

ECPC Part C and Part B/619 Personnel Recruitment and Retention Survey



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Part C and Part B/619 Personnel Recruitment and Retention Survey

The Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) surveyed state Part C and Part B/619 Coordinators. Part C Coordinators were contacted through the IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA). Both Part C and Part B/619 Coordinators were asked to respond to a brief survey about recruitment and retention efforts for early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE) personnel in their states. Specifically, the survey included three primary questions: (1) Do you feel that recruitment and retention of EI (Part C) or ECSE (Part B/619) personnel is a concern in your state?; (2) Do the EI (Part C) or ECSE (Part B/619) personnel across your state represent the background characteristics and diversity of the families enrolled and receiving services?; and (3) Are you using any innovative and/or effective recruitment and retention strategies to increase the background characteristics and diversity of EI (Part C) or ECSE (Part B/619) personnel in your state? Open-ended, follow-up questions were included for each primary question. In addition, respondents were given an opportunity to share other comments about shortages of EI/ECSE personnel in their states, either via an open-ended survey item, or follow-up phone interview. The goals of the survey were to (a) describe the national EI/ECSE personnel landscape and (b) identify effective and innovative strategies being used in state programs to recruit and retain EI/ECSE personnel who have diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, or other backgrounds across discipline categories.

EI Personnel Recruitment and Retention Survey

Part C Coordinators from 35 states and two U.S. territories responded to the survey (see Appendix for a complete list of states and territories represented). In the subsequent sections, we use the word 'states' to refer to both states and territories.

Is Recruitment and Retention of EI Personnel a Concern?

All respondents indicated that recruitment and retention of EI personnel is a concern in their state (see Figure 1). In fact, the respondent from Washington described this concern as a "crisis." Over half of respondents (64.8%) provided an explanation for their response. In their explanations, many respondents emphasized an overall personnel shortage (*n* = 18; Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Guam, Idaho, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia). For example, the respondent from Kansas described that there are "not enough personnel for all of the open positions." In Oklahoma, "service providers are running around a 16% vacancy rate." The respondent from Virginia noted "true shortages in some provider types," going on to note that "not enough [people are] graduating from personnel preparation program to fill [the] need."

Figure 1



Respondents' Concern about Recruitment and Retention of EI Personnel in Their State

In other explanations, some respondents described potential reasons for the personnel shortage. The most frequently cited reason was inadequate compensation (n = 7; Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, New York, North Carolina, Virgnia). For example, the respondent from Virginia noted an "inability to pay enough to compete with private sector and public schools." The respondent from Colorado expressed a similar sentiment and described how "professionals [are] leaving to take salaried or contracted positions."

Three respondents emphasized unfavorable job-related logistics, often in tandem with low compensation (Colorado, Georgia, Virginia). For example, the respondent from Colorado suggested provider shortages could be "due to travel demands across the state...Colorado has many geographical areas that are rural and mountain passes require significant drive time...a provider may not be able to carry a full caseload due to those circumstances." The respondent from Georgia emphasized the lack of mileage reimbursement, another travel-related challenge.

Some respondents described the lack of training opportunities (n = 3; Alaska, Colorado, Montana) as a potential contributor to their state's personnel shortage. Concerns for two of these respondents centered around the apparent lack of degree programs offered at state institutions of higher education. For example, the respondent from Montana noted that there are "no Early Intervention degree[s] available in Montana." The respondent from Colorado shared a similar concern, noting that "Colorado has a limited [number of] higher education specialty programs [from] which to recruit professionals/providers."

Another two respondents pointed to COVID-19 as a contributing factor, noting that personnel shortages have worsened since 2020 (Nebraska, New Hampshire). For example, the respondent from New Hampshire described losing "a lot of highly qualified providers during and immediately after the pandemic." Instead of identifying reasons for the personnel shortage, several respondents highlighted the impact of the recruitment and retention challenges they face, especially with respect to impacts on service provision (n = 6; Connecticut, Indiana, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Rhode Island). As an example, the respondent from Connecticut expressed "great concerns with supporting the families who are enrolled in our system." The respondent from Indiana shared data to quantify this concern: "Based upon our monitoring last year several of our regions were out of compliance for 45 days. One region had significant non-compliance with 45 days and timely start of services. A number of children and families are waiting for IFSP [Individualized Family Service Plan] services."

