payment rates for higher-quality programs[17], reducing sibling approval delays, and training Texas Rising Star mentors with hands-on experience in the child care setting.

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[17] TWC sets the CCS base payment rates (prior to any enhanced rates for Texas Rising Star certification) at the 75th percentile of the most recent Market Rate Survey. The 75th percentile is the federal benchmark for states, which means that TWC's payment rates match or exceed the market price charged by 75% of providers. As noted by the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center , a total of 20 states meet this federal benchmark.

Focus Group Findings

Directors across all settings recognized the Texas Workforce Commission as a critical partner in maintaining and strengthening the child care workforce. Funding for retention bonuses, professional development, and program materials was widely appreciated but often viewed as difficult to access or subject to unclear or changing requirements. Directors consistently called for more flexible, affordable, and relevant training opportunities, particularly those that reflect the realities of working in varied geographic and programmatic contexts. Many noted the value of initiatives like the Early Childhood Professional Development Scholarship program and Texas Rising Star mentorship but emphasized the need for greater consistency, tailored supports, and reduced administrative burden.

Child Care Services (CCS) was praised as an essential program that supports both family access and program enrollment, but directors across all groups expressed concern over systemic barriers—such as confusing application portals, internet-dependent attendance systems, and long approval delays.

> *"I wish they could get through their [CCS] waitlist quicker...there's so many waiting...the parents need to get their children in and can't afford private pay."*

Rural Licensed Centers

Participants from rural programs emphasized the importance of targeted funding for staff retention, including grants to support regular bonuses. While TWC's business coaching program was acknowledged as valuable, directors noted budgeting support could be more effective if tailored to the rural context and delivered by coaches with direct rural child care experience. The Texas Rising Star mentorship program was also noted as beneficial, and suggestions for improving the program included reducing mentor turnover and ensuring that mentoring materials are aligned with program needs.

Professional development was a major area of concern. Directors called for more remote training options to address the challenges of travel and staffing coverage, especially for CPR and first aid certification. They also recommended expanding training content beyond repetitive offerings to include topics such as autism and ADHD. The Early Childhood Professional Development Scholarship program (currently distributed by TXAEYC through their T.E.A.C.H. program) was widely praised, particularly its support for CDA attainment and renewal.

While TECPDS was recognized as a useful credential tracking tool, some directors noted usability issues—especially among older staff. Some directors highlighted the usefulness of Texas A&M AgriLife for professional development training.

CCS was viewed as a vital resource, though its impact was limited by accessibility issues, including an 18-month waitlist and unreliable internet access required for KinderConnect. Directors urged TWC to

improve the application process and consider increasing CCS payment rates for higher-rated Texas Rising Star programs[18].

Urban Licensed Centers

Urban directors emphasized the importance of clearer guidance for grant and supply reimbursements, citing confusion around changing procedures and purchasing portals. They also identified an unmet need for more CDA training offerings in Spanish, reflecting the linguistic variation of the workforce in metropolitan areas like Houston.

Many urban directors felt that TECPDS was underutilized, especially among non-Texas Rising Star programs, and called for increased outreach to raise awareness of its benefits as a centralized record-keeping system.

Regarding CCS, urban child care programs strongly supported the program but recommended several policy changes to better serve families and stabilize enrollment. These included reducing approval delays for siblings, backdating payments to the child's start date with proof of attendance, and maintaining consistent funding streams.

Home-Based Programs

Directors of home-based programs focused on the unique administrative and operational challenges they face, particularly in complying with Texas Rising Star requirements. They requested a streamlined approach to Texas Rising Star paperwork and communication, highlighting that frequent policy updates often require multiple changes to parent handbooks within a single week. Some Texas Rising Star requirements—such as weekly family communications and milestone updates—were seen as overly burdensome given their limited staffing.

Mentor support was valued, especially when mentors provided timely updates on funding or training opportunities. However, directors recommended more rigorous training for mentors, including classroom experience and policy stability, to prevent burnout and confusion.

Home-based directors also flagged disorganized communications regarding resources and training and echoed broader concerns about the accessibility and relevance of professional development opportunities.

