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Apprenticeships: Building a Strong Child Care Workforce Pipeline

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Table of Contents

4 INTRODUCTION

5 WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

7 CHILD CARE REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS

9 GROWTH IN CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIPS

12 STATE APPRENTICESHIP EXAMPLES

18 LOCAL APPRENTICESHIP EXAMPLES

21 RECOMMENDATIONS

23 CONCLUSION

24 ENDNOTES

Introduction

Child care plays an integral role in our nation's economic growth and productivity. In addition to boosting labor participation, workforce productivity, and parents' household earnings, the child care industry employs workers, purchases goods and services, and stimulates economic activity.

Despite the value that child care teachers generate for working families, employers, and communities, their wages are among the lowest of any occupation. The child care workforce ranks near the bottom in pay; 98 percent of occupations have higher average annual earnings.¹ Child care teachers access federal support services, including the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, at higher rates than other types of workers.² Child care teachers face poverty rates an average of 7.7 times higher than teachers employed by public school districts.³

The demand for a child care workforce with early learning competencies is increasing. However, acquiring a credential or degree while on the job is a challenging task for an underpaid and under-resourced workforce. A 2018 U.S. Department of Labor report found the child care workforce faces significant barriers to higher education and professional-development systems.⁴

Unfortunately, our child care workforce is shrinking. Over the past 10 years, the workforce has dropped from more than 2 million to about 1.6 million child care teachers, program administrators, and family child care providers. The decline comes at a time when demand for child care is growing. BPC's research estimates that 1 in 3 children under age 6 with all parents in the labor force does not have access to child care programs.

THE NATION'S SUCCESS IN MEETING THE NEED FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE DEPENDS ON OUR ABILITY TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN A COMPETENT WORKFORCE. BY SUPPORTING INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILD CARE, WE CAN INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND FILL THE CHILD CARE GAP. ONE INNOVATIVE MODEL HAS BEEN WELL ESTABLISHED IN OTHER INDUSTRIES FOR DECADES: REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS.



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The career pathways model is a workforce-development strategy used to improve transitions from education into the workforce, provide employees with continuous education and skill attainment, and support professional advancement.⁵ Although the career pathways model has existed for decades, the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, passed in 2014, formalizes its use by establishing a common definition and outlining essential elements.⁶ WIOA also expanded the purpose of states' adult education systems to include assisting working adults through career pathways.

At the federal level, several agencies partner to administer WIOA and support its implementation, but the bulk of the responsibility falls on states to implement and develop plans. The U.S. Department of Labor, in coordination with the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, provides information and resources for states, local communities, nonprofits, and others. States use federal guidance to develop and implement WIOA State Plans, as well as local and regional subplans that are responsive to local

community workforce needs.⁷ Workforce Development Boards at the state and local level are tasked with enacting the plans and identifying communities' in-demand occupations for targeted funding.⁸

WIOA is designed to match employers with skilled workers, and to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services. To meet this goal, WIOA strengthened registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs). All RAPs are on a state's Eligible Training Provider List and receive WIOA federal workforce funding. The funding is allotted to states based on a formula, usually administered through local Workforce Development Boards. The Workforce Development Boards can use funds to support on-the-job learning, also referred to as on-the-job training, and related training and instruction. WIOA funding can also help provide books, transportation, and other supports such as child care that enables individuals to successfully participate in apprenticeship programs.

HOW TO START A REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM:⁹

- A sponsor determines the target audience, which could include the full child care workforce, or the apprenticeship could be designed specifically for family child care, center-based teachers, and/or center-based program administrators.
- Next, the sponsor seeks potential partners, including nonprofits, community colleges, child care programs, and state and local agencies and offices.
- Then, working together, the partners determine the credential or degree to be earned and any needed coursework alignment.
- The program budget is created and includes wage increases, mentor stipends, training or coursework fees, and administrative costs.
- Finally, the program is registered with federal (and sometimes state) agencies. Once approved, it can be launched.
- Apprenticeship programs can pursue federal, state, local, or private funding sources to help begin and sustain the program, including federal or state grants, philanthropic funds, or business partnerships.



