

The Early Care and Education Workforce of Contra Costa County

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Introduction

Early care and education (ECE) programs are central to a thriving community: they support the well-being of children as well as their families. In Contra Costa County, approximately 260 child care centers serve children from birth through age five, along with 765 family child care providers operating in their own homes. These nurturing and vibrant learning environments reflect the ECE workforce, a highly skilled yet undervalued professional group of nearly 4,000 individuals.¹

Building on the [California Early Care and Education Workforce Study](#), this report provides a snapshot of the state of the licensed ECE workforce in Contra Costa County. **Chapter 1** offers a profile of its core members: family child care providers and center-based educators (directors, teachers, and assistants).² **Chapter 2** describes the state of educator well-being, and **Chapter 3** explores stability for center- and home-based programs and for professionals in the field.

About the Study

The Contra Costa County Workforce Study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) in Spring and Summer 2023. The study sample includes 529 educators across three groups: 181 family child care (FCC) providers, 101 center directors, and 247 center teachers and assistants. The FCC sample includes 81 “large” and 100 “small” FCC providers—a distinction in licensure that corresponds to the maximum group size (up to eight children for a small license and up to 14 for a large license). The specific title of center directors varied, with about one third of respondents working in another administrator position

¹ We estimate that between 2,200 and 2,500 teachers and assistants work in child care centers throughout Contra Costa County, along with 500 to 1,000 directors and administrators. We further estimate that approximately 1,000 family child care providers and paid assistants are working in the county. Taken together, this sample provides an upper bound of approximately 4,000 individuals in the birth-to-five workforce.

² Transitional kindergarten (TK) is a growing offering for four-year-olds in California’s public schools. Its workforce, however, was not included in the scope of the Contra Costa County study. For preliminary findings on this burgeoning new arm of the ECE workforce, refer to CSCCE’s statewide report (Montoya et al., 2022b).

such as site supervisor or teacher-director. In our teaching staff sample, we reached 185 lead teachers and 56 assistants.

The survey took place online in English and Spanish. We recruited study participants through email and/or text message invitations to all program leaders (center directors and FCC providers) through contact information furnished by CocoKids, the state-funded resource and referral agency for child care in the county. First 5 Contra Costa, CocoKids, the Contra Costa County Office of Education, and many partner organizations conducted additional waves of outreach, including communication via the local members of the California Early Care & Education Workforce Registry.

All program leader data is weighted by county region (see **Figure 1.1**). Center directors are also weighted by Head Start and Title 5 contract status, and FCC providers are weighted by small or large program licensure.³ These adjustments allow us to align our sample with the full population of sites in the county. We used CocoKids' list of licensed and active programs in the county to calculate weights, excluding centers that serve school-age children only.

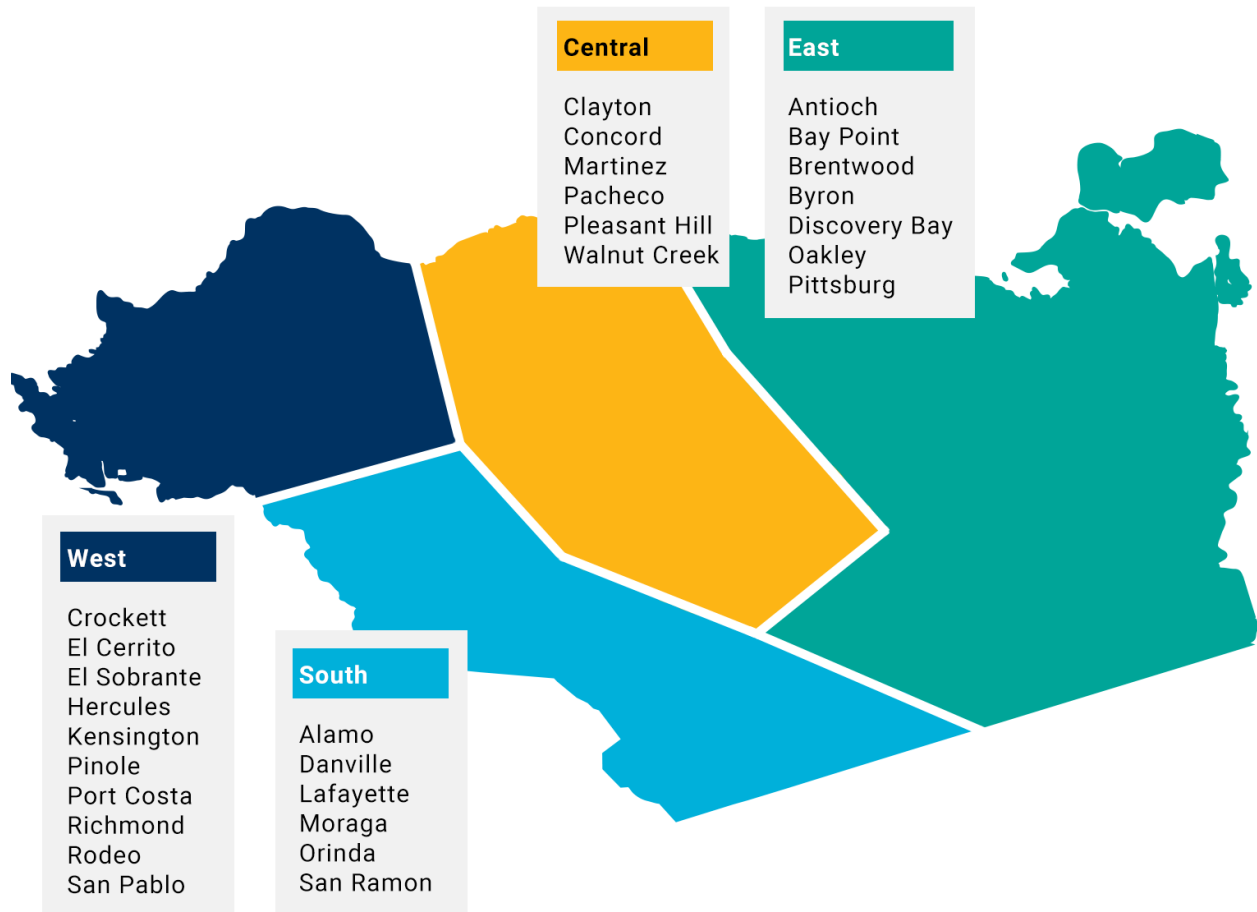
In some sections of the report, we compare responses from Contra Costa County with responses from our statewide sample. Our statewide sample participated in the same survey in 2023 as part of the ongoing California Early Care and Education Workforce Study begun in 2020.⁴

³ Title 5 funding includes the California State Preschool Program and the General Child Care and Development (CCTR) program.

⁴ To read about our ongoing statewide study, please visit <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/projects/california-early-care-and-education-workforce-study/>.

Figure 1.1. County Regions of Analysis

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023



Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

In this report, we present findings by **provider type**: FCC provider, center director, and center teacher and assistant. We also disaggregate findings for a closer look, using dimensions such as **FCC size** (small or large license), **center funding type** (Head Start and Title 5, versus all other centers), educator **race and ethnicity** (self-reported), and educator **tenure** (years of experience in early care and education).

Core Findings

County Workforce Profile

Educator Characteristics

- The ECE workforce is predominantly women of color, and nearly one half of center teachers and assistants are Latina.⁵ Four in ten FCC providers and center teachers and assistants were born outside the United States.
- Approximately 27 percent of FCC providers and 38 percent of center teachers and assistants hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Approximately 66 percent of center directors have 20 or more years of experience, along with 42 percent of FCC providers and 23 percent of center teachers and assistants.

Compensation

- FCC provider earnings in Contra Costa County fell in the range of \$30,000 to \$35,900 per year, compared to the statewide range of \$36,000 to \$45,000.
- Center directors in Contra Costa County earned approximately \$64,500 annually, compared to the statewide median salary of \$63,800.
- Center teachers in our county sample had self-reported hourly wages similar to our statewide sample (\$24.80 in Contra Costa County, \$25.00 statewide), and self-reported assistant teacher wages were also similar (\$20.00 per hour in Contra Costa County, \$19.70 statewide). Wages were somewhat higher in Head Start and Title 5 programs.
- Around three quarters of centers offered health insurance to full-time teachers, and two thirds of centers offered retirement benefits. However, there are stark differences by program funding: virtually all Head Start and Title 5 centers offered both benefits.