In terms of CCS, they welcomed recent improvements such as earlier payments and simplified attendance reporting. They appreciated the high-quality materials sometimes received through their

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[18]TWC sets the CCS base payment rates (prior to any enhanced rates for Texas Rising Star certification) at the 75th percentile of the most recent Market Rate Survey. The 75th percentile is the federal benchmark for states, which means that TWC's payment rates match or exceed the market price charged by 75% of providers. As noted by the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center , a total of 20 states meet this federal benchmark.

local LWDB but suggested further revisions to attendance policies to remove duplicative reporting requirements—such as unnecessary notes for extended absences.

Appendix D: Overview of Local Retention Supports

Table 11 details which Local Workforce Development Boards used Child Care Quality funding to offer wage supplements as a retention support during Board Contract Year 2024 (10/1/23 – 9/30/24) and Board Contract Year 2025 (10/1/24 – 9/30/25).

Table 11: Local Workforce Development Board Retention Supports, 2024

LWDB	Description
Alamo	The Board gave incentives to child care program staff based on the Texas Rising Star star-level.
Capital Area	The Board awarded wage supplements to professionals for length of service and who have a certification or higher education in early-childhood-related studies. The Board used additional funding to award to staff who did not have a degree.
North Central	The Board provided two incentives to child care program staff that have been employed for 6 months or longer at their current child care facility and met all other requirements.
Rural Capital	The Board awarded wage supplements to child care program staff for length of services and possession of a certification or higher education in early-childhood-related studies. The Board used additional funding to award to staff who do not have a degree.
South Plains	The Board provided each Texas Rising Star program with a predetermined amount of reimbursement for incentives paid to child care program staff upon completion of initial Texas Rising Star certification. The reimbursement was dependent on licensing capacity and star level obtained.
Tarrant	The Board distributed wage supplements for child care program staff based on completion of: 1. obtainment of Three- and Four-Star Texas Rising Star certification for newly certified programs, star level increases, recertification star level increases, and those that maintain Four-Star after assessment; 2. participation in CLASS® observation assessments for program year; 3. retention of employment at a Texas Rising Star facility as evidenced through the use of their completed TECPDS registry account; and/or 4. career lattice movement through the obtainment of a CDA, apprenticeship certificate, or educational degree during the FY24 program year.

Texoma	The Board offered Child Development Scholarship students an incentive for staying at the same employer at 3 months and 6 months after obtaining a credential or certificate in the Child Development program at a local community college.
West Central	The Board provided Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff a retention bonus for tenured staff that have been employed since the last Board-supported retention bonus. The amount was based on multiple factors, including tenure, education level, and Texas Rising Star star-level.

Table 12: Local Workforce Development Board Retention Supports, 2025

LWDB	Description
Alamo	The Board provided three incentives to child care program staff based on length of service, child care capacity and the Texas Rising Star star-level achieved.
Borderplex	The Board provided a pilot incentive to child care program staff ($2.00/day wage increase up to 12 weeks).
Brazos Valley	The Board provided three incentives to child care program staff based on length of service, new hire/recruitment, and higher education completion.
Capital Area	The Board provided two incentives to child care program staff based on length of service and who have a certification or higher education in early-childhood-related studies and those working with an underserved population (i.e., child care desert, non-traditional hours).
Central Texas	The Board provided an incentive to Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff based on length of service.
Coastal Bend	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on length of service.
Deep East	The Board provided two incentives to child care program staff based on length of service.
East Texas	The Board provided an incentive to Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff based on length of service.
Golden Crescent	The Board provided an incentive to Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff based on length of service.

Gulf Coast	The Board provided an incentive to Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff based on length of service and other work requirements.
Lower Rio Grande	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on employment status (full-time or part-time).
Middle Rio Grande	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on Texas Rising Star star-level achieved.
North Central	The Board provided two incentives to child care program staff based on length of service and for having Workforce Registry accounts.
Northeast Texas	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on length of service and education level.
Panhandle	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on various work requirements and length of service ($2.00/hour up to $2,000).
Permian Basin	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on length of service.
Rural Capital	The Board provided three incentives to child care program staff based on length of services and possession of a certification or higher education in early-childhood-related studies, strictly length of service, and new hire/recruitment.
South Texas	The Board provided an incentive to Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff based on Texas Rising Star star-level achieved.
Tarrant	The Board provided an incentive to child care program staff based on Texas Rising Star star-level achieved, higher education in early-childhood-related studies, and other work requirements.
West Central	The Board provided an incentive to Texas Rising Star-certified child care program staff based on Texas Rising Star star-level achieved and other work requirements.

