DO STATES REQUIRE CHILD CARE PROGRAMS TO EDUCATE CHILDREN?

Preview of Report #4:
Qualifications for Teachers and Directors in Child Care Centers

A Summary of the Discussion Draft by Sarah LeMoine and Gwen Morgan

This paper is a summary of Report #4, part of a five brief series that also includes:

Report #1: State Center Licensing Requirements for Child Development and Early Education
Report #2: Preschool and Child Care Center Rules
Report #3: Infant/Toddler Rules to Assure Early Education and Strong Relationships
Report #5: The Role of State Licensing Agencies in Quality Improvement of Centers
INTRODUCTION

In response to questions from Senate staff, the authors undertook a study of the states’ child care center licensing rules to determine whether the States require child care centers to provide education for young children in all licensed programs, or whether they intend only to protect the physical health and safety of children. The study examines only the baseline requirements that states require of all center programs that are permitted by the licensing agency to operate. Report #4 focuses on both the minimum and maximum educational alternatives for staffing qualifications across all the states, and the content of annual ongoing professional development requirements. This preview contains a summary of the information and findings contained in the full Report #4, which includes state-by-state tables on staff educational and training requirements.

CENTRAL QUESTION

To what extent do the States require licensed child care centers to provide an educational program for all children?

REPORT #4 SUB-QUESTION

Do the States require child care centers to employ teachers and directors with specialized early childhood qualifications?

Over the past decade, a plethora of research findings have linked positive child outcomes to qualifications of staff. Because this study focused on whether states require that young children receive an educational program, we gathered information on staff training and preservice requirements. The authors assume that if a state requires licensees to provide early childhood education, then the teachers and those who employ and supervise the teachers must have knowledge and skills for work with children of the age groups accepted by the centers. In this section of the study, we investigated all the alternative preservice qualifications and training requirements that the states permit. In examining the sub-question (listed above), we also wanted to know how much education, and what kind of education is being required; to that end, we asked three additional questions:

1) What is the level of education required of directors and teachers in licensed centers?
2) What is the content of required preservice qualifications and annual ongoing training?
3) What opportunities do staff have to improve their qualifications and move to higher positions?

Staff requirements in licensing regulations can serve as a foundation for professional development and career pathways. Recent data on the lowest alternative for meeting minimum early childhood education (ECE) qualifications of teachers, master teachers, and directors, are available on the Web site of the National Child Care Information Center (LeMoine, 2004)¹, and are periodically updated. For purposes of comparing how much professional education is

¹ Center and family child care minimum early childhood education preservice qualifications and ongoing training requirements are available on the Web at http://nccic.org/poptopics/index.html#licensing.
required across the states, the data tracked at the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), and previously by Wheelock College, have been based only on the professional education a staff member has been required to have. If a state has a list of alternative ways to meet the qualification requirement, and one of the ways is experience alone, that state is considered to have no educational preservice qualifications. Rather than duplicating this tracking effort, our study looked at all of the alternatives for qualification—in particular, the maximum educational alternatives—and the content of the required education.

The authors examined the content of required preservice and ongoing training for teachers and directors as specified in the states rules, including the:

- Specialization of required degrees or academic credentials;
- Content for any coursework required to supplement a degree or credential requirement;
- Content of any training required for orientation of new teachers or directors; and
- Content of annual ongoing training.

Additionally, we examined the qualifications by role, in order to determine whether there is ease of entry into assisting roles, if those roles can be a step in a progression of roles and qualifications, and whether required degrees and qualifications are likely to be accessible in all geographic areas.

The United States changing demographics surface additional factors to consider in examinations of staffing requirements and supports. Projections on youth population growth from 1995–2005 show a net decrease of 3 percent for white, non-Hispanic youth. A net increase is projected for youth of all other races/ethnicities (Washington & Andrews, 1998). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), between the years 2000 and 2050 the percentage of population change will be approximately 71 percent for African Americans, 213 percent for Asian Americans, and 188 percent for Hispanics.

Children who see members of their own community in positions of authority in the programs that serve their community are given a message of hope. Cultural factors including support of home language are critical to English language development and educational success of children from non-mainstream backgrounds. Recent research and studies highlight the importance of cultural continuity in achieving and maintaining quality programs (Chang, Muckelroy & Polidoro-Tobaissen, 1996; Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Galinsky, Howes, & Kontos, 1995; Simpson, 1993; Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1989).

The authors wanted to examine state strategies to assure that members of young children’s communities have access to future careers in child care services in their community. We investigated staffing requirements with attention to whether licensing requirements support members of the children’s own communities to enter the field and become qualified teachers over time.