Do EI Personnel Represent the Background Characteristics and Diversity of the Families Enrolled and Receiving Services in EI Programs?

Most respondents (n = 28; 75.7%) indicated that that EI personnel across their state did not represent the background characteristics and diversity of the families enrolled and receiving services in the EI program (see Figure 2). Of those 28 respondents, 21 provided an explanation for their response. Most often, respondents described the demographic mismatch between providers and families in their states (n = 11; Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Tennessee, Wyoming). For example, respondents from Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska, and New York noted that EI personnel are predominantly White women. Several respondents also emphasized the need for more linguistically diverse personnel. As an example, the respondent from Tennessee reported that they "would like more bi-lingual and multi-lingual personnel." In Arkansas, there are "few nonnative English-speaking professionals." Respondents from Colorado and Wyoming specifically mentioned Spanish as a language spoken by an insufficient number of providers. For example, the respondent from Colorado described relying "heavily on interpreters for Spanish-speaking families" and having "very few Spanish-speaking providers." The respondent from New Hampshire noted that "New Hampshire does have a few Spanish-speaking staff." A handful of respondents also highlighted the need for more cultural diversity, including the need for more "Alaska native providers" (Alaska).

Figure 2

Respondents' Views of Representation of Diversity of Families within EI Personnel



Note. 'Other' includes respondents who selected both *yes* and *no* response options or neither option (including those who provided an explanation without selecting *yes* or *no*).

In their explanations, seven respondents described potential reasons for the demographic mismatch, including educational requirements, hiring processes, and the general lack of diversity in the broader pool of EI providers (Alaska, Colorado, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia). With respect to educational requirements, the respondent from Rhode Island suggested that "there may be access issues within our state relative to who has more opportunity to attend and complete higher education degrees. In our state, people of color have less education and sometimes do not meet requirements for EI positions." The respondent from Pennsylvania provided a potential hiring-related explanation, noting that the "EI Providers Association believes it is due to contracting rather than hiring. Potential personnel that need benefits will not be able to take positions." In Virginia, "the pool of personnel in some provider types is not very diverse."

Six respondents emphasized a need for improving the representation of the diversity of families in the EI workforce (Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington). For example, the respondent from Washington described diversification of EI providers as a "priority for change" and the respondent form New Jersey shared that "the state recognizes that there is most likely work to be done." Other states provided more explicit actions they are taking to improve the diversity of the EI workforce, including "looking at qualifications and how we can consider other qualifications than education alone" (Rhode Island).

Of note, respondents from New Jersey and New York suggested they did not have sufficient data to support their response. For example, the respondent from New York reported that they "don't collect information on provider demographics."

Respondents from six states (15.8%; District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Nevada, Puerto Rico, South Carolina) indicated that EI personnel across their state did indeed represent the background characteristics and diversity of the families enrolled and receiving services in the EI program (see Figure 2). Of those states, two respondents provided an explanation for their responses. The respondent from the District of Columbia reported that "we have a diverse workforce, but it is not enough. We need more providers." In contrast, the EI workforce in Georgia has "multicultural and diverse district and lead agency staff."

Respondents from three states (8.1%) either did not select a response (Missouri, Texas) or selected both responses (Connecticut). Three of these respondents provided an explanation. The respondent from Missouri did not select a response because they were "not sure," as they "don't collect provider demographics." Like the respondent from the District of Columbia, the respondent from Connecticut noted the diversity of their EI personnel but emphasized the general lack of providers: "we have a diverse workforce, so we would say they represent the background. However, we do not have the number of staff needed."

Are States Using Innovative and/or Effective Recruitment and Retention Strategies to Increase the Diversity of EI Personnel?