Child Care Registered Apprenticeships

A defined career pathway, as highlighted in WIOA, presents a promising road map for the child care workforce. Opportunities are furthered when a career pathway specifically incorporates a registered apprenticeship program. RAPs combine classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and mentorship to create a holistic program with an earn-while-you-learn approach.¹⁰ RAPs offer a flexible model for child care educators to improve their knowledge and skills with the goal of acquiring a state-defined credential, a nationally recognized child development associate (CDA) credential, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree—all while increasing their wages and improving the quality of the child care and early learning workforce.

**THE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING
WORKFORCE WAS ONE OF THE TOP FIVE NEW
REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP OCCUPATIONS IN
THE UNITED STATES IN 2021.¹¹**

A Labor Department study on effective career pathways for the early education workforce found that “apprenticeships, which combine classroom instruction with on-the-job training, offer another comprehensive approach to helping child care teachers enter and advance along the [early childhood education] pathway.”¹²

Every registered apprenticeship has a sponsor responsible for the overall operation of the program. Sponsors can be a business, a workforce intermediary, a community college, or a community-based organization. Regardless of who serves as the sponsor, apprenticeships are always employer-driven, and employers are involved throughout the process. To establish and implement a registered apprenticeship program—and to be eligible to receive WIOA funding—sponsors must incorporate five key elements in their programs:¹³

1. *Business Partnerships*. Incorporating businesses as partners is essential; it allows apprentices to learn while using their improved skill set. For child care and early learning apprenticeships, early care and education programs are the business partners and employers.
2. *On-the-Job Training (OJT)*. OJT allows apprentices to apply what they learn in a real-world setting. Sponsors often give apprentices a mentor to advise and support them throughout their training.
3. *Related Instruction*. Curriculum-driven content designed to supplement OJT. A community college or other relevant classroom setting can provide this instruction.
4. *Wage Steps*. Increasing rewards for skill advancements are known as wage steps, or wage bumps. Apprentices gradually receive increases in pay as their skills and knowledge grow.
5. *Credential*. Apprentices receive a credential indicating they can satisfactorily perform a job. Within existing child care and early learning RAPs, this often transfers as a child development associate credential, CDA, an associate degree, or another credential.

Caregivers, parents, family members, and other adults are integral to a young child's healthy development and shape children's earliest experiences.

The emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive and linguistic capacities that emerge in a child's early years are all important for success in school and life. Consistent and reliable child care teachers are key to supporting the best outcomes for young children. "Nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults are essential to healthy human development."¹⁴ When infants and toddlers have the same teacher for more than a year, they are more likely to form a secure caregiver relationship that supports their early learning.¹⁵ High staff turnover harms program stability, working families, and young children.



Growth in Child Care and Early Learning Apprenticeships

Ten years ago, only a handful of states had child care RAPs. Five years ago, registered apprenticeship programs grew to more than a dozen states. However, in the past few years, as interest has risen, 35 states now have active regional or statewide child care and early learning RAPs. An additional seven states are developing programs this year. Many of the programs are just starting up, and most are small, serving anywhere from five to 25 apprentices.

As of June 2023:

- 10 states are using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to plan, establish, or expand child care apprenticeships.
- 13 states are using federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 (PDG B-5) funds to plan, establish, or expand child care apprenticeships.
- 15 states mentioned or described child care apprenticeship initiatives in their 2022–2024 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plans.
- 5 states mentioned or described child care apprenticeship initiatives in their 2022 WIOA state plans.
- Texas is the only state that BPC found utilizing all of the four above strategies.

Table 1. Status of Registered Apprenticeship Programs for the Child Care Workforce by State, June 2023

State	Registered Apprenticeshop	ARPA Funding	PDG Funding	In CCDF State Plan	In WIOA State Plan
Alabama	Yes		Yes		Yes
Alaska	None Found				
Arizona	Yes				
Arkansas	Yes				
California	Yes			Yes	
Colorado	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Connecticut	Yes	Yes			Yes
Delaware	Yes			Yes	
Florida	Yes				
Georgia	Developing		Yes		
Hawaii	Developing				
Idaho	Yes		Yes		
Illinois	Yes	Yes			
Indiana	None found				Yes
Iowa	Yes				
Kansas	Yes				
Kentucky	Yes	Yes			
Louisiana	None found				
Maine	Yes	Yes			
Maryland	Developing	Yes			
Massachusetts	Yes				
Michigan	Yes		Yes		
Minnesota	Yes			Yes	
Mississippi	Yes			Yes	
Missouri	Yes				
Montana	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Nebraska	Developing		Yes		
Nevada	None found				