The data for this report are drawn from the states’ most recent licensing rules for child care centers, as of June 2004. A summary of the findings—organized by level of required qualification, content of any required teacher education or training, and experience—are presented in this preview.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Alternative Levels of Required Qualifications for Teachers and Directors

States often identify a number of options as alternative ways for center staff to meet minimum preservice qualifications. Alternatives usually permit some direct service experience to substitute for some of the educational qualifications. For example a state may either require a Bachelor’s degree in ECE or child development without direct service experience, OR an Associate’s degree in ECE or child development AND three years of experience working with young children in a licensed program.

In general, states set their ECE or child development qualifications for directors higher than their qualifications for teachers. States’ requirements indicate that they want those who administer programs to have knowledge about young children. In some states, it is possible for an administrator to lack this knowledge, but if so, typically another person with early childhood qualifications must be employed as well, to supervise the program.

States offer a wide range of alternatives to become a qualified center director—numbers of alternatives range from two to 18. Four states’ regulations have only one way for directors to qualify, or require no educational qualifications at all. For teachers, too, states’ rules permit a number of alternatives, ranging from 0 to eight. Nine states have either no academic qualifications, or very low requirements. We defined the highest academic alternative as the maximum alternative.

### MAXIMUM ALTERNATIVE: DIRECTOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum Preservice Educational Alternative</th>
<th># of States</th>
<th>% of States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA/MS/PhD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/BS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA/AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA credential</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specified Number of college credits short of degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State director credential</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing annual hours of training only</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MAXIMUM ALTERNATIVE: TEACHING STAFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th># of States</th>
<th>% of States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA/MS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/BS or higher degree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA/AS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA credential</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specified number of college credits short of degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State DOE certification as public school teacher; other state credential; or approved training program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing annual hours of training only</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By offering alternatives for meeting qualifications, the states avoid the problem that the minimum comes to define the maximum. In some states the alternatives become the basis for career paths toward increasing qualifications for moving to other jobs in the field (such as
different roles, accredited centers, or centers serving children with special needs) and the basis for salary policies. Indeed, some states regulations are directly linked to their professional development systems and/or tiered strategy systems. Some states link an alternative to a size of center, i.e. requiring that larger centers must employ some percentage of degreed teachers, or must employ a director meeting a higher academic alternative.

**Content of Required Education for Directors and Teachers**

Of the 35 states that have a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree as an alternative qualification for directors, 11 require that the degree be in ECE or child development. One of these 11 will accept a degree in a related field, with two additional years of experience with young children. Fourteen states require that the degree be in ECE or child development or a related field. One of them, South Dakota, requires a degree in ECE or child development OR elementary education. Two will accept a degree in any field with additional credits in ECE or child development.

The question of defining whether a related field has the appropriate content is being debated. Since there are few states with strong early childhood degrees at the Bachelor’s level, the States are concerned that related degrees may not offer the necessary content in child development for children younger than school-age. The issue of access complicates this debate.

**Experience**

Research studies have found that the states can not rely on experience alone as an indicator of quality. And few states have an alternative based only on experience for center directors—38 states require some form of ECE related preservice qualification. For the baseline, or lowest requirement, only 15 states require center teachers to have ECE preservice qualifications; the majority include qualifying options that rely heavily on experience combined with high school (or equivalent) completion. Experience is typically required for all roles if a qualifying degree does not include a significant emphasis on the ages of children the staff member will teach. For example, Vermont, a state with high professional standards, requires a year of additional experience with young children even for teachers who have a Master’s degree.

**Administrative Content for Directors**

Only 26 states, roughly half, even mention administrative content among their qualifications for directors, and not all of these 26 require such content in each alternative for qualifying. Six states require some preservice training in administration: Alabama, California, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. Colorado requires administrative content only for directors of large centers. Nevada permits three semester-hours in the business of child care to count toward the required 12 hours of credit, but directors are free to take the entire 12 hours in child development or related topics with no credits in administration.

Eight states (FL, MS, NY, NC, OK, TN, TX, and WI) have a state-defined administrator credential, or a state-developed director course, as a qualifying option. But only two of them—Florida and Tennessee—require that the credential be earned or the course taken prior to assuming the role of director. Mississippi’s and Wisconsin’s credentials are voluntary. Wisconsin requires center directors with no previous experience to complete at least 10 hours of training in supervision or personnel management within one year of assuming their position. In Texas’ rules, the credential is one of seven alternatives—each alternative requires some business
management content. New York and North Carolina give directors time to acquire the credential after becoming a director. In January 2005, the Oklahoma state director credential becomes mandatory for all center directors; until that date, only directors in large centers are required to have any preservice administrative training.