Of the 37 states that participated in the survey, respondents from 20 states (54.1%) reported actively using at least one strategy to increase the diversity of EI personnel (see Figure 3). Respondents from all but one state provided a description of the strategy used. The remaining states' respondents reported not using a strategy to increase the diversity of EI personnel (n = 16, 43.2%) or did not select a *yes* or *no* response option (n = 1, 2.7%). However, of these 17 respondents, three described strategies they are planning to use but haven't yet implemented (Arkansas, District of Columbia, Ohio).

Figure 3

Respondents' Use of Innovative and/or Effective Recruitment and Retention Strategies to



Diversify EI Workforce

Note. 'Other' includes respondents who selected both *yes* and *no* response options or neither option (including those who provided an explanation without selecting *yes* or *no*).

We identified five themes among the planned or active strategies described, including (a) community outreach and engagement, (b) financial incentives, (c) novel or alternative credentialing pathways, (d) professional or career development, and (e) marketing. Respondents from eight states described using community outreach and engagement strategies to recruit and retain diverse EI personnel (Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Vermont). Examples of such strategies included communicating needs to "target community centers, including tribal, Latino, and other minority groups" (Oklahoma), "outreach

to professional associations and clubs" (Indiana), "hosting career fairs" (Connecticut), "supporting Child Find outreach to diverse populations" (Arkansas), as well as opportunities to "convene family round tables to engage diverse families in identifying barriers to access and participation and brainstorm solutions" (Arkansas).

Financial incentives were also a commonly reported strategy (*n* = 8; Colorado, Connecticut, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island). Respondents from some states described increasing compensation for in-service providers, including retention bonuses (Arkansas, Colorado, North Carolina, Rhode Island). The respondent from Puerto Rico reported they have "increased the service rates as much as our resources allow us to." Similarly, the respondent from Rhode Island "secured state ARPA [American Rescue Plan Act] funds for EI agencies to provide salary increases, bonuses, and other incentives." Other states described decreasing costs associated with education and training, including offering tuition-free degree programs (Michigan, Oregon), "providing funding to student placements" (Connecticut), and "tuition assistance for necessary credentialing" (Nebraska).

Seven respondents described novel or alternative credentialing pathways to improve recruitment and retention (Alaska, Michigan, Nebraska, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee). Respondents from two states (Michigan, Nebraska) reported using "Grow Your Own" models focused on recruiting and training community members to increase the diversity of the workforce (Motamedi et al., n.d.). The respondent from Oregon described their state's alternative pathway to become an EI specialist:

Oregon has an alternative pathway to become an EI specialist which is run by the Oregon Department of Education. It is free and the specialist or supervisor does not have to attend a college program, as long as they have a BA [bachelor's degree] in early childhood, special education, or a related field. Several bi-lingual teaching assistants have

received Authorization, as well as some specialists who live in tribal communities. The respondent from Rhode Island reported they are "changing qualifications to include other experiences and not solely education," but noted this change had not yet been completed. In Alaska, they "allow exemptions for providers who are working toward becoming highly qualified." This respondent noted that "this has been especially helpful in rural communities."

Respondents from four states reported career and/or professional development strategies (Arkansas, Colorado, Tennessee, Washington). The respondent from Colorado described a robust professional development program:

EI Colorado [EI CO] is providing...continuing education/professional development opportunities for service providers and service coordinators across the state in the following topic areas: Prevent, Teach, Reinforce for Parents, Leadership and Advocacy, Practice Based Coaching, and Assessment Practices in Early Intervention in partnership with The University of Denver presenting these opportunities as an ECHO series. These four 8-week ECHO series will repeat during FY24. EI CO has also partnered with The Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health to provide a professional development opportunity to 30 professionals across the state with the opportunity to receive an Infant Mental Health endorsement through a 12-month learning collaborative.