⁵ Because the ECE workforce is overwhelmingly composed of individuals who identify as women, we use the gender-specific term “Latina” to describe early educators who identify as part of the Latin American diaspora. However, we know that data collection has not always accounted for gender diversity beyond a male/female binary. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of early educators who identify as men, nonbinary, or another gender identity and recognize that the gendered oppression of women in the workforce is related to the gender-based oppression of nonbinary, trans, and genderqueer educators.

- FCC providers had high rates of insurance coverage (97 percent in Contra Costa County), but only one third of home-based providers had any retirement savings.

Staffing Patterns

- Compared to California as a whole, small FCC providers in Contra Costa were somewhat more likely to be working alone (71 percent, compared to 63 percent statewide). Large FCC providers were somewhat more likely to have unpaid assistants only (22 percent, compared to 10 percent statewide).
- Between January 2021 and Spring 2023, 95 percent of centers had one or more positions turn over, with an average of 5.6 positions per site.

Workforce Well-Being

Professional Well-Being

- While most educators are confident they are making a difference and supporting children to grow and develop, only about one half report frequently feeling respected for the work they do or receiving praise from families.
- The most commonly selected teaching challenge was “working with children with challenging behaviors,” though FCC providers were much less likely than center teachers and assistants to select this option (32 percent, compared to 64 percent).

Economic Well-Being

- When examining economic concerns, Black center-based educators were most likely to worry about affording housing. Among FCC providers, Asian respondents were most likely to share this worry.
- Center teachers and assistants had the lowest food security (56 percent). They were also most likely to fall short on food: 9 percent of center-based teaching staff sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.
- While few center directors used public assistance, 47 percent of FCC providers and 42 percent of center teachers and assistants used programs

like Medi-Cal or food stamps. FCC providers with less than five years of experience were particularly likely to use public assistance (70 percent).

Physical and Mental Well-Being

- Close to one half of FCC providers, center teachers, and center assistants reported being “moderately concerned” about infection to exposure and injury on the job. Additionally, 57 percent of FCC providers identified “working longer hours to clean and sanitize” as a concern.
- About one third of educators experienced at least one health condition with chronic pain (for instance, arthritis or knee/hip pain). The figure rose to one half of educators with more than 15 years of experience (excluding center directors).
- One half of FCC providers and two thirds of center teachers and assistants reported high levels of perceived stress. White educators were least likely to report high levels of stress.

Stability of the Field

Program Stability

- Around one half of program leaders reported that they continue to experience reduced income from families, typically because of lower enrollment levels post-pandemic.
- Center directors were more likely than FCC providers to report decreased enrollment of four-year-old children as a result of TK expansion (54 percent, compared to 37 percent). Some FCC providers also began to enroll or increased enrollment of infants and toddlers.

Job Stability

- About one half of all FCC providers went without paying themselves at some point between January 2021 and our survey in Spring 2023. Black educators were most likely to forego payment, especially among large FCC providers (73 percent).

- A few center-based educators experienced job level “advancement” between 2021 and 2023: for instance, four percent of directors in 2023 were teachers in 2021, and 14 percent of teachers in 2023 were assistants in 2021.

Job Plans

- A majority of FCC providers intend to continue to provide family child care services (62 percent of small FCC providers and 73 percent of large FCC providers).
- Among small FCC providers, the most likely to plan to leave the field were Black educators (30 percent), by race and ethnicity; providers who held an associate degree (20 percent), by education; and providers with 5 to 15 years of experience (20 percent), by tenure. Few large FCC providers expressed interest in leaving the field.
- More than six in ten center teachers and assistants expressed interest in higher educational attainment, along with one half of FCC providers. Interest was somewhat higher among Head Start and Title 5 directors and lead teachers. Educators with some college credit or less were most likely to want to go back to school: for instance, 71 percent of lead teachers with less than an associate degree reported wanting to pursue additional education.
- Around 47 percent of lead teachers and 42 percent of assistants planned to continue working at their current center in three years. Teaching staff in non-Head Start and Title 5 sites were more likely to plan on leaving the ECE field, along with educators with less tenure or educational attainment.
- Across job roles, around one in five educators would be interested in possibly pursuing the new PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction Credential. Meanwhile, other educators need more information before forming an opinion, including one third of FCC providers and center teachers.

Chapter 1. County Workforce Profile



Educator Characteristics

The Contra Costa County sample included 520 educators across three groups: FCC providers, center directors, and center teachers and assistants. The educators in our center-based sample work in more than 70 different sites around the county. The specific title of center directors varied, with 40 percent working in another administrator position such as site supervisor or teacher-director.

Demographics

Table 1.1 provides sample demographics, including age, race and ethnicity, and language fluency. The table also reports the proportion of educators born outside the United States, though some educators declined to answer this question. Among the 132 educators who identified their specific country of birth, 58 were born in Latin America and 32 in Asia.

Table 1.1. Educator Demographics

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers	Center Directors	Center Teachers/ Assistants
Age	N=178	N=101	N=241
29 years or younger	2%	4%	22%
30 to 39 years	15%	11%	25%
40 to 49 years	27%	43%	21%
50 to 59 years	34%	25%	20%
60 years or older	22%	17%	12%
Race and Ethnicity	N=143	N=88	N=212
Asian	13%	16%	17%
Black	23%	11%	7%
Latina	28%	19%	45%
White	18%	44%	21%
Multiethnic	10%	10%	6%
All other	7%	0%	4%
Language Fluency	N=151	N=92	N=224
English	91%	99%	96%
Spanish	27%	17%	43%
Hindi	3%	4%	4%
Chinese	3%	2%	3%
Farsi	6%	0%	3%
Additional Characteristics	N=142-151	N=88-91	N=217-225
Woman	99%	96%	99%
Born in another country	38%	25%	40%
Married or living with partner	68%	72%	56%
Child in household under age 5	18%	13%	25%
Child in household age 6-17	47%	40%	44%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: All data are self-reported. Some participants opted not to disclose one or more characteristics, such as country of birth. We supply the number of respondents, or N, for each question or set of questions.

Education and Experience

In **Table 1.2**, we describe the educational attainment and years of experience of the ECE workforce. Approximately 27 percent of FCC providers hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, along with 66 percent of center directors and 38 percent of center teachers and assistants. Additionally, 42 percent of FCC providers have more than 20 years of experience in the field, along with 66 percent of center directors and 23 percent of their teaching staff.

Table 1.2. Educator Education and Experience

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=132-152)	Center Directors (N=91-93)	Center Teachers/Assistants (N=212-228)
Educational Attainment			
High school or less	13%	1%	8%
Some college	27%	15%	25%
Associate degree	34%	18%	29%
Bachelor's degree	18%	44%	31%
Graduate degree(s)	9%	22%	7%
Major of Highest Degree			
Early Childhood Education	66%	66%	64%
Child Development	26%	24%	21%
Years of Experience			
Less than 2 years	2%	1%	8%
2 to 5 years	10%	3%	27%
6 to 10 years	12%	6%	24%
11 to 15 years	15%	8%	10%
16 to 20 years	19%	16%	8%
More than 20 years	42%	66%	23%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Compensation

Poor compensation is endemic to the ECE field—driven by both historical and contemporary factors. Unlike the care and education of older children, the cost of most early care and education is borne by parents, who pay at least 32 percent of their household income in California (California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2022). Parents' inability to pay higher prices directly limits the wages that centers can offer or FCC providers can earn, a challenge that disproportionately impacts women of color and immigrant women. As a result, the ECE workforce effectively subsidizes the cost of early care and education through their low wages and inadequate benefits (Montoya et al., 2022a).

Wages

Table 1.3 shows the median annual earnings of FCC providers and center directors, with a statewide estimate for comparison. For FCC providers, we estimate a range of earnings; for center directors, we use self-reported earnings. For more information on our FCC earnings methodology, refer to our report on ECE compensation in California (Montoya et al., 2022a).