State	Registered Apprenticeship	ARPA Funding	PDG Funding	In CCDF State Plan	In WIOA State Plan
New Hampshire	Yes		Yes	Yes	
New Jersey	Yes		Yes		
New Mexico	Yes				
New York	Developing				
North Carolina	Yes	Yes			
North Dakota	None found				
Ohio	Developing				
Oklahoma	Developing		Yes		Yes
Oregon	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Pennsylvania	Yes			Yes	
Rhode Island	Yes		Yes	Yes	
South Carolina	Yes				
South Dakota	None found				
Tennessee	Yes				
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Utah	None found				
Vermont	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Virginia	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Washington	Yes				
West Virginia	Yes			Yes	
Wisconsin	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Wyoming	None found				
DC	None found				



State Apprenticeship Examples

The following examples showcase the diverse strategies that states are using to plan, coordinate, fund, build, and expand apprenticeship opportunities. States can support new local programs and the expansion of existing regional programs such as Colorado, Florida, and Pennsylvania. States can leverage federal funding opportunities and follow the examples of Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin. States can help develop innovative models to serve the full child care workforce, similar to what Rhode Island did with the development of an apprenticeship for family child care providers. And states can combine apprenticeship programs with scholarship programs, such as Arkansas and several other states are doing with T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarships.



WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia's Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) program is the nation's longest-running child care and early learning registered apprenticeship. The program is a partnership between the West Virginia Office of the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training and River Valley Child Development Services.¹⁶ Other partners include the West Virginia Department of Education, the West Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources program, and vocational schools across the state.¹⁷

Apprentice applicants must be at least 18 years old with a high school diploma or equivalency, and be employed for a minimum of 20 hours a week at a child care center, Head Start, or preschool program.¹⁸ ACDS is a four-semester training program that includes 300 hours of coursework and 3,200 to 4,000 hours of on-the-job training.¹⁹ Classes are held once a week at night and cost \$25 per semester. A mentor helps each apprentice track goals and monitor progress in the apprentice's OJT. Mentors receive a stipend for their time and attend a one-day training session.²⁰

Upon completion of the program, apprentices receive the title of "journey person," which formally indicates competency in the field. Nine West Virginia colleges and universities count a journey person certificate toward a bachelor's or associate's degree. These colleges offer flexible opportunities for apprentices to continue their studies through hybrid and online classes.

Alabama

In 2021, Alabama started its first child care and early learning apprenticeship program. The Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship program was launched at the Coleman Center for Early Learning on the Troy University Dothan Campus and at Wallace Community College. Apprentices can stack credentials, where each credential or degree is layered and supports the achievement of the next one, from a Child Development Associate (CDA) certification, to an associate's degree, to a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. There is no cost for apprentices to participate. To offset costs for employers, apprentices apply for FAFSA, T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood scholarships, Leadership in Childcare scholarships, and C3 scholarships.²¹ As of 2023, the apprentice program had grown to serve 15 counties, with additional partners including Athens State University and Community Action Partnership of North Alabama.²²

Arkansas

Arkansas began a child care and early learning RAP in 2023 with five apprentices in partnership with Child Care Services Association (CCSA) and its T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Division. CCSA worked with the U.S. Department of Labor to develop a national model where apprentices receive a T.E.A.C.H. early childhood scholarship and individualized mentorship while working toward their credential or degree. Other states working with CCSA to implement apprenticeship programs include Colorado, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.²³

Colorado

Colorado has been working to expand its child care RAP opportunities. As part of ARPA CCDF discretionary funding, Colorado offered Circle Grants that could be used to start apprenticeship programs.²⁴ In addition, the Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance of Colorado is undertaking a new RAP in 2023 in partnership with the Child Care Services Association (CCSA).²⁵

Colorado's Red Rocks Community College and the state's Department of Labor, along with partners at several other community colleges, lead the Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship. It is administered through the Red Rocks Child Care Innovations program, which provides services to improve and support child care and early learning.