Examples of career development opportunities included establishing "promotion pathways" (Arkansas), "building opportunities for professional growth through a career ladder" (Washington) and implementing "a tiered system for upward mobility for service coordinators" (Tennessee). Lastly, respondents from four states reported using marketing strategies to support recruitment efforts (Indiana, New York, Oregon, Tennessee). In Tennessee and Indiana, respondents implemented social media campaigns to support recruitment. With support from a contracted local marketing firm, Indiana is "developing social media posts, LinkedIn posts, outreach materials for IHEs [institutions of higher education], talking point one-pagers for our local offices, utilization of social media influencers...[and] promotional videos. We have incorporated bepartofei.org into our campaign as well." The respondent from New York described a similar strategy with positive outcomes: "We ran a promotional campaign to recruit additional providers. Our marketing highlighted people of diverse backgrounds. As a result of the campaign, we received 200-300 new provider applications." In Oregon, the department of education "created a one-page document with helpful resources and articles for strategies on hiring a more diverse workforce and shared it with contractors across the state."

Some respondents provided information about *who* would support the implementation of these strategies. In most cases, respondents cited partnerships or collaborations with institutions of higher education (Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Idaho, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma). Respondents from two states reported hiring or planning to hire personnel with specific responsibilities to support recruitment and retention. For example, the respondent from Oklahoma shared that they "have hired (shared FTE [full time equivalent]) recruitment/retention coordinator. This individual will be working to better communicate our needs with higher education, professional organizations, and target community centers...". The respondent from Arkansas emphasized their plans to hire an "Equity Specialist," but noted that a hiring freeze has prevented them from moving forward with the hire.

ECSE Personnel Recruitment and Retention Survey

Part B/619 Coordinators from 40 states and one U.S. territory responded to the survey (see Appendix for a complete list of states and territories represented). In the subsequent sections, we use the word 'states' to refer to both states and territories.

Is Recruitment and Retention of ECSE Personnel a Concern?

All respondents indicated that recruitment and retention of ECSE personnel is a concern in their state (see Figure 4). About half of respondents (53.7%) provided an explanation for their response. In their explanations, most respondents emphasized an overall personnel shortage (*n* = 15; Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Virginia, West Virginia). For example, the respondent from Delaware shared that "People are leaving the field [and] enrollment in the EC [early childhood] field is declining so recruitment is very hard." In Illinois, "Positions are going unfilled, and we have received several calls from programs about what to do when they can't find qualified staff." Respondents from the District of Columbia and Virginia provided state-level data that illustrated the shortage despite increasing enrollment. For example, the respondent from the District of Columbia shared data collected by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, wherein "special education is inclusive of Pre-K grade level, but not exclusively focused on early childhood special education":

Year-over-year student enrollment in the District of Columbia increased by 0.12%. However, the rate of vacant teaching positions increased from 4% to 60%. Currently, early childhood vacant positions are at 1% and special education vacant positions are at 5%, both of which is a decrease from the year prior. When considering the number of returning staff, 82% of early childhood positions were filled by returning staff while 71% of special education staff were returning. As for recruitment, almost 74% of teachers remain in the District; however, 11% remain in the same role at a new school and 3% were employed in a different role at the same or a new school.

The respondent from Virginia reported that "7% of ECSE teacher positions last year were vacant, teaching out of endorsement, or substitute. We had a 16% increase in children." Respondents from Arizona and Oregon noted that rural and remote areas are particularly difficult to staff. The respondent from Arkansas shared that they "currently have enough staff to cover services; however, they don't feel like they have enough applicants to have true choice in picking staff that are of the highest quality for their children."

Figure 4



Respondents' Concern about Recruitment and Retention of ECSE Personnel in Their State

In other explanations, respondents shared possible reasons for the personnel shortage, including a decline in the number of credentialing programs offered at institutions of higher education (Minnesota, Washington), a lack of interest in the field (North Carolina, South Dakota), and low compensation (Nebraska, Wyoming). The respondent from Nebraska also mentioned "high caseloads, no understanding from administration, and long hours" as potential barriers to recruitment and retention of ECSE personnel.