FCC provider wages are somewhat lower in Contra Costa County than in California as a whole, particularly for large FCC providers. Specifically, large FCC providers in the county typically earn between \$31,000 to \$38,800 annually, compared to \$46,800 to \$58,800 statewide. In addition to local market factors—in other words, parents' ability to pay for care—this difference may be due in part to lower overall enrollment: large providers in Contra Costa were serving an average of 11.5 of part- or full-time enrollments, compared to 13.5 statewide.

Compared to FCC provider wages, center directors earn wages in Contra Costa County that are fairly similar to California as a whole, though Head Start and Title 5 directors reported earning slightly more in Contra Costa County: an average of \$66,700 annually, compared to \$64,500 statewide.

In **Table 1.3** and also **Table 1.4**, which displays center teacher and assistant wages, our sample size is smaller than in other sections of the report. For instance, only 94 FCC providers (55 percent of the sample) answered the survey questions that we

use to calculate the wage ranges in **Table 1.3**. In all CSCCE surveys, we allow educators to skip sensitive questions, and lower participation in wage questions is typical.

Table 1.3. Program Leader Median Annual Earnings

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
FCC Providers	N=94	N=230
All respondents	\$30,000 to \$35,900	\$36,000 to \$45,000
FCC License Size		
Small	\$29,800 to \$34,700	\$32,000 to \$42,000
Large	\$31,000 to \$38,800	\$46,800 to \$58,800
County Region		
West	\$27,500 to \$38,400	
South	*	
Central	\$23,600 to \$30,000	
East	\$37,500 to \$38,700	
Center Directors	N=59	N=357
All respondents	\$64,500	\$63,800
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5	\$66,700	\$64,500
All other centers	\$63,800	\$63,800
County Region		
West	*	
South	\$87,400	
Central	\$65,700	
East	*	

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Table 1.4 provides median hourly wages of center teachers and assistants, expressed in two ways for Contra Costa County educators: the director-reported pay range and the self-reported wage. The range estimates the median lowest and median highest wages paid at the site level, as reported by the directors and administrators who answered questions about staff at their sites. Meanwhile, the self-reported estimate comes directly from the teaching staff who took our survey.

Table 1.4. Center Teaching Staff Median Hourly Wages

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Director-Reported Range (County)	Self-Reported (County)	Self-Reported (State)
Lead Teachers	N=70	N=100	N=281
All centers	\$20.00 to \$25.00	\$24.80	\$25.00
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5	\$21.00 to \$26.00	\$28.60	\$26.40
All other centers	\$20.00 to \$25.00	\$23.00	\$23.00
Region			
West	\$18.00 to \$22.50	\$23.30	
South	\$21.00 to \$26.00	\$25.50	
Central	\$20.00 to \$25.25	\$26.80	
East	*	\$21.00	
Assistant Teachers	N=54	N=25**	N=51
All centers	\$18.00 to \$20.00	\$20.00	\$19.70
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5	\$18.00 to \$20.00	\$20.50	\$19.50
All other centers	\$18.00 to \$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The “director-reported range” reflects the median lowest and highest wages being paid across sites. By contrast, the “self-reported” wage comes from the teachers and assistants who took our survey and reported their earnings directly.

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

**Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Self-reported wages tend to fall on the high end of the director-reported pay range (or slightly above). The ranges themselves are compressed, which reflects the history of low wages in the field. For instance, the range for lead teachers is \$5 and for assistants, \$2. While **Table 1.3** reports director earnings annually, **Table 1.4** reports center teaching staff wages per hour to reflect the greater prevalence of part-time work in our sample.

Benefits

To supplement our discussion of wages for center-based staff, we provide an estimate of sites that offer benefits to full-time employees, as reported by center directors (**Table 1.5**). Contra Costa County centers are largely similar to their peers throughout the state. There are some minor differences, however, regarding assistant teachers: county sites are somewhat less likely to offer retirement benefits or bonuses to full-time staff.

Table 1.5. Centers Offering Benefits to Full-Time Teaching Staff
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
Lead Teachers	N=68	N=393
Health insurance	78%	79%
Paid vacation	88%	86%
Retirement	65%	65%
Recruitment bonus	9%	10%
Retention bonus	19%	14%
Assistant Teachers	N=46*	N=196
Health insurance	70%	79%
Paid vacation	79%	83%
Retirement	56%	64%
Recruitment bonus	8%	11%
Retention bonus	12%	17%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
 *Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Table 1.6 looks more closely at the county-level findings on benefits reported by directors—this time, disaggregating by program funding. Head Start and Title 5 centers are more likely than other centers in the county to offer core benefits like health insurance or retirement to full-time lead teachers. In fact, 100 percent of centers with those funding streams reported offering both benefits. These programs are less likely, however, to offer a retention bonus than the non-Head Start and Title 5 sites in the county: only 11 percent, compared to 23 percent.

Table 1.6. Centers Offering Benefits to Full-Time Teaching Staff, By Program Funding Type

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Head Start/ Title 5	All Other Centers	All Centers
Lead Teachers	N=17*	N=47*	N=68
Health insurance	100%	72%	78%
Paid vacation	97%	85%	88%
Retirement	100%	58%	65%
Recruitment bonus	9%	10%	9%
Retention bonus	11%	23%	19%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

To better understand the benefits educators ultimately use, we also asked educators directly if they currently have health insurance (**Table 1.7**) or any retirement savings (**Table 1.8**).

For health insurance, we find that FCC providers in Contra Costa County are somewhat more likely to hold health insurance than providers statewide, with very high coverage overall (97 percent). Among center-based staff, educators working in Head Start and Title 5 programs have slightly higher rates of coverage.

Table 1.7. Educators With Health Insurance From Any Source
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
FCC Providers	N=113	N=495
All respondents	97%	94%
FCC License Size		
Small	97%	94%
Large	96%	93%
Center Directors	N=83	N=501
All respondents	95%	97%
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5	100%	98%
All other centers	94%	97%
Center Teachers/Assistants	N=156	N=425
All respondents	97%	97%
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5	97%	98%
All other centers	98%	94%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

When looking at retirement savings, we find that small FCC providers in Contra Costa are more likely to have an account (30 percent) than their peers statewide (22 percent). Center teachers and assistants, meanwhile, are less likely to have retirement savings: only 51 percent in Contra Costa reported any such savings, compared to 72 percent statewide. This gap appears in centers of all funding types.

Table 1.8. Educators With Retirement Savings From Any Source
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
FCC Providers	N=114	N=499
All respondents	31%	28%
FCC License Size		
Small	30%	22%
Large	32%	37%
Center Directors	N=78	N=481
All respondents	71%	74%
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5	70%	81%
All other centers	72%	72%
Center Teachers/Assistants	N=144	N=406
All respondents	51%	72%
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5	59%	75%
All other centers	44%	68%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Staffing Patterns

In their approach to hiring assistants (**Table 1.9**), FCC providers in our Contra Costa County sample largely resemble the statewide sample, with a few exceptions: small FCC providers in the county are somewhat more likely to be working alone (71 percent, compared to 63 percent statewide). Large FCC providers are somewhat more likely to have unpaid assistants only (22 percent, compared to 10 percent statewide).

Table 1.9. Family Child Care Staffing

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
Small FCC Providers	N=96	N=283
No assistants	71%	63%
Paid only	17%	17%
Unpaid only	7%	14%
Combination	4%	6%
Large FCC Providers	N=75	N=246
No assistants	12%	19%
Paid only	42%	48%
Unpaid only	22%	10%
Combination	25%	23%
All FCC Providers	N=171	N=529
No assistants	45%	43%
Paid only	28%	31%
Unpaid only	14%	12%
Combination	13%	14%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Likewise, centers in Contra Costa County tend to have similar numbers of employees as the statewide average (**Table 1.10**). In our Head Start and Title 5 sample, however, there is a slight deviation: Contra Costa programs are somewhat more skewed towards lead teachers (an average of six per site, with three assistants).