Five states require administrative content only in their requirements for annual ongoing training (NJ, OH, SC, VA, and WA). Of these states, New Jersey is unique in accepting a degree in business administration as one optional alternative for qualifying for director; and Ohio is unique because the definition of ECE/child development in its center rules includes administration. Four states include administrative topics as one alternative for ongoing training (AK, AR, KS, and MO). Arkansas requires new directors to attend an orientation session provided by the licensing department within six months of hire.

We found that almost all states that had Bachelor’s or Master’s degree alternatives gave highest priority to a degree in ECE or child development.

- Seven states that have Bachelor’s degree alternatives or higher require that the degree be in ECE or child development;
- Eight more require that the degree be in ECE or a closely related field;
- Three require that the degree be in education or a related field; and
- Two require that the degree be in any field with some credits in child development.

Some states that accept a degree in a related field require additional credits in ECE or child development, or experience in the field, assuring a focus on the younger age groups. Only two states mention a Department of Education teaching license as equal to an ECE degree, and three others describe a state-developed credential or approved training program in ECE.

**Limitations on Requiring Preservice Qualifications for Teachers and Directors**

If all directors and all teachers were required to meet the maximum preservice alternative, there are many geographic areas where there would not be enough colleges that could or would offer such a degree (Morgan et al, 1993). Bachelor’s degrees in ECE or child development are not available everywhere, and are often provided only in private higher education institutions, while Associate’s degrees in early childhood are more likely to be available at public institutions.

The number of teachers who meet the higher academic alternatives for qualifying may relate to the availability of higher education programs in early childhood in a particular geographic area. Even when ECE or child development degrees are available, low-income and minority students, particularly Hispanics, face barriers—both monetary and linguistic—that can prevent access to formal education (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2001; Ruppert, 2003). States have maintained and refined their alternatives because a single qualification would have to be widely waived if college programs in ECE are not accessible.

**Assistant Teachers**

Assistant teachers and aides work under supervision, and are not in charge of a group of children. Few states’ regulations have any preservice qualifications or alternatives for this role. Several states require assistants and aides to attend basic orientation training when employment begins. In most states, assistant teachers are included with all teachers in ongoing training requirements.
Content of Ongoing Required Training

In addition to preservice qualifications, most states also require annual ongoing training of a specified number of hours, for directors, teachers, assistants, and aides. When states require annual ongoing training, the topics are usually delineated. Typically, educational, developmental, and health and safety topics must be covered in ongoing training.

The data in this study reveal some changes in the past decade. Some states are adding a requirement that at least some of the required annual hours be in approved “sponsored group settings,” rather than sessions organized by the director at the center. At least one state now specifies the option of a course that could substitute for the annual hours of training—an improvement over unconnected workshops. A pioneer in this area may be Alaska, where the professional development training required for directors offers three college credits every two years, until the individual has a Bachelor’s degree in child development. After that, three credit-hours are required every three years. In this state, the ongoing professional development requirement is used ultimately to provide a college-based qualification.

Ease of Entry and Availability of Supports

In most states, the field offers access at the entry level by defining an assistant’s role. The role of assistant teacher makes it possible for ECE “newcomers” to enter the field prior to qualifying as a teacher. Assistant and aide roles also provide an entry point for those who wish to become a teacher, but are first pursuing a college degree. The annual ongoing training requirement—at least conceptually—offers the potential for assistants to acquire the knowledge and skills they will require as teachers, even though few states expect this training to carry college credit. The alternative routes states identify for teacher qualifications, and the linking of alternatives to the size of centers, could become a framework that enables individuals to move in a career path both prior to and during employment.

The past few years have seen an increase in the number of state credentials, such as infant/toddler or director credentials, included in qualification alternatives. These credentials give states more policy control over what the content of such an alternative should be. A few states are now defining their requirements by a level on their career development registry. These innovations are all recent, but are leading in the direction of a progression of qualifications for a progression of roles.

Summary Comments

The content of the educational alternative for teachers in licensed centers, whether it is a degree or community-based training, is usually focused on the skills and knowledge needed to work with children younger than kindergarten age. States that do not require any college degrees or the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, detail the content of the training they require. Some emphasis on health and safety is often included, but the majority of topics are related to child development and early childhood programming. This content may be required in college credits or hours of preservice education, or in annual hours of ongoing training. When required as annual training topics, the content specifications offer some clues about what the states consider important for licensees. And possibly even some clues as to topics that may not currently be included in state’s degree programs.
Improved qualifications are realistic only if states are able to develop salary incentives and college scholarships, over and above what can be required through baseline licensing alone. New state emphasis on levels of quality, continuous improvement, and collaboration between licensing agencies and funding agencies may result in a stronger role for licensing not only in safeguarding all aspects of child development, but also in improving quality and assuring higher levels of early childhood education in licensed programs.
REFERENCES