Do ECSE Personnel Represent the Background Characteristics and Diversity of the Families Enrolled and Receiving Services in Preschool Special Education?

Most respondents (n = 25; 61.0%) indicated that that ECSE personnel across their state did not represent the background characteristics and diversity of the families enrolled and receiving services in preschool special education (see Figure 5). Of those 25 respondents, 18 provided an explanation for their response. Most often, respondents described the demographic mismatch between educators and students in their states (n = 9; Alaska, Arkansas, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Utah, West Virginia). For example, respondents from Arkansas, Indiana, Nebraska, and Utah noted that preschool special education teachers are predominantly White women, whereas the students they serve come from more diverse backgrounds. Another four respondents (Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon) emphasized the need to increase the diversity of the ECSE workforce to "be more representative of the students and families with which we work" (Massachusetts). Respondents from three states (Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas) noted a lack of data—or completed data analysis—to support their responses. A couple of respondents (n = 2; Alaska, Washington) cited barriers related to higher education early childhood programs as contributors to the demographic mismatch between students and ECSE personnel. For example, the respondent from Washington reported that "colleges/universities are limiting their offerings of programs such as this and/or are pushing their students outside of the communities they might serve in otherwise. Representation is hard when opportunities are universally not available."

Figure 5



Respondents' Views of Representation of Diversity of Families within ECSE Personnel

Note. 'Other' includes respondents who selected both *yes* and *no* response options or neither option (including those who provided an explanation without selecting *yes* or *no*).

Respondents from 10 states (24.4%) indicated that ECSE personnel across their state did indeed represent the background characteristics and diversity of the families enrolled and receiving services in preschool special education (see Figure 5). Of those states, three

respondents provided an explanation for their responses. The respondent from the District of Columbia provided data on the races and ethnicities of both the students receiving preschool special education and the teacher workforce:

Nearly two-thirds of DC's [District of Columbia's] students, 64%, are Black/African American; nearly one-fifth, 19%, are Hispanic/Latino and 12% are White/Caucasian. Three percent of DC students are of two or more races and 1% are Asian. Fewer than 1% of DC students are American Indian/Alaskan Native or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Based on the available data, more than half, 55%, of DC's teacher workforce is Black/African American which is nearly a 10% gap between students and teachers who share this racial/ethnic category. There is also a 10% gap between students and teachers who Hispanic/Latino. In contrast, 29% of DC's teachers are White/Caucasian, while 12% of DC's students are White/Caucasian which represents the largest difference among all racial categories in DC. The distribution of students and teachers across each of the city's eight wards is proportional, employing approximately the same percentage of teachers to the percentage of students served by LEAs [local education agencies]. The same is true for the distribution between the only public school district (DCPS) and 71 public charter LEAs.

In contrast, the respondent from Arizona acknowledged the lack of data upon which their response was based: "I think there is some representation, but I don't have data on that right now." Both the respondent from the District of Columbia and the respondent from New Mexico acknowledged the importance of continued efforts to recruit and retain ECSE personnel from diverse backgrounds.

Respondents from five states (12.2%) did not select a response (Illinois, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin). Four of these respondents provided an explanation, all of whom noted insufficient data (or limited access to data) to support a response to this survey question. For example, the respondent from Texas reported they were "not part of the data team that runs demographics" and the respondent from Illinois was "unsure as I have not seen recent data to support this."

Are States Using Innovative and/or Effective Recruitment and Retention Strategies to Increase the Diversity of ECSE Personnel?

Of the 41 states that participated in the survey, respondents from 16 states (39.0%) reported actively using at least one strategy to increase the diversity of ECSE personnel (see Figure 6). Respondents from all 16 states provided a description of the strategy used. The remaining states' respondents reported not using a strategy to increase the diversity of ECSE personnel (n = 22, 53.7%) or did not select a *yes* or *no* response option (n = 3, 7.3%).