Table 1.10. Average Center Staffing, By Program Funding

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
Head Start/Title 5	N=21*	N=139
Lead Teachers	6	5
Assistants	3	4
Total Teaching Staff	9	9
All Other Centers	N=70	N=352
Lead Teachers	6	6
Assistants	2	2
Total Teaching Staff	8	8
All Centers	N=99	N=509
Lead Teachers	6	6
Assistants	2	2
Total Teaching Staff	8	8

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Center Turnover and Vacancies

Our survey included additional questions for center directors regarding their site's staff turnover and current vacancies. **Table 1.11** displays both the proportion of sites experiencing turnover and vacancies, as well as the average numbers of turned-over and vacant positions. From January 2021 to Spring 2023 (the period of our survey), Contra Costa centers experienced higher-than-average turnover: 95 percent of sites had one or more positions turn over, compared to 84 percent statewide. Additionally, Contra Costa centers are more likely than the state as a whole to have a vacancy in 2023, particularly non-Head Start or Title 5 sites: 74 percent of these sites have one or more vacancies, compared to 54 percent of similarly funded sites in the statewide sample.

Table 1.11. Centers With Turnover and Vacancies, By Program Funding
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
Head Start/Title 5	N=21*	N=139
Any turnover since January 2021	98%	87%
Number of turned-over positions	4.2	4.8
Any vacancy now	63%	56%
Number of vacancies	3.0	2.0
All Other Centers	N=67	N=352
Any turnover since January 2021	94%	84%
Number of turned-over positions	5.9	4.1
Any vacancy now	74%	54%
Number of vacancies	1.4	1.1
All Centers	N=93	N=509
Any turnover since January 2021	95%	84%
Number of turned-over positions	5.6	4.2
Any vacancy now	71%	54%
Number of vacancies	1.6	1.3

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Directors also responded to questions about the most common reasons staff left their position. **Table 1.12** reports the share of directors who indicated each reason was “very often an issue.” Four of the five most common reasons were wage-related; however, Contra Costa County directors marked these items “very often an issue” slightly less often than their peers statewide. For instance, for the challenge of “low wages or benefits in ECE,” 35 percent of county directors chose “very often,” compared with 43 percent of directors statewide. Head Start and Title 5 directors were much more likely to identify retirement as “very often” a reason for departures than directors statewide (31 percent versus 4 percent) and less likely to identify “a job with better compensation within ECE” as the reason for turnover (32 percent versus 51 percent).

Table 1.12. Leading Drivers of Turnover Among Center-Based Staff
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Contra Costa County	Statewide
All Respondents	N=81	N=407
High cost of housing	35%	33%
Low wages/benefits in ECE	35%	43%
Found a job with better compensation outside of ECE	26%	32%
Found a job with better compensation within ECE	26%	35%
Left the workforce to care for family members	21%	12%
Wanted to reduce the long commute	20%	18%
Did not want to work during the pandemic	17%	8%
Found a job within TK-12 public school system	15%	21%
Moved out of the area	14%	19%
Hours were reduced/schedule was changed	11%	3%
Retirement	6%	3%
Head Start/Title 5	N=16*	N=115
Low wages/benefits in ECE	51%	57%
Found a job with better compensation outside of ECE	34%	40%
Found a job with better compensation within ECE	32%	51%
Retirement	31%	4%
High cost of housing	26%	32%
All Other Centers	N=60	N=284
High cost of housing	38%	34%
Low wages/benefits in ECE	33%	37%
Found a job with better compensation within ECE	25%	29%
Found a job with better compensation outside of ECE	25%	30%
Left the workforce to care for family members	21%	13%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The table reports the proportion of directors who identified each reason as “very often an issue,” reflecting the strongest rating on a four-point scale (“never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” and “very often” an issue).

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Discussion

In this chapter, we establish the profile of the Contra Costa County ECE workforce in 2023. Early educators, who are predominantly women of color, frequently hold degrees and have substantial years of experience. Despite their dedication, their wages are chronically low. FCC providers in Contra Costa fall behind the statewide median, particularly large FCC providers. Meanwhile, among center-based educators, lead teachers in Head Start and Title 5 programs earn slightly more than their peers throughout California. Assistant teacher wages, however, fall in a narrow pay band, both locally and statewide.

Several indicators point to somewhat greater stability in earnings and overall employment in programs funded through Head Start and Title 5. Not only are lead teacher wages somewhat higher, but employee benefits like health care and retirement are more consistently provided. This is not typically the case in other centers in the county, which lack the stabilizing funding of a state contract.⁶ Head Start and Title 5 programs in Contra Costa County also experienced less staff turnover than other centers locally, but they currently face more vacancies. As we will discuss in **Chapter 3**, this finding likely reflects the growing disruptions of transitional kindergarten expansion.

With regard to program staffing, we find that FCC providers in Contra Costa County hire paid assistants less often: small providers usually work alone, and large providers frequently rely on an unpaid person (usually a family member). Not only do home-based providers require support in raising their own earnings, but large FCC providers would benefit from resources to support paying staff.

Compensation accounts for the top four out of five reasons for center staff turnover. As rate reform begins to phase in, county programs will likely diverge as new dollars begin flowing to programs with public funding. For private programs, staff will face greater incentives to seek a position in a public program, while staff in Head Start and Title 5 programs may be drawn to jobs in TK.

⁶ For an analysis on the stabilizing effects of contract-based funding, refer to our reports on statewide compensation and program stability during COVID-19 (Kim et al., 2022).

Chapter 2. Workforce Well-Being



This chapter describes aspects of well-being for the ECE workforce in several dimensions: professional, economic, physical, and mental. Our survey included a more expansive set of indicators in each domain, which are covered in our statewide profiles of well-being (Muruvi et al., 2023). In this report, we synthesize key findings for Contra Costa County and examine variations among programs.

Professional Well-Being

Workplaces that provide a supportive environment can enhance educators' job satisfaction and mitigate some of the stresses of ECE work. Professional well-being further impacts educator turnover and retention (Curbow et al., 2000; Whitebook et al., 2016; Zinsser et al., 2016). A high-quality work environment is also a prerequisite for a high-quality learning environment for children. CSCCE defines a high-quality work environment holistically through the principles laid out in the *Model Work*

Standards (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment [CSCCE] & American Federation of Teachers Education Foundation [AFTEF], 2019).

Job Rewards

As **Table 2.1** shows, the vast majority of educators feel they are “helping children grow and develop” and “making a difference” with the children in their care. Only a simple majority, however, say they receive praise from parents or feel respected for their work. Center teachers and assistants were least likely to agree with the statement “I feel respected for the work that I do” (only 53 percent). Center-based teachers and assistants who were White, less tenured, or working in the central region reported the lowest levels of agreement (44 percent, 49 percent, and 47 percent, respectively).

Table 2.1. Educators Experiencing Job Rewards

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=132)	Center Directors (N=83)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=181)
I feel like I am helping the children grow and develop	96%	92%	89%
I see that my work is making a difference with a child	93%	87%	83%
I feel the satisfaction of knowing that I am helping parents	82%	86%	73%
I get praise from the parents for the work that I do	64%	58%	54%
I feel respected for the work that I do	65%	71%	53%

Table continues on the next page.

Table 2.1. Educators Experiencing Job Rewards, *continued*

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=122-132)	Center Directors (N=79-83)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=169-181)
Detail: I Feel Respected for the Work That I Do			
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		67%	51%
All other centers		73%	56%
County Region			
Central	73%	64%	47%
East	64%	68%	59%
South	*	84%	63%
West	58%	75%	55%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	54%	*	49%
5 to 15 years	65%	74%	53%
More than 15 years	67%	72%	57%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	60%	89%	50%
Black	58%	68%	70%
Latina	71%	73%	61%
White	64%	64%	44%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The table reports the proportion of respondents who selected “somewhat agree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” to the statement.

Teaching Challenges

Our survey included a list of teaching challenges providers might experience in the classroom or program. **Table 2.2** reports on the percentage of educators who see certain aspects of their work as challenging. “Working with children with challenging behaviors” was most commonly indicated, although FCC providers were much less likely to select this option than early educators working in centers: 32 percent of FCC providers, compared to 64 percent of center teachers and assistants.