Appendix E: Director Survey

Section 1: Child Care Facility Information

This section asks general questions about the **child care facility** that you oversee. Please answer these questions based on what is true as of **today**.

Throughout this survey, we use the term "director" to include the center director or program director of a center-based child care facility and the director, owner, or operator of a home- based child care facility.

Section 1.1 – General Facility Information

Question 1.1A

Based on Texas child care licensing data, our records indicate that you are the director at [Facility Name]. Is this correct?

- o   Yes, I am the director at this facility.
- o   No, I am not the director at this facility OR I am <u>not</u> the director anymore.
- o   This facility is permanently closed. This will exit the survey.

Question 1.1B

What is the name of the current director? If you do not know or prefer not to disclose, please type "Unsure."

First Name:

 Last Name:

Question 1.1C

What is the email address for the current director? If you do not know or prefer not to disclose, please type "Unsure."

Question 1.1D

What is the phone number for the current director? If you do not know or prefer not to disclose, please type "Unsure."

Question 1.1E

What is your name?

First Name:

Last Name:

Question 1.2

Is your facility nationally accredited? Please select all that apply.

- o   No
- o   NAEYC - National Association for the Education of Young Children
- o   NAFCC - National Association for Family Child Care
- o   NECPA - National Early Childhood Program Accreditation
- o   NAC - National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs
- o   COA - Council on Accreditation
- o   Cognia Accreditation
- o   Montessori Accreditation (AMS or AMI)
- o   ACSI - Association of Christian Schools International Accreditation
- o   MSA - Middle States Association
- o   Something else:

Question 1.3A

The list below contains special types of child care facilities. Please select whether your facility is any of the following. Please select all that apply.

- o   My program is a Head Start or Early Head Start program
- o   My program is a Public Pre-K program
- o   My program only provides drop-in care (i.e., on an as-needed basis without fixed schedules)
- o   My program only provides summer or school vacation care (e.g., summer camp, spring break camps, etc.)
- o   None of these are true for my program

Question 1.3B

Which of the following describes the times that your facility offers child care? Please select all that apply.

- o   We offer full-day care on weekdays
- o   We offer part-day care on weekdays
- o   We offer before and/or after school care on weekdays
- o   We offer care on weekends
- o   We offer care overnight
- o   We offer care in the evening (after 7PM)

Question 1.3C

Which of the following describes the number of weekdays that children can enroll in care at your facility? Please select all that apply.

- o Children enroll in 5 day per week care
- o Children enroll in 4 day per week care
- o Children enroll in 3 day per week care
- o Children enroll in 2 day per week care
- o Something else, please describe:

Question 1.3D

Why does your facility not participate in Child Care Services (CCS) scholarships? Please select all reasons that apply.

- o We are not eligible to participate in CCS scholarships due to our current licensing status
- o We choose not to participate because CCS payment rates do not cover the full cost of care
- o We do not want to achieve Texas Rising Star certification
- o We have another reason. Specify:
- o Incorrect database information – we do accept CCS

Question 1.3E

If you selected "We do not want to achieve Texas Rising Star certification", please indicate why. (Mark all that apply)

- o I am unfamiliar with Texas Rising Star and its requirements
- o It is too costly to participate in Texas Rising Star
- o It takes too much time to participate in Texas Rising Star
- o Other reason for not participating in Texas Rising Star:

Question 1.4

How many teachers/caregivers work at your facility as of today, **NOT** including yourself?

Please include both full- and part-time staff. Also, include **only** teachers/caregivers who work directly with children, such as lead teachers/caregivers, assistant teachers/caregivers,

and aides/floater teachers/caregivers. Do not include bus drivers, cooks, or other staff who do not routinely work directly with children in the classroom.

Question 1.5

We are interested in the types of staff at [FACILITY NAME] who work directly with children in the classroom, besides yourself. Please tell us the number, if any, of staff at your facility in each of the following roles, including both full-time and part-time staff.

Lead teacher/caregiver – Staff responsible for a designated classroom or group of children. Staff may or may not supervise other staff members.

Assistant teacher/caregiver – Staff who support the lead teacher/caregiver for a designated classroom or group of children.

Floater/rotating assistant – Staff not responsible for one designated classroom or group of children, but provides support to lead or assistant teacher/caregiver. Staff may offer support in a variety of capacities as needed.