Figure 6

Respondents' Use of Innovative and/or Effective Recruitment and Retention Strategies to



Diversify ECSE Workforce

Note. 'Other' includes respondents who selected both *yes* and *no* response options or neither option (including those who provided an explanation without selecting *yes* or *no*).

We identified five themes among the strategies described, including (a) novel or alternative credentialing pathways, (b) financial incentives, (c), community outreach and engagement, and (e) marketing. Respondents from nine states described novel or alternative credentialing pathways to recruit diverse ECSE personnel (Alaska, Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, West Virginia). One novel pathway reported by several states was the development of "Grow Your Own" programs focused on recruiting and training community members to increase the diversity of the workforce (Alaska, Michigan, New Mexico; Motamedi et al., n.d.). In West Virginia (WV), "Grow Your Own WV (GYO WV) and GYO WV Apprenticeship to Teaching are initiatives to increase the teacher pipeline by capturing students in high school to complete their first year of college in their JR [junior] and SR [senior] year in HS [high school] and then Sophomore and Junior years in college spent on general studies and content area/pedagogy and their senior year, if a vacancy is available, the resident teacher may be hired as the teacher of record." In addition to "Grow Your Own programs," other alternative credentialing pathways included a "Para-to-Teacher Pathway" (North Dakota), as well as alternative programs at the local level: "School districts can now offer alternative educator prep [preparation] programs" (Arizona).

Seven respondents described using financial incentives to recruit and retain a diverse ECSE workforce (Arkansas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah). All financial incentives were tuition- or credential-related, including "funding college coursework and Praxis fees for endorsements to add early childhood special education for licensed teachers with a foundation in early childhood" (Arkansas); "offering a tuition-free pathway to obtaining a teaching degree" (Michigan); a "special program that helps anyone get the minimum requirements to teach without having to pay for college classes" (Utah); and scholarships (New Mexico, North Dakota).

Respondents from three states (Alaska, Massachusetts, New Jersey) reported leveraging community outreach and engagement strategies to recruit diverse ECSE personnel, including job fairs in conjunction with local education agencies (Massachusetts) and local universities and colleges (New Jersey). The respondent from Alaska described "partnering with school districts" more broadly. Of note, respondents from two states reported partnering with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to support recruitment and retention (Ohio, Vermont). In Ohio, a "retention grant with OSEP...is helping us create and deploy leaderships cohorts." The respondent from Vermont reported successes from their partnership with OSEP:

Through an OSEP grant, our largest higher education institution has worked to increase the number of ECSE, EI, SLPs [speech-language pathologists] in the state. Other invested parties, such as the 619, are on the advisory board for this project.

References

Motamedi, J. G., Leong, M., & Yoon, S. Y. (n. d.). *Strategies for designing, implementing, and evaluating grow-your-own teacher programs for educators.* REL Northwest.

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/strategies-for-educators.pdf

Appendix

Alabama	Maine	Oregon
Alaska	Maryland	Pennsylvania
Arkansas	Michigan	Puerto Rico
Colorado	Missouri	Rhode Island
Connecticut	Montana	South Carolina
District of Columbia	Nebraska	Tennessee
Georgia	Nevada	Texas
Guam	New Hampshire	Vermont
Hawaii	New Jersey	Virginia
Idaho	New York	Washington
Indiana	North Carolina	Wyoming
Kansas	Ohio	
Kentucky	Oklahoma	

U.S. States and Territories Represented in Part C Survey

U.S. States and Territories Represented in Part B/619 Survey

Alaska Arizona	Maine Maryland	Oregon Pennsylvania
Arkansas	Massachusetts	South Carolina
Colorado	Michigan	South Dakota
Connecticut	Minnesota	Tennessee
Delaware	Mississippi	Texas
District of Columbia	Nebraska	Utah
Guam	Nevada	Vermont
Hawaii	New Jersey	Virginia
Illinois	New Mexico	Washington
Indiana	North Carolina	West Virginia
Iowa	North Dakota	Wisconsin
Kansas	Ohio	Wyoming
Louisiana	Oklahoma	