Table 2.2. Educator-Reported Teaching Challenges

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=128)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=170)
Working with children with challenging behaviors	32%	64%
Finding time for planning	31%	41%
Spending time with individual children	10%	27%
Conducting student assessments	22%	22%
Finding time for observing children	10%	22%
Finding ways to communicate with families	11%	10%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Choice in Professional Development

Table 2.3 shows the share of educators who selected “somewhat agree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” to the following statement: “Over the past year, I have had a choice in the professional development in which I participated.” Most educators agreed, though center teaching staff in non-Head Start and Title 5 sites were less likely (only 66 percent). FCC providers early in their ECE tenure were extremely likely to agree (100 percent of providers with less than five years of experience).

Table 2.3. Educator Choice in Professional Development

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=117)	Center Directors (N=81)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=159)
All Respondents	75%	80%	76%
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		72%	87%
All other centers		80%	66%
County Region			
Central	79%	77%	72%
East	83%	78%	92%
South	*	89%	60%
West	59%	75%	80%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	100%	*	73%
5 to 15 years	76%	64%	83%
More than 15 years	72%	82%	67%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	85%	81%	80%
Black	83%	89%	70%
Latina	71%	81%	79%
White	73%	71%	65%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Economic Well-Being

Housing Worries

The majority of our sample worried about being able to afford their housing costs. **Table 2.4** shows the percent of educators who “somewhat agree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” that they were worried about paying for their housing. Compared to our statewide sample, center teachers and assistants were more often worried. Within the county, center teachers and assistants were also most likely to be

worried about paying for their housing (78 percent), followed by FCC providers (69 percent). By race and ethnicity, Black center-based educators were most often worried (70 percent of Black directors and 91 percent of Black teachers and assistants), while Asian respondents were most likely to be worried about housing costs among FCC providers (87 percent).

Table 2.4. Educators Worried About Paying for Housing

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=119-122)	Center Directors (N=80-84)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=180-183)
Statewide Sample	63%	53%	68%
All County Respondents	69%	50%	78%
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		49%	77%
All other centers		48%	78%
County Region			
Central	58%	51%	69%
East	63%	55%	85%
South	*	51%	70%
West	76%	38%	86%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	68%	*	80%
5 to 15 years	64%	41%	75%
More than 15 years	70%	50%	81%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	87%	34%	80%
Black	62%	70%	91%
Latina	69%	49%	74%
White	63%	48%	78%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Food Security

Table 2.5 estimates food security among the ECE workforce. Our survey leveraged an item from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (Flood et al., 2023), which defines food security as having “enough of the kinds of food we want to eat.” By this measure, center teaching staff had the lowest food security (56 percent). They were also the most likely to go hungry: 9 percent of center teachers and assistants “sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.” FCC providers were also at risk of food insecurity. Compared to the broader California workforce, FCC providers were twice as likely to sometimes or often not have enough to eat, and center teachers and assistants were three times as likely.

Table 2.5. Food Security

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=125)	Center Directors (N=80)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=180)	Total California Workforce*
We had enough of the kinds of food we wanted to eat	62%	80%	56%	82%
We had enough but not always the kinds of food we wanted to eat	33%	15%	36%	15%
We sometimes/often did not have enough to eat	6%	5%	9%	3%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Authors’ analysis of the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, retrieved via IPUMS (Flood et al., 2023).

Table 2.5.1 provides a closer look at educators who were food secure. Among the center-based workforce, educators with longer tenures were more likely to be food secure. By race and ethnicity, Black teachers and assistants were least likely to be food secure (36 percent). Compared to the statewide sample, center directors were

somewhat more likely to be food secure and teachers and assistants were somewhat less likely.

Table 2.5.1. Educator Food Security, By Demographic Characteristics

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=117-125)	Center Directors (N=76-80)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=171-180)
Statewide Sample	62%	75%	62%
All County Respondents	62%	80%	56%
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		91%	53%
All other centers		78%	57%
County Region			
Central	66%	86%	55%
East	50%	77%	63%
South	*	89%	72%
West	63%	55%	45%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	77%	*	43%
5 to 15 years	52%	64%	63%
More than 15 years	64%	84%	58%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	78%	89%	54%
Black	47%	83%	36%
Latina	55%	62%	53%
White	66%	82%	60%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: “Food secure” educators are those who selected “We had enough of the kinds of food we wanted to eat” on the food security scale.

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Public Assistance

To make ends meet, many early educators enroll in public assistance programs such as Medi-Cal or SNAP (food stamps). **Table 2.6** shows the proportion of educators participating in one or more forms of assistance. Compared to our statewide sample, center teachers and assistants were more likely to participate. While few center directors used public assistance, 47 percent of FCC providers and 42 percent of center teachers and assistants used at least one form of public support. FCC providers with less than five years of experience were particularly likely to rely on at least one form of public assistance (79 percent). Across provider types, Medi-Cal was the most commonly used program.

Table 2.6. Educator Use of Public Assistance

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=106-112)	Center Directors (N=73-77)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=163-172)
All County Respondents			
One or more forms of assistance	47%	16%	42%
Medi-Cal for self	28%	13%	26%
Medi-Cal for child	15%	8%	17%
SNAP	10%	5%	8%
WIC	6%	0%	2%
Food pantry	4%	1%	10%
Statewide Sample			
One or more forms of assistance	50%	19%	31%
Medi-Cal for self	24%	7%	17%
Medi-Cal for child	26%	7%	12%
SNAP	9%	4%	8%
WIC	3%	1%	2%
Food pantry	6%	3%	5%

Table continues on the next page.

Table 2.6. Educator Use of Public Assistance, *continued*

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=106-112)	Center Directors (N=73-77)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=163-172)
Detail: One or More Forms of Assistance			
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		19%	42%
All other centers		13%	43%
County Region			
Central	43%	16%	34%
East	57%	23%	57%
South	*	6%	18%
West	42%	25%	58%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	79%	*	52%
5 to 15 years	49%	24%	50%
More than 15 years	42%	15%	26%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	36%	*	50%
Black	61%	37%	60%
Latina	57%	12%	43%
White	43%	15%	32%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Physical and Mental Well-Being

Health Risks at Work

Our survey also asked respondents about their level of concern regarding health risks they face on the job. The response options included “not at all concerned,” “slightly concerned,” “moderately concerned,” and “very concerned.” **Table 2.7** shows the proportion of our sample that selected either “moderately” or “very concerned.” Center directors only sometimes rated the statements as a concern,

but unlike teacher-directors, center directors typically spend less time in the classroom. On the other hand, 40 to 50 percent of FCC providers and center teachers and assistants indicated they were “moderately concerned” about infection exposure or injury. Additionally, 57 percent of FCC providers identified “working longer hours to clean and sanitize” as a concern.

Table 2.7. Educator Health Risks at Work

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=121)	Center Directors (N=77)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=165)
Being exposed to infections at work	46%	33%	52%
Working with young children who are not vaccinated against infections	41%	24%	45%
Getting injured while performing my regular duties	43%	23%	38%
Working longer hours to clean and sanitize	57%	28%	28%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The table reports the proportion of educators who selected “moderately” or “very concerned” on a four-point scale (“not at all concerned,” “slightly concerned,” “moderately concerned,” and “very concerned.”).

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Table 2.7 does not distinguish between lead and assistant teachers; however, on all five measures, lead teachers were more likely to express concern. For instance, 52 percent of lead teachers worried about being exposed to infections at work, yet only 43 percent of assistant teachers shared this concern.

Health Conditions Causing Chronic Pain

Working with young children is highly physical and can take a toll on the body. Our survey asked about a number of health challenges. **Table 2.8** reports on the number of educators who have medically diagnosed issues that involve chronic physical pain. Relevant conditions include arthritis, lower back pain, knee or hip pain, and severe headaches.

Table 2.8. Educators With Health Conditions Causing Chronic Pain
Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=107-115)	Center Directors (N=68-71)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=129-137)
All Respondents	39%	30%	34%
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		37%	33%
All other centers		30%	34%
County Region			
Central	29%	30%	38%
East	41%	40%	29%
South	*	18%	19%
West	44%	31%	38%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	21%	*	27%
5 to 15 years	27%	36%	26%
More than 15 years	46%	30%	51%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	50%	36%	35%
Black	54%	*	*
Latina	29%	*	29%
White	36%	29%	32%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: Conditions include arthritis, lower back pain, knee/hip pain, and severe headaches.