Section 1.2 – Benefits and Pay

In this section, we ask about the benefits (e.g., health insurance and paid sick leave) and non- wage compensation (e.g., signing bonuses) available to you and staff who work directly with children at your facility.

Question 1.6

Which of the following benefits do **you** have access to as a result of your job as a child care director? Please select all that apply.

- o Health insurance
- o Life insurance
- o Dental insurance
- o Vision insurance
- o Flexible Spending Account (FSA)
- o Health Savings Account (HSA)
- o Paid sick leave
- o Paid parental leave
- o Paid vacation/holidays
- o Retirement account (401k, etc.)
- o Discounted or free child care slots
- o Complimentary meals
- o Other, please specify:
- o I do not have access to any of these benefits

Question 1.7

Which of the following benefits do **teachers/caregivers** have access to? Please select all that apply.

	Full-Time	Part-Time
Health insurance	Select	Select
Life insurance	Select	Select
Dental insurance	Select	Select
Vision insurance	Select	Select
Flexible Spending Account (FSA)	Select	Select
Health Savings Account (HSA)	Select	Select
Paid sick leave	Select	Select
Paid parental leave	Select	Select
Paid vacation/holidays	Select	Select
Retirement account (401k, etc.)	Select	Select
Discounted or free child care slots	Select	Select
Complimentary meals	Select	Select
Other, please specify:	Select	Select
Teachers do not have access to any of these benefits	Select	Select

Question 1.8A

Does your facility currently offer a one-time signing bonus to newly-hired teachers/caregivers?

- o Yes
- o No
- o No, but we have offered one-time signing bonuses within the past year
- o Not applicable – we are not currently hiring

Question 1.8B

What is the typical amount of the one-time signing bonus offered to newly hired teachers/caregivers? Submit only numbers and **do not include** a dollar sign.

Question 1.8C

What was the typical amount of the one-time signing bonus you offered to newly hired teachers/caregivers within the past year? Submit only numbers and **do not include** a dollar sign.

Question 1.9A

Does your facility currently offer a longevity or retention bonus to teachers/caregivers?

- o Yes
- o No
- o No, but we have offered longevity or retention bonuses within the past year
- o Not applicable – I have no other staff

Question 1.9B

How much is the longevity or retention bonus for teachers/caregivers? Submit only numbers and **do not include** a dollar sign.

Question 1.9C

How long do teachers/caregivers have to work to receive this longevity or retention bonus?

Question 1.9D

How much was the longevity or retention bonus for teachers/caregivers offered within the past year?

Question 1.9E

How long did teachers/caregivers have to work to receive this longevity or retention bonus?

Question 1.10A

Does your facility regularly offer salary raises to teachers/caregivers?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Not applicable – I have no other staff

Question 1.10B

How do teachers/caregivers earn raises? Select all that apply.

- o   Raises are given automatically every year
- o   Meeting performance goals
- o   Earning new credentials (e.g., CDA, Associate's, Bachelor's)
- o   Other:

Question 1.10C

Does your facility receive funding support beyond tuition revenue and government funding? Select all that apply.

- o   Yes, we receive philanthropic funding
- o   Yes, we receive funding from private businesses
- o   No, we do not receive funding from other sources
- o   Yes, other:
- o   Prefer not to answer

Section 1.3 – Professional Development

What type of facility is [Facility Name]?

- o   Center
- o   Child Care Home

Section 1.3A – Professional Development Section A (Centers)

We would like to learn about the opportunities for professional development that are available in your area, learn which resources you prefer to use, and what additional resources could benefit you and teachers/caregivers at your facility.

Question 1.11

To the best of your knowledge, about how many teachers/caregivers (not including yourself) at your facility have Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) Workforce Registry accounts?

- o   The majority of staff members have accounts
- o   Less than a majority of staff members have accounts
- o   Staff members do not have accounts
- o   Unsure of staff utilization

Question 1.12

To the best of your knowledge, about how many teachers/caregivers (not including yourself) at your facility have Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage accounts?

- o The majority of staff members have accounts
- o Less than a majority staff members have accounts
- o Staff members do not have accounts
- o Unsure of staff utilization

Question 1.13A

Does your facility support teachers/caregivers to obtain credential or higher education scholarships, specifically T.E.A.C.H. scholarships administered by Texas AEYC?

- o Yes, we have supported one or more teachers/caregivers through this program
- o Yes, we offer this, but no teachers/caregivers have requested this benefit
- o No

Question 1.13B

Why doesn't your facility support staff participation in T.E.A.C.H. scholarships? Select all that apply.