The two-year program offers grants to support apprentices; the grants include funding for community college courses, training, books, payment for mentors who advise apprentices, and substitutes to fill in for apprentices when needed.²⁶ The apprenticeship program requires apprentices to complete 4,000 hours of on-the-job training and more than 300 hours of course instruction. Every apprentice is assigned a mentor teacher who has completed a training program and has at least three years of child care and early learning experience. Once apprentices have fulfilled all requirements for the Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential, they earn the designation of "Child Development Specialist" from the state Department of Labor.

Florida

The Florida Department of Education issues Child Care Apprenticeship Certificates (CCAC). The CCAC is a birth-to-age-5 child care credential that once earned, designates the person as a Child Care Development Specialist. There are 11 child care apprenticeship program sponsors throughout the state, including Manatee Technical College.²⁷ The child care and early learning workforce can earn two other types of credentials in Florida: a Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC), or an Early Childhood Professional Certificate (ECPC).

The program at Manatee Technical College offers pathways to all three credentials and courses and includes competencies related to the following elements of the child care and early learning profession: planning,

management, finance, technical skills, technology, labor, community, health, safety, environmental issues, and developmentally appropriate practices for children birth through age 8.²⁸

Kentucky

Utilizing Preschool Development Grant funds in 2018, Kentucky turned its Early Childhood Professional Development Framework into an Early Childhood Workforce Development Plan.²⁹ In 2021, Kentucky allocated \$2 million of its ARPA CCDF Discretionary funds to increase registered apprentice opportunities for the child care workforce.³⁰ The state now offers three apprenticeship options: Child Development Specialist Youth Apprenticeship; Early Childhood Instructor Apprenticeship; and Early Childhood Program Administrator/Director Apprenticeship. As participants in the programs, apprentices earn pay raises and bonuses, and upon completion of the apprenticeship, a national journey worker credential. The state funding for the apprenticeship program covers the wage increases and mentor stipends so that participating child care and early learning programs don't incur these costs when they sponsor an apprentice.³¹

Maryland

The Maryland Department of Education dedicated \$43 million in ARPA funds for a grant initiative called Maryland Rebuilds, and designated \$11 million of the funds for child care workforce development, with a focus on registered apprenticeships. The University of Maryland, Worcester County Public Schools, Tip Top Tots Early Learning Center, Chesapeake College, and Echelon Academy received the Maryland Rebuilds Grant to develop child care and early learning registered apprenticeship programs.³²

The University of Maryland developed the Maryland Early EdCorp Apprenticeship Program to support child care teacher candidates in earning Preschool Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials. Program participants receive their on-the-job training at high quality child care centers that serve families dealing with a variety of challenges, such as homelessness, poverty, disability, or participation in the child protective services system. Participants receive 160 hours of professional development training and on-site mentor coaching.³³

Oklahoma

Oklahoma included in its PDG B-5 strategic plan a partnership with the WIOA program under the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to establish a child care and early learning RAP.³⁴ In 2019, the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development received a \$1.06 million Apprenticeship State Expansion (ASE) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to expand and diversify apprenticeship opportunities. Child care was selected as one of the nine industry sectors to target as the state seeks to register 300 new apprenticeship programs across industries.³⁵

Pennsylvania

In Philadelphia's CDA-to-Associate's Degree apprenticeship program for child care and pre-kindergarten teachers, employers partner with the Philadelphia Hospital and Health Care District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund. The fund is a Philadelphia-based labor and management workforce-development group that support regional apprenticeship programs across the state.³⁶ The program is designed to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and leverage private and public workforce-development funding.³⁷ District 1199C has several other prominent partners, including the Community Colleges of Philadelphia and Delaware County, which provide coursework and college credit; First Up, which provides mentorship; and the Pennsylvania Apprenticeship & Training Council, which works with the Labor Department at the state and federal levels to license and register apprenticeship programs.³⁸ Philanthropic partners also support the CDA-to-Associate's Degree apprenticeship program.