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

About one third of educators experienced at least one form of chronic physical pain, including roughly one half of educators with more than 15 years of experience (excluding center directors). Latina educators were least likely to report chronic pain (29 percent of both FCC providers and center teachers and assistants).

Stress

Our survey additionally included a validated measure of emotional well-being: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4) (Warttig et al., 2013). This tool encompasses four questions:

- In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
- In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
- In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Educators respond by identifying the frequency of these feelings, ranging from “never” to “very often.” Each answer is scored and summed. **Table 2.9** shows the proportion of educators who scored six or greater, which corresponds to high levels of perceived stress. FCC providers less often met this threshold for high stress, though providers with less than five years of experience did so more frequently (57 percent). White educators (with the exception of center directors) least often scored a six or greater. In particular, only 33 percent of White FCC providers indicated high stress levels.

Table 2.9. Educators With High Levels of Perceived Stress

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=107-114)	Center Directors (N=76-80)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=149-157)
All Respondents	47%	70%	66%
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5		43%	66%
All other centers		73%	65%
County Region			
Central	42%	71%	67%
East	47%	67%	56%
South	*	75%	52%
West	51%	64%	77%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	57%	*	62%
5 to 15 years	47%	78%	69%
More than 15 years	44%	67%	69%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	57%	84%	76%
Black	52%	70%	67%
Latina	45%	56%	63%
White	33%	65%	54%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Discussion

Educator well-being includes both personal and professional dimensions, but it is not always easy to separate them. Inadequate resources for food and rent can impact physical health and overall stress, and an educator can carry both pride in their professional impact and worry about the toll their work takes on them.

Overall, early educators across provider types and settings face challenges to their well-being. While a few themes arise from this chapter, we particularly find evidence of FCC providers expressing positivity and resilience. For instance, FCC providers are least likely to report: a) being challenged by children’s behaviors; and b) elevated levels of perceived stress. Yet, this positive note is only part of the story. We also find that FCC providers are most likely to be using SNAP to feed themselves and their families and most likely to be contending with chronic pain.

Among center-based educators, we find mixed results when comparing program types. Teaching staff in Head Start and Title 5 sites more often feel they have a choice in their professional development. On the other hand, we find virtually no difference in participation in public assistance programs or levels of perceived stress for center teachers and assistants based on center funding. This finding contrasts with what we reported in **Chapter 1**, which indicated that Head Start/Title 5 centers can offer somewhat more stability in employment and wages.

Compared to our statewide study sample, center teachers and assistants in Contra Costa County were more likely to face challenges to their economic well-being. Center directors and FCC providers, meanwhile, reported similar well-being in our Contra Costa and statewide samples.

Across provider types, we find recurring well-being challenges for less experienced members of the ECE workforce (i.e., those with less than five years in the field). Not only are they more likely to participate in public assistance programs, but they are also less likely to feel respected for their work. As we will see in **Chapter 3**, these circumstances could have implications for their plans to remain in the field.

Chapter 3. Stability of the Field



Our report concludes with a look at workforce stability: how programs have weathered changing conditions and how educators' jobs have shifted. We also examine the individual plans and intentions of the ECE workforce. In particular, we report where they see themselves working in three years, whether they are interested in pursuing additional education, and whether they are interested in the forthcoming PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction Credential.

Program Stability

Table 3.1 describes lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on program operations. Shortly before our survey entered the field in Spring 2023, Governor Newsom issued an end to the COVID-19 State of Emergency (Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2023). For child care programs, the declaration signaled an end to a heightened state of vigilance, but ECE program leaders (center directors and FCC providers) still felt the sting of the pandemic. Around one half of program leaders

reported that they continue to experience reduced program income, typically from lower enrollment levels than pre-pandemic. Similarly, one half of center directors reported higher staffing costs, and a similar share of FCC providers faced higher costs for cleaning, sanitation, and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Table 3.1. Lingering Pandemic Impact on Program Stability

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers	Center Directors
All County Respondents	N=150	N=90
Loss of income from families	53%	48%
Higher staffing costs	18%	45%
Higher costs for cleaning, sanitation, PPE supplies	50%	35%
Statewide Sample	N=519	N=491
Loss of income from families	55%	40%
Higher staffing costs (for ratio requirements or health and safety)	29%	45%
Higher costs for cleaning, sanitation, PPE supplies	60%	40%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Meanwhile, transitional kindergarten (TK) expansion represents a growing headwind for ECE program leaders. We estimate that child care centers enrolling children under age six employ between 2,200 and 2,500 teachers and assistants in Contra Costa County. The majority of these early educators are not currently eligible to apply for lead teacher positions in TK.

Table 3.2 shows the impact of transitional kindergarten on enrollment in ECE programs during 2022-2023, the first school year of a multiyear expansion towards universal TK. Center directors were more likely than FCC providers to report a drop in four-year-old enrollment (54 percent, compared to 37 percent). Meanwhile, some

FCC providers began to enroll or increased enrollment of infants and toddlers. Enrollment drops were somewhat lower in Contra Costa County than in our statewide sample.

Table 3.2. Impact of TK Expansion on ECE Programs

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers	Center Directors
All County Respondents	(N=154)	(N=91)
Fewer four-year-olds	37%	54%
Fewer three-year-olds	27%	10%
Began before or aftercare for TK students	11%	20%
Accepting more infants and toddlers	27%	6%
Began accepting infants and toddlers	11%	7%
Statewide Sample	(N=528)	(N=501)
Fewer four-year-olds	46%	61%
Fewer three-year-olds	30%	18%
Began before or aftercare for TK students	14%	7%
Accepting more infants and toddlers	26%	9%
Began accepting infants and toddlers	8%	2%
Detail: Fewer Four-Year-Olds		
FCC License Size		
Small	35%	
Large	40%	
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5		32%
All other centers		58%
County Region		
Central	30%	62%
East	36%	30%
South	53%	76%
West	40%	47%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

FCC Job Stability

FCC providers' job stability cannot be disentangled from the stability of their businesses. For greater insight, we look at four types of business challenges providers have faced since January 2021 (**Table 3.3**). We find few differences by provider license size, with the exception of credit card debt: small FCC providers were more likely to take on debt to support their business (43 percent). About one half of all FCC providers had to go without paying themselves at some point between January 2021 and our survey in Spring 2023. Black educators were the most likely to forego pay, especially among large FCC providers (73 percent).

Table 3.3. FCC Provider Business Challenges Since January 2021
Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Small FCC Providers	Large FCC Providers	All FCC Providers
All County Respondents	(N=84)	(N=65)	(N=149)
Unable to pay myself	49%	48%	49%
Missed a rent, utility, or vendor payment	39%	37%	38%
Took on credit card debt for my program	43%	33%	39%
Took out a second mortgage	2%	3%	3%
Statewide Sample	(N=262)	(N=237)	(N=499)
Unable to pay myself	40%	48%	44%
Missed a rent, utility, or vendor payment	38%	32%	36%
Took on credit card debt for my program	39%	41%	40%
Took out a second mortgage	1%	3%	2%
Detail: Unable to Pay Myself			
Race and Ethnicity	(N=84)	(N=65)	(N=149)
Asian	*	*	39%
Black	58%	73%	66%
Latina	51%	45%	48%
White	*	48%	37%

Table continues on the next page.

Table 3.3. FCC Provider Business Challenges Since January 2021, *continued*
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Small FCC Providers	Large FCC Providers	All FCC Providers
Detail: Unable to Pay Myself			
County Region	(N=84)	(N=65)	(N=149)
Central	31%	56%	45%
East	*	*	60%
South	0%	25%	15%
West	52%	36%	45%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Table 3.4 reports the types of assistants of FCC providers. Unpaid assistants are less common, but most of them are family members. For paid assistants, small FCC providers also tend to hire a family member, while large providers are somewhat more likely to hire a person with no prior relationship.