- o Unaware of the program
- o Aware of the program, but don't know how to participate
- o Unclear benefit to the facility
- o Too expensive
- o Too time consuming
- o Participate in other credential or higher-education scholarship programs
- o Other: _

Question 1.14

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:

Overall, teachers/caregivers at my facility can access high-quality professional development opportunities to continue developing their skills as an early childhood educator.

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

Question 1.15

Which of the following best describes **<u>the primary way</u>** that teachers/caregivers at your facility earn their annual professional development hours?

- o Trainings hosted by the child care facility (e.g., on a day that the children are not there or after hours)
- o On their own (e.g., selecting online or in-person trainings and attending on a day off or after hours)

Question 1.16

Does your facility pay teachers/caregivers for the time they spend earning professional development (i.e., count the training time as work hours)? Please select the option that is **most true** for your facility.

- o We are <u>unable</u> to pay teachers/caregivers OR we do <u>not pay</u> teachers/caregivers for the time they spend obtaining any of their professional development hours
- o We pay teachers/caregivers for <u>some, but not all</u> of the time they spend obtaining their required professional development hours
- o We pay teachers/caregivers for <u>all</u> of the time they spend obtaining their required professional development hours **but do not** pay teachers/caregivers for any <u>additional</u> professional development hours
- o We pay teachers/caregivers for <u>all</u> of the time they spend obtaining their required professional development **and** <u>additional</u> hours
- o Something else, please describe:

Question 1.17A

What do you think are the **top 3** most desired/needed professional development topics for your teachers/caregivers?

- o Child growth and development
- o Supporting children with special needs
- o Addressing challenging behaviors
- o Responsive interactions and guidance
- o Learning environments, planning framework, curriculum, and standards
- o Content pedagogy and instructional support (literacy, math, etc.)
- o Supporting student skill development
- o Observation and assessment
- o Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- o Supporting Dual/Multiple Language Learners
- o Family and community relationships
- o Health, safety, and nutrition
- o Professionalism and ethics
- o Staff mental health and wellbeing
- o Business operations (administration, HR, recruitment and marketing, etc.)

Question 1.17B

What are the **top 3** barriers that prevent teachers/caregivers at your facility from accessing professional development on topics that would most benefit them?

- o Cost
- o Time of trainings is not convenient. Convenient times would be:
- o Availability of trainers
- o Availability of technology resources to access online training
- o Lack of administrator support
- o Lack of access to substitute teachers/caregivers to attend training
- o Location of trainings.
- o Online training is not available
- o Level of training content does not match experience level
- o Personal barriers, such as lack of child care for own children, lack of transportation, etc.
- o Trainings not available in primary language of staff. Languages we need:
- o Something else, please describe:

Section 1.3B – Professional Development Section B (Child-Care Homes)

We would like to learn about the opportunities for professional development that are available in your area, learn which resources you prefer to use, and learn what additional resources could benefit you.

Question 1.17A

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:

Overall, I can access high-quality professional development opportunities to continue developing my skills as an early childhood educator.

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

Question 1.17B

What do you think are the **top 3** most desired/needed professional development topics for you?

- o   Child growth and development
- o   Supporting children with special needs
- o   Addressing challenging behaviors
- o   Responsive interactions and guidance
- o   Learning environments, planning framework, curriculum, and standards
- o   Content pedagogy and instructional support (literacy, math, etc.)
- o   Supporting student skill development
- o   Observation and assessment
- o   Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- o   Supporting Dual/Multiple Language Learners
- o   Family and community relationships
- o   Health, safety, and nutrition
- o   Professionalism and ethics
- o   Staff mental health and wellbeing
- o   Business operations (administration, HR, recruitment and marketing, etc.)

Question 1.17C

What are the **top 3** barriers that prevent you from accessing professional development on topics that would most benefit you?

- o   Cost
- o   Time of trainings is not convenient. Convenient times would be:
- o   Availability of trainers
- o   Availability of technology recourses to access online training
- o   Lack of administrator support
- o   Lack of access to substitute teachers/caregivers to attend training
- o   Location of trainings.
- o   Online training is not available
- o   Level of training content does not match experience level
- o   Trainings not available in primary language of staff. Languages we need:
- o   Personal barriers, such as lack of child care for own children, lack of transportation, etc.
- o   Something else, please describe: _

Section 1.3C – Professional Development Section C (Centers and Homes)

Question 1.18A

Please mark how familiar you are with the following tools to search for and schedule professional development opportunities.