Potential apprentices must have a CDA credential before applying to the apprenticeship program, and they must have an employer who is willing to sponsor them for at least one year.³⁹ The program offers resources to prepare apprentices for college-level coursework through college preparation placement courses, academic advising, tutoring, and study groups. College coursework is contextualized for relevant application in an early learning setting. The program includes an accelerated associate degree program, as well as 4,000 hours of on-the-job training at its child care or Head Start program. Apprentices and employers are each required to pay \$500 toward the \$12,000 degree.⁴⁰ District 1199C provides scholarships through federal Child Care and Development Fund-supported tuition programs. Each apprentice receives an on-site coach who helps ensure OJT learning requirements, goals, and progress are met. On average, apprentices will earn a \$2,000 wage increase on completion of the program.

Rhode Island

In 2019, Rhode Island's Office of Health and Human Service was awarded \$26.82 million over three years to implement the state's PDG B-5 objectives. Among these objectives, DHS is piloting a RAP for the infant and toddler child care workforce in partnership with institutes of higher education and national technical assistance partners. The pilot includes 25 apprentices working in five child care programs.⁴¹

Rhode Island also has a registered apprenticeship program for family child care providers developed by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Education and Support Fund; SEIU 1199 New England; the Rhode Island Department of Health and Human Services (DHS); and Building Futures. The Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training partners in the program implementation. The RAP creates pathways for the family child care workforce in becoming certified, leading to increased pay and Bright Stars' quality rating score. Once apprentices complete the registered apprenticeship program,

participants earn a wage based on a bargaining agreement between their union and DHS. Family Child Care Providers are sole proprietors who, through SEIU, collectively bargain with DHS on reimbursement rates, making this a unique application of the RAP model and the first of its kind in the country.⁴²