Table 3.4. Types of FCC Provider Assistants

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Small FCC Providers	Large FCC Providers	All FCC Providers
Paid Assistants	(N=21)*	(N=49)*	(N=70)
Family member	46%	42%	43%
Friend or neighbor	32%	31%	31%
Person with no prior relationship	31%	51%	45%
Other	0%	6%	4%
Unpaid Assistants	(N=14)*	(N=30)*	(N=44)*
Family member	100%	84%	88%
Friend or neighbor	0%	14%	10%
Person with no prior relationship	0%	6%	4%
Other	0%	4%	3%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

* Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Center Job Stability

Job stability looks different for center-based educators, who may change both their role and/or their employer. **Table 3.5** shows job-level progression between January 2021 and Spring 2023. The table does not imply that educators remained at the same site, but describes educators’ progression through job levels or titles. Most respondents experienced continuity in job level. For instance, 90 percent of our 2023 director sample reported being employed as a director in 2021.

Table 3.5. Center-Based Educator Job-Level Progression Since January 2021
Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors, 2023 (N=101)	Teachers, 2023 (N=183)	Assistants, 2023 (N=57)
Directors, 2021	90%	1%	0%
Teachers, 2021	4%	77%	0%
Assistants, 2021	1%	14%	84%
Other, 2021	5%	8%	16%

Legend Advancement Continuity Step Back

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Note: Chart compares January 2021 to Spring 2023.

A few educators experienced job advancement during this period. For instance, 4 percent of directors in 2023 were teachers in 2021, and 14 percent of teachers were assistants in 2021. Very few educators took a “step back” to a lower job title.

We look closer at continuity in **Table 3.6** and advancement in **Table 3.7**. Across provider types, Black educators experienced continuity in job role less often, but this finding is due in part to their higher levels of job advancement during the period. For instance, 25 percent of Black teachers had advanced from an assistant role in 2021.

Table 3.6. Center-Based Educator Job-Level Continuity Since January 2021
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors, 2023 (N=87-101)	Teachers, 2023 (N=161-183)	Assistants, 2023 (N=49-57)
Program Funding Type			
Head Start/Title 5	90%	84%	86%
All other centers	92%	71%	79%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	100%	79%	78%
Black	79%	63%	80%
Latina	90%	69%	89%
White	96%	78%	100%
Tenure in the Field			
2 to 5 years	*	51%	86%
6 to 10 years	*	87%	64%
11 to 15 years	100%	71%	*
16 to 20 years	93%	92%	*
More than 20 years	93%	90%	*

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: Chart compares January 2021 to Spring 2023, a time span of a little more than two years.

*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Table 3.7. Center-Based Educator Job-Level Advancement Since January 2021
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors, 2023 (N=87-101)	Teachers, 2023 (N=161-183)
Program Funding Type		
Head Start/Title 5	6%	11%
All other centers	3%	16%
Race and Ethnicity		
Asian	0%	10%
Black	10%	25%
Latina	3%	21%
White	0%	11%
Tenure in the Field		
2 to 5 years	*	37%
6 to 10 years	*	5%
11 to 15 years	0%	24%
16 to 20 years	7%	0%
More than 20 years	2%	2%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
 Note: Chart compares January 2021 to Spring 2023, a time span of a little more than two years.
 *Fewer than 10 respondents.

Continued Education

Our survey asked respondents whether they hoped to pursue additional degrees. About one half of FCC providers expressed an interest in continued education (**Table 3.8**). Educators with an associate degree were most likely to be interested, and educators with some college or less were most likely to be unsure.

Table 3.8. FCC Providers Interested in a Future Degree

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Small FCC Providers	Large FCC Providers
All County Respondents	(N=84)	(N=68)
Yes	49%	55%
No	30%	22%
Don't know	21%	24%
Statewide Sample	(N=277)	(N=245)
Yes	46%	46%
No	32%	30%
Don't know	22%	24%
Detail: Responses by Educational Attainment		
Some College or Less	(N=34*)	(N=23*)
Yes	39%	60%
No	34%	9%
Don't know	27%	31%
Associate Degree	(N=27*)	(N=28*)
Yes	68%	66%
No	15%	17%
Don't know	17%	17%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	(N=22*)	(N=16*)
Yes	42%	30%
No	40%	50%
Don't know	17%	20%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Among center-based educators, few respondents gave a definitive “no” when asked if they were interested in continuing their education (**Table 3.8**). Meanwhile, more than six in ten center-based teachers and assistants expressed interest in higher educational attainment, with somewhat greater interest among Head Start and Title 5 directors and lead teachers. Compared to our statewide sample, Contra Costa

teachers and assistants were slightly more likely to be interested in going back to school. In Contra Costa, educators with some college credit or less were most likely to be interested, including 71 percent of lead teachers with some experience of higher education but no degree.

Table 3.9. Center-Based Educators Interested in a Future Degree
Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors	Teachers	Assistants
All County Respondents	(N=90)	(N=166)	(N=49)*
Yes	47%	61%	65%
No	37%	13%	14%
Don't know	16%	26%	20%
Statewide Sample	(N=493)	(N=341)	(N=75)
Yes	44%	55%	55%
No	37%	25%	17%
Don't know	20%	20%	28%
Detail: Educators Selecting "Yes"			
Program Funding Type	(N=90)	(N=166)	(N=49)*
Head Start/Title 5	50%	69%	65%
All other centers	44%	55%	67%
Educational Attainment	(N=86)	(N=153)	(N=44)*
Some college or less	54%	71%	69%
Associate degree	47%	58%	64%
Bachelor's degree or higher	45%	56%	58%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Job Plans in Three Years

To project job stability into the future, our survey asked educators to consider where they would most likely be working in three years.

FCC Providers

In **Table 3.10**, we present FCC providers' responses regarding their professional plans in three years. A majority of providers intend to continue providing home-based services (62 percent of small FCC providers and 73 percent of large FCC providers). Small FCC providers were more likely than large FCC providers to plan on retirement or leaving the ECE field. In our statewide sample (not reported on **Table 3.10**), the responses for large and small FCC providers are very similar, but small FCC providers were more likely to plan to continue operating (76 percent).

Table 3.10. FCC Provider Job Plans in Three Years

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Small FCC Providers (N=69)	Large FCC Providers (N=51)	All FCC Providers (N=120)
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	64%	78%	70%
Continuing to provide FCC services	62%	73%	67%
Working in a center	2%	5%	3%
Not Continuing	28%	14%	21%
Working in a TK classroom	0%	0%	0%
Working in a K-12 classroom	0%	0%	0%
Working in support of children and families but not providing care	1%	4%	2%
Working outside of the ECE field	10%	2%	7%
Retired	14%	6%	10%
Other	3%	2%	2%
Don't know	8%	8%	8%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

In **Table 3.11**, we look more closely at respondents who indicated they plan to continue to provide family child care services. At higher levels of educational

attainment, the share of FCC providers planning to continue declined (particularly for small FCC providers). By tenure, meanwhile, small FCC providers with 5 to 15 years of experience had lower levels of intention to continue than large FCC providers with similar tenure (46 percent and 60 percent, respectively). By race and ethnicity, Latina providers were most likely to plan to continue (81 percent), and Black providers were least likely (52 percent).

Table 3.11. FCC Providers Planning to Continue Operating in Three Years
Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Small FCC Providers (N=65-69)	Large FCC Providers (N=48-51)	All FCC Providers (N=113-120)
Educational Attainment			
Some college or less	86%	81%	84%
Associate degree	48%	72%	62%
Bachelor's degree or higher	43%	68%	52%
Tenure in the Field			
Less than 5 years	*	*	100%
5 to 15 years	46%	60%	50%
More than 15 years	64%	74%	69%
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	*	*	84%
Black	57%	45%	52%
Latina	82%	79%	81%
White	*	58%	59%
County Region			
Central	56%	67%	60%
East	68%	65%	66%
South	*	*	*
West	*	78%	73%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Fewer than 10 respondents.

Center-Based Educators

Around one half of teachers and assistants planned to continue working in early care and education in three years (**Table 3.12**). Assistant teachers were the least likely to plan to be working in the same center (42 percent) and the most likely to plan on working in a different center (11 percent). Only 3 percent of teachers and 11 percent of assistants expected to be in a TK classroom. Around 8 percent of teachers and assistants planned to leave the ECE field, and one in five were unsure of their plans. While the table does not provide a statewide comparison, both teachers and assistants in the statewide sample were somewhat less likely to continue working in early care and education: 50 percent of teachers planned to work in a center- or home-based role, along with 45 percent of assistants.