	I have never heard of this resource	I have heard of this resource, but I have never used it	I have heard of this resource, but I cannot access it	I have used this resource
AgriLife Extension Courses	Select	Select	Select	Select
Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage	Select	Select	Select	Select
Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Online	Select	Select	Select	Select
Regional Education Service Centers	Select	Select	Select	Select
TECPDS Trainer Registry	Select	Select	Select	Select
Texas Education Agency (TEA) Monthly Webinars	Select	Select	Select	Select
Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) / Local Workforce Solutions (Boards)	Select	Select	Select	Select

Question 1.18B

What other types of professional development opportunities do you wish you could access? Please include both your desired topic(s) and training format(s).

Section 1.4 – Workforce Pay & Turnover

We would like to learn about your experiences and opinions on workforce topics, such as monetary compensation and hiring, in the child care industry.

Question 1.19

What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing your operation? Select one answer.

- o   Unskilled or inexperienced staff
- o   Staff retention
- o   Child enrollment
- o   Obtaining non-tuition funding
- o   Other:

Question 1.20

When you need to hire additional teachers/caregivers, which of the following is the primary challenge you face in the current market? Select one answer.

- o   People do not want to work in child care
- o   Wages are too low to attract qualified staff
- o   We do not receive applications from qualified candidates
- o   Something else, please describe:
- o   We do not face any major challenges to hiring
- o   Not applicable; we do not need to hire additional teachers/caregivers

Question 1.21

What are the top 3 child care workforce changes that would most help to reduce turnover of high-quality teachers/caregivers?

- o   Increasing pay to ensure teachers/caregivers make a living wage
- o   Offering more benefits, such as health insurance
- o   Offering more paid time off (i.e., paid vacation or sick days)
- o   Decreasing the staff to child ratio (i.e., more teachers/caregivers)
- o   Increasing the amount of time teachers/caregivers have for planning
- o   Increasing the number of breaks a teacher/caregiver can take during the day
- o   Increasing opportunities for free or low-cost continuing education
- o   Providing more career advancement opportunities
- o   Other:

Section 2: Director Information

In this section, we ask you to provide information about yourself as the facility director.

Section 2.1 – Director Demographic Characteristics

Question 2.1

Do you consider yourself to be one or more of the following? Select all that apply.

- o American Indian or Alaska Native
- o Asian
- o Black or African American
- o Hispanic or Latino
- o Middle Eastern or North African
- o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- o White
- o Another race (please specify):
- o Prefer not to say

Section 2.2 – Director Education & Experience

Question 2.3

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- o Less than a high school diploma or equivalent
- o High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- o Some college, but no degree
- o Specialized Trade Certification or Vocational Degree, such as a Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential
- o Associate degree
- o Bachelor's degree
- o Master's degree
- o Doctoral degree

Question 2.4

Is your degree in child development, early childhood education, or a related field?

- o No
- o Yes

Question 2.5

We want to learn about the additional early childhood education credentials you may have. Please select all of the credentials, certificates, or certifications you have, if any.

- o I do not have additional early childhood education credentials
- o Child and Youth Care (CYC) Certification
- o Child Care Director's Credential
- o Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC)
- o Child Care Professional (CCP)
- o Child Development Associate (CDA)
- o CIRCLE Foundation Training – I&T
- o CIRCLE Foundation Training – Pre-K D EC Technical Certificate
- o Family Life Educator Certification (CFLE)
- o Infant-Toddler Specialist (Texas ITSN) Certification
- o Montessori Credential
- o Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Certification
- o State Teacher Certification
- o First3Years Infant Mental Health Endorsement
- o Texas Teaching Certification, please list subject area:
- o Something else, please describe:

Question 2.6

What language(s) do you use to communicate with family members at your facility? Select all that apply.

- o English
- o Spanish
- o Vietnamese
- o Chinese (Mandarin)
- o Chinese (Cantonese)
- o Arabic
- o Korean
- o Tagalog
- o French, Haitian, or Cajun
- o Another language:

Question 2.7

How long have you worked at [FACILITY NAME] as the director?

Question 2.8

How many total years of early childhood education / child care experience do you have?