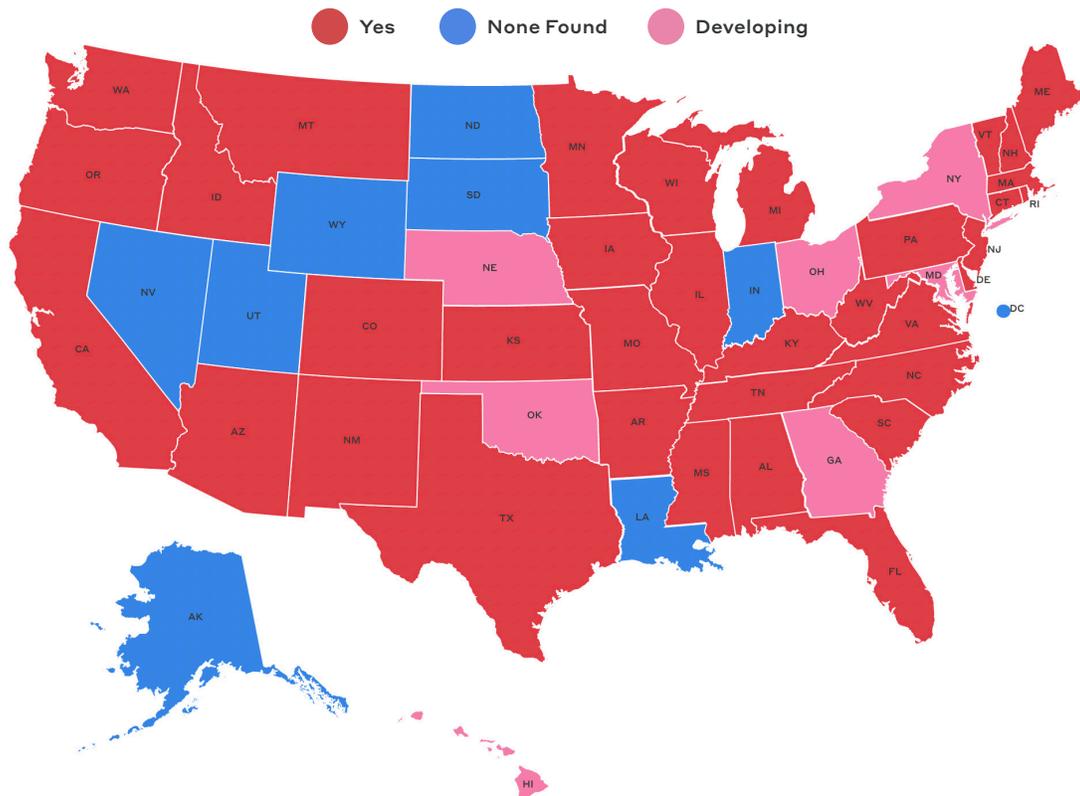
Texas

Texas included intentional and aligned language in its state CCDF and WIOA plans on child care and early learning RAPs. It also allocated Preschool Development Grant and ARPA CCDF Discretionary funds to support developing apprenticeships. Within its PDG B-5 plans, the Texas Workforce Commission is offering registered apprenticeship planning and implementation program grants to expand access to work-based learning for child care professionals. The Texas Workforce Commission hopes to increase the retention of current child care teachers and support the expansion of apprenticeships.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin offers Early Childhood Educator apprenticeship programs across five technical colleges in the state. These programs were developed with the support of a U.S. Department of Labor grant called the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI). The grant focuses on creating opportunities in nontraditional apprenticeship industries, including child care.

States With Child Care Workforce Registered Apprenticeships





Local Apprenticeship Examples

The following examples highlight regional collaboration that helped create and sustain apprenticeship programs. These local programs demonstrate how public-private partnerships, with support from philanthropy, workforce development boards, higher education, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, drive the development of apprenticeship opportunities.

Honolulu

The Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project (ECE³) is part of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. ECE³ designed a child care and early learning apprenticeship program with two community-based Native Hawaiian educational organizations: the Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture, and Keiki O Ka 'Aina. Apprentices are assigned to an on-site mentor and an off-site community college supervisor. Upon completion of coursework, the mentor and supervisor support the apprentice's transition to an advanced-degree program. The programs bring credit-bearing coursework to the child care workforce in their community, with the goal of making courses more accessible.⁴³

Kalamazoo, MI

The Great Start to Quality Southwest Resource Center offers an apprenticeship program for individuals working with children birth to age 5. The program is delivered in partnership with Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency,

KC Ready 4s, and Michigan Works! Southwest. Upon completion, participants will have gained knowledge and skills in the following competencies: planning a safe and healthy learning environment; advancing children’s physical and intellectual development; supporting children’s social and emotional development; building productive relationships with families; managing an effective program; maintaining a commitment to professionalism; observing and recording children’s behavior; and understanding principles of child development and learning. Program participants earn a CDA credential and an Early Childhood Apprenticeship Certificate.⁴⁴

The area east of San Francisco

In 2015, with support from an Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant, the YMCA of the East Bay recruited 21 parents to participate in a credential-based apprenticeship. Since that time, the YMCA has expanded its Early Educator Apprenticeship Program, with many apprentices going on to earn their associate and bachelor’s degrees. The YMCA provides salary raises as the qualifications of apprentices increase. In this work, the YMCA partners with multiple two- and four-year colleges. The YMCA has worked to recruit instructors of color, to ensure the apprenticeship program is more reflective of the diverse communities it serves. Since 2015, the apprenticeship program has grown to work with YMCA of the East Bay’s 25 child care and Head Start programs in four counties and has served more than 500 participants.⁴⁵

Santa Fe, NM

Between 2016 and 2021, private philanthropic funds helped establish early childhood teacher residency models, as well as apprenticeship and mentorship programs at colleges and universities in New Mexico. In 2021, New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group, Hilton Foundation, and Stranahan Foundation supported the development of a child care registered apprenticeship program at Santa Fe Community College. This program, APRENDE, has partnered with four employers to provide services to the child care workforce. Apprentices earn a Child Development Certificate (CDC) from the New Mexico Apprenticeship Office, the Early Childhood Professional Certificate from the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, and an associate degree in early childhood education through Santa Fe Community College.⁴⁶

Southwest Oregon

The Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship was launched through a regional partnership with the Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB); South Coast Regional Early Learning Hub; Southwestern Oregon Community College; Umpqua Community College; South Coast Head Start; and the United Community Action Network Head Start.⁴⁷ SOWIB recruits apprentices for Head Start programs within Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties.⁴⁸ The apprenticeship program is grant-funded, covering the cost of classes for apprentices.