Table 3.12. Center-Based Educator Job Plans in Three Years

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors (N=79)	Teachers (N=120)	Assistants (N=38)*
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	61%	60%	53%
Working in my current center	57%	47%	42%
Working in a different center	0%	8%	11%
Operating an FCC program	4%	5%	0%
Not Continuing	29%	23%	27%
Working in a TK classroom	1%	3%	11%
Working in a K-12 classroom	6%	3%	0%
Working in support of children and families but not providing care	4%	4%	0%
Working outside of the ECE field	2%	8%	8%
Retired	9%	2%	5%
Other	7%	3%	3%
Don't know	10%	17%	21%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Tables 3.13 to 3.15 report variation in educators' future job plans. As shown in Table 3.13, larger proportions of directors and lead teachers at Head Start and Title 5 centers plan to continue in early care and education, as do assistant teachers at non-Head Start/Title 5 programs.

Table 3.13. Center-Based Educator Job Plans in Three Years, By Program Funding Type

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors (N=79)	Teachers (N=120)	Assistants (N=38)*
Head Start/Title 5			
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	76%	59%	44%
Not continuing	24%	33%	40%
Don't know	0%	9%	16%
All Other Centers			
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	56%	49%	59%
Not continuing	34%	33%	29%
Don't know	9%	18%	12%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

Among lead teachers, respondents with higher educational attainment were less likely to plan on staying in a center or opening an FCC program (Table 3.14). For instance, among lead teachers, 67 percent of respondents with some college or less planned to stay in early care and education, compared to 52 percent with a bachelor's degree.

Table 3.14. Center-Based Educator Job Plans in Three Years, By Educational Attainment

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors (N=79)	Teachers (N=120)	Assistants (N=38)*
Some College or Less			
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	**	67%	59%
Not continuing	**	23%	23%
Don't know	**	10%	18%
Associate Degree			
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	54%	59%	63%
Not continuing	33%	24%	13%
Don't know	14%	16%	25%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher			
Continuing as FCC or center-based provider	59%	52%	**
Not continuing	32%	28%	**
Don't know	9%	21%	**

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

**Fewer than 10 respondents.

Finally, **Table 3.15** compares educators' responses based on their years of experience. Educators with less than five years of experience were most likely to plan on staying in the field; however, many of them plan to work at a different site in three years. Meanwhile, respondents with 5 to 15 years of experience were more likely to leave the field than respondents with more than 15 years of experience (33 percent and 25 percent, respectively).

Table 3.15. Center-Based Educator Job Plans in Three Years, By Tenure in ECE
 Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	Directors (N=78)	Teachers (N=105)	Assistants (N=36)*
Less Than 5 Years			
Continuing as an FCC provider or center-based educator	**	65%	69%
Not continuing	**	12%	13%
Don't know	**	23%	19%
5 to 15 Years			
Continuing as an FCC provider or center-based educator	45%	50%	44%
Not continuing	32%	33%	28%
Don't know	23%	17%	28%
More Than 15 years			
Continuing as an FCC provider or center-based educator	64%	61%	**
Not continuing	29%	25%	**
Don't know	7%	14%	**

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 50 respondents).

**Fewer than 10 respondents.

Due to the small sample size of respondents, we are unable to provide estimates for teachers and assistants separately by race and ethnicity. When we group the job roles together, we find little difference in the share of Asian, Black, and White respondents who plan to continue at their current center. Fewer Latina educators, however, indicated that they would remain (only 37 percent, compared to more than one half of other educators). Instead, Latina early educators were more likely to choose “don’t know” (24 percent).

PK-3 Credential

As we show in the previous section, some members of the ECE workforce are interested in working in TK classrooms in the next three years. Currently, a lead teacher in TK needs a Multiple Subject Credential, but requirements for assistant teacher positions vary widely by district. A new teaching credential, however, will soon become available for lead teachers of TK: the PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction Credential.

While enrollment in credential programs has yet to open, our survey included a description of the forthcoming opportunity and asked educators to describe their interest. **Table 3.16** shows their responses. Across provider types, around one in five educators would pursue a program as soon as it became available. Meanwhile, other educators needed more information before forming an opinion, including one third of FCC providers and center teachers.

Table 3.16. Educator Interest in Pursuing the PK-3 Credential

Contra Costa County Early Care and Education Workforce Study, 2023

	FCC Providers (N=151)	Center Directors (N=91)	Center Teachers/ Assistants (N=213)
Yes, as soon as it was available	20%	20%	18%
Yes, but no money or time	17%	27%	23%
No, I am not interested	31%	34%	23%
Not sure/Need more information*	32%	18%	37%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*This combines the responses "I am not sure, I need more information" and "Don't know."

Discussion

The well-being challenges explored in the previous chapter are not new to the ECE workforce and neither are challenges to program stability. However, as programs

continue an incremental recovery from the pandemic, they face new upheaval with TK expansion.

In this chapter, we come full circle with our study findings. Early educators hold a deep personal connection to their work, and most of them intend to continue working with children and families over the next three years. Many of these educators plan on remaining in the same setting in which they currently work. In centers, some early educators may even experience job-level advancement, like the 13 percent of center teachers in 2023 who were assistants two years earlier. However, only one third of assistants intend to stay working in the same program. Some will change sites; others may pursue a paraprofessional role in TK.

The majority of early educators are interested in continuing their own education. One in five would readily take up a PK-3 Credential program opportunity, but many educators are unsure and need more information to form an opinion. While state-level wage reform may improve compensation for many members of the ECE workforce, it remains to be seen if the funding will support salaries that can compete with TK offerings (even for paraprofessionals or aides). In the meantime, there is still a notable minority of center-based educators who are uncertain of their professional plans.

FCC providers are most likely to envision themselves continuing to operate, though unintended drops in income may force them to close against their wishes. From 2021 to 2023, one half of FCC providers had to forego pay at one point or another, with Black educators even more likely to go without paying themselves. As we add the growing TK headwinds to the picture, we can expect some FCC providers will be challenged to earn sufficient income while enrolling their desired mix of age groups. TK headwinds impact centers, as well: center-based ECE programs are more likely to already report a decline in four-year-old enrollment. Pivoting to serve three-year-olds will be a vital goal for both settings.

Conclusion

The ECE workforce in Contra Costa County is composed of skilled professionals, most of whom are women of color. Despite their dedication, their wages are chronically low, and they routinely encounter challenges to their professional, economic, physical, and mental well-being. While FCC providers less often report teaching challenges or elevated levels of perceived stress compared with their center-based peers, we also find they are most likely to be using SNAP and contending with chronic pain.

Among center-based educators, teachers and assistants employed at Head Start and Title 5 sites experience somewhat more stability in employment and wages, but we find little difference in their subsequent participation in public assistance or their perceived stress. Across provider types, we find consistent well-being challenges for less experienced members of the ECE workforce. When we compared the findings to our statewide study sample, we also found that center teachers and assistants in Contra Costa County were more likely to report challenges to their economic well-being.

Job turnover and exits from the field are frequently challenging in early care and education. Teaching staff in programs not receiving Head Start or Title 5 funding were more likely to plan on leaving the ECE field, along with educators with less tenure or educational attainment. Only one third of current assistants saw themselves still working in the same program three years from now. However, both assistant and lead teachers reported planning to change centers about as often as planning to leave the field entirely.

As Contra Costa County considers current and future mechanisms for supporting the workforce, certain guiding principles apply:

- A “compensation first” strategy is vital. Seek long-term sources of public funding for county-led initiatives, and continue state-level advocacy.
- Engage deeply with centers and FCC providers in efforts to support a thriving mixed-delivery system.

- Support programs outside the Head Start and Title 5 universe in securing stronger wages and job stability.
- Help the ECE workforce learn about and navigate the PK-3 Credential as it becomes available.
- Support programs in pivoting to serve more three-year-olds and/or infants and toddlers.
- Design new initiatives in consultation with early educators.

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The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), founded in 1999, is the national leader in early care and education workforce research and policy. CSCCE provides research and analysis on the preparation, working conditions, and compensation of the early care and education workforce. We develop policy solutions and create spaces for teaching, learning, and educator activism. Our vision is an effective public early care and education system that secures racial, gender, and economic justice for the women whose labor is the linchpin of stable, quality services.

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