Section 2.3 – Director Compensation and Work Hours

Question 2.9

In a typical week, approximately how many hours do you work?

Question 2.10

Are you paid an hourly wage or paid an annual salary?

- o Hourly Wage
- o Annual Salary

Question 2.11

What is your hourly wage?

Question 2.12

What is your annual salary?

Section 2.4 – Director Online Professional Development Accounts

Question 2.13A

Do you have a Texas Workforce Registry Account with Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) in which you are listed as director and teachers/caregivers can link their account to your facility?

- o Yes
- o No
- o I have a Texas Workforce Registry Account, but I am not the listed Center Director account for the facility
- o I am not sure

Question 2.13B

Why do you not have a TECPDS Workforce Registry Account? Select all that apply.

- o Unaware of this resource
- o Don't know how to make an account
- o Unclear on the benefits of having an account
- o Too time-consuming to create an account
- o Other:

Question 2.14A

Do you have a Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage account?

- o Yes
- o No
- o I am not sure

Question 2.14B

Why do you not have a Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage account? Select all that apply.

- o Unaware of this resource
- o Don't know how to make an account
- o Unclear on the benefits of having an account
- o Too time-consuming to create an account
- o Other:

Section 3: Teacher/Caregiver Information

As required by law, this section will ask you to provide information on each **individual teacher/caregiver** (staff who work directly with children in a classroom) at your facility to the best of your ability.

Section 3.1 – Teacher/Caregiver Roles

Question 3.0

Enter the initials or names for each teacher/caregiver. This is only to help you track the information you will enter across multiple questions. The information will only be stored temporarily and will not be used to identify any individual

Question 3.1

What best describes this teacher's role at your facility?

Lead teacher/caregiver: Staff responsible for a designated classroom or group of children.

Assistant teacher/caregiver: Staff who support the lead teacher/caregiver for a designated classroom or group of children.

Floater/rotating assistant: Staff not responsible for one designated classroom or group of children and may offer support in a variety of capacities.

Question 3.2

What age of children does this teacher/caregiver primarily work with?

- o Infants (age birth – 17 months)
- o Toddlers (age 18 months – 35 months)
- o Preschool (age 3 years – 4 years)
- o School age (age 5 years and older)

Section 3.2 – Teacher/Caregiver Demographic Characteristics

Question 3.3

As far as you know, does this teacher/caregiver consider themself to be any of the following? Select all that apply.

- o American Indian or Alaska Native
- o Asian
- o Black or African American
- o Hispanic or Latino
- o Middle Eastern or North African
- o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- o White
- o Another race (please specify):
- o Prefer not to say

Question 3.5

What language(s) does this teacher/caregiver use to communicate with **children** at your facility? Select all that apply.

- o English
- o Spanish
- o Vietnamese
- o Chinese (Mandarin)
- o Chinese (Cantonese)
- o Arabic
- o Korean
- o Tagalog
- o French, Haitian, or Cajun
- o Another language:

Section 3.3 – Teacher/Caregiver Compensation

How would you like to report teacher compensation?

- o Report hourly wages
- o Report annual earnings
- o Report a mix of hourly wages and annual earnings

Question 3.6

Is this teacher/caregiver paid based on an hourly wage or annual salary?

Question 3.7

What is this teacher's hourly wage?

Question 3.8

What is this teacher's annual salary?

Question 3.9

How many hours a week does this teacher/caregiver work, on average?

Section 3.4 – Teacher/Caregiver Education & Experience

Question 3.10

What is the highest level of education that this teacher/caregiver has completed?

- o Less than a high school diploma or equivalent

- High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Some college, but no degree
- Specialized Trade Certification or Vocational Degree, such as a Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

Question 3.11

Is this teacher/caregiver currently enrolled in a degree or certification program?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Question 3.12

Please select all of the credentials, certificates, or certifications this teacher/caregiver has, if any.

- Child and Youth Care (CYC) Certification
- Child Care Director's Credential
- Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC)
- Child Care Professional (CCP)
- Child Development Associate (CDA)
- CIRCLE Foundation Training – I&T
- CIRCLE Foundation Training – Pre-K D EC Technical Certificate
- Family Life Educator Certification (CFLE)
- Infant-Toddler Specialist (Texas ITSN) Certification
- Montessori Credential
- Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Certification
- State Teacher Certification
- First3Years Infant Mental Health Endorsement
- Texas Teaching Certification