Worcester, MA

The Center for Childcare Careers (CCC) at Family Services of Central Massachusetts, an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation, implemented a pilot child care center-based apprenticeship program. The initiative, Project Flourish, welcomed the inaugural class apprentices in 2021. Each apprentice is assigned a mentor during the program, which lasts 12–18 months. The apprenticeship begins with 150 hours of bilingual classroom training, followed by 2,000 hours of on-the-job training with employer partners: YWCA of Central MA; ABC Child Care Bilingual Program; Children’s Nest Academy; Pakachoag Acres Auburn & Millbury; WCAC Head Start, Webster & Southbridge; and Guild of St. Agnes, Webster.

CHILD CARE FOR APPRENTICES VS. CHILD CARE APPRENTICESHIPS

Child care is an important service for apprentices, **and** child care is an industry with its own career pathways. Apprentices might be parents of young children who need access to child care in order to join and complete an apprenticeship. Additionally, child care program administrators and teachers can become apprentices to gain skills and competencies in their profession.



Recommendations

In most states, plans under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act identify child care as an important support for workers in other industries. However, child care workforce development is largely absent from WIOA planning and implementation at state and local levels. Although many states and local regions are starting to leverage the benefits of child care apprenticeships, most programs have started in the past few years, are relatively small, and need support to be sustainable and scalable. To help states and communities develop WIOA-supported career pathways and RAPs, government agencies at the federal and state levels must work together, along with local communities, businesses and employers, philanthropic organizations, and higher education institutions. Below are several recommendations on how to achieve this goal.

CONGRESS:

- Authorize use of funds for programs to start up and expand RAPs as part of a child care career pathway.
- Direct HHS to include registered apprenticeships as a career pathway in the 2025–2027 Child Care and Development Fund Plan preprint.

FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS:

- Labor Department and HHS—Actively promote registered apprenticeships as a part of a career pathway for the child care workforce.
- HHS—Expand child care and early learning professional-development technical assistance to include workforce expertise in career pathways and registered apprenticeships.
- HHS—Include registered apprenticeships as a career pathway in the 2025–2027 Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan preprint.

STATES:

- Define child care career pathways, including registered apprenticeships, in WIOA state plans and CCDF plans.
- Include child care business representation on state and local workforce development boards.

- Provide technical assistance from the state’s department that oversees child care to workforce development boards on how funding and policies can best support the child care workforce.
- Make child care apprenticeships eligible for workforce development funding.
- Encourage higher education institutions, including community colleges, to develop and monitor content, coursework, and related instruction in registered apprenticeships.

COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

- Work with community partners to fund or identify resources needed to create and expand child care registered apprenticeships.

BUSINESSES AND PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS:

- Provide start-up funding for registered apprenticeship programs, and support expansion to underserved child care teachers, such as infant-toddler teachers, family child care providers, dual-language teachers, and child care educators in rural and tribal communities.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

- Work with local registered apprenticeship programs to create content responsive to community needs and demographics.



Conclusion

The pandemic highlighted a cold, hard truth: a thriving economy needs a functioning, well staffed child care system. One in 3 children with all parents in the labor force lacks access to child care in their community. As the labor market tightens, many child care businesses are struggling to recruit and retain staff, in part because of the low wages that child care educators typically earn.

Our nation's broader economic success depends on our ability to recruit and retain a competent child care workforce. By supporting investments in education and workforce development for child care, we can increase the supply of programs and reduce our nation's child care gap.

Program staff need opportunities to increase their competencies, build their knowledge, and learn and practice new skills. Registered apprenticeships, often a tool used to recruit workers to high demand occupations, are a compelling option for states to support their child care and early learning workforce.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, passed with bipartisan support more than a decade ago, formalizes the use of registered apprenticeships to improve education to workforce transitions and gives employees continuous education and improves on-the-job skills. Federal and state agencies must work together, along with local communities, businesses and employers, philanthropic organizations, and higher education institutions, to encourage states and communities to develop and expand WIOA-supported career pathways and registered apprenticeships.

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