

**Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force
Workforce Compensation and Supports Working Group Meeting**

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting: WebEx

Working Group Members Present: Meghan Caine, Pat Ives, Adriana Lopez, Jenny Moses, Krystal Shatek, Senator Melissa Wiklund, Nicole Blissenbach, Lydia Boerboom, Oriane Casale, Cyndi Cunningham, Nancy Hafner, Debbie Hewitt, Ann McCully, Michelle Trelsted

Working Group Members Absent: None

Task Force Consultants Present: Ellen Johnson, Afton Partners; Katie Reed, Afton Partners, Gerald Liu, Afton Partners; Brytain Tate, Afton Partners

Children’s Cabinet Staff Present: Hannah Quinn

Welcome and Agenda

Working Group members reviewed virtual meeting protocols, Task Force Guiding Principles, and went over the agenda for the meeting. The agenda included a review of the first working group meeting, working to understand current Early Care and Education (ECE) staff compensation, reviewing a proposed wage scale, and discussion.

Review

Members reviewed the Working Group Charge:

Define what a “qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated” ECE workforce in Minnesota looks like and how it can be achieved.

Legislation determines that the Task Force must consider:

Workforce Demographics

- Preserving and increasing racial and ethnic equity and diversity in the workforce
- Developing affordable, accessible, and aligned pathways to support ECE staffs’ career and educational advancement

Compensation

- Identifying a compensation framework that supports recruitment and retention of qualified staff in every setting
- Aligning provider compensation with that of elementary school teachers
- Tying provider reimbursement rates to employee wages

Transforming Minnesota’s Early Childhood Workforce Project

Related recommendations from the Transforming Minnesota’s Early Childhood Workforce Project were highlighted:

- Provide early childhood educators with equitable compensation that reflects their importance in educating children and supporting the larger economy.
- Support the establishment of an Early Care and Education Profession in Minnesota through the adoption of the Power to the Profession Framework for defining and advancing the field and align compensation to the framework through the use of wage scales and other mechanisms.
- Support early childhood professionals in earning early childhood credits and degrees and invest in the institutes of higher education that confer credentials.

Debbie Hewitt, MDE representative on the Task Force and member of the Transforming Minnesota’s Early Childhood Workforce Project, shared background information about the project following an NGA report, along with information on their process and outcomes. The group found that institutes of higher education need supports to offer education to those hoping to enter the early education field. Due to current state of wages and benefits, it is hard for higher education institutions to make a case that students should enter the field as a career path. The full report has connections to the Task Force work, and Task Force members should take those findings into consideration.

Review: Brainstorming Activity

In the February meeting, the working group participated in a brainstorming activity to share ideas around defining the areas of the charge: qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated.

Themes from that activity included:

Qualified ECE staff are:

- Competent
- Skilled
- Educated
- Experienced
- Culturally Competent
- They have access to ongoing professional development
- They have received education and training in ECE **and/or** they have obtained requisite experience

Supported ECE staff receive:

- Equitable pay
- Comprehensive benefits
- Prep time
- Ongoing professional development
- Decision making input
- They are valued as professionals by parents & families, their organizations, and society

Equitable compensation for ECE staff:

- Includes benefits
- Is comparable to other educators and similarly situated professionals
- Provide household-sustaining wages
- Reflects the education and experience required to do the job
- Is *equal* pay regardless of setting or child age group

Diverse ECE staff represent:

- A mix of ages
- A mix of genders
- A variety of experiences
- The children they are serving

Feedback included:

- Under “diversity”, staff should represent not only the children they are serving, but should be diverse throughout all programs, reflecting the state as a whole.
- Linguistic diversity should be included.
- Under “supported”, it is important to see the point about being valued as professionals by parents and families, organizations, and society. Early education teachers are as important as teachers of older grades, and the respect should be on par with elementary and higher ed teachers, especially given the amount of development the youngest children experience in ECE settings.

Current ECE Staff Compensation and Living Wage Calculations

An overview of current compensation in the ECE field in Minnesota was provided, along with calculations for a living wage, according to the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). See slides 15-20.

Discussion themes included:

- This data may be skewed due to higher earners (center directors, etc.) being included along with other staff. We may want to try to disaggregate.

- Data is bracketed by level of education (high school diploma or GED, associate degree, and bachelor's degree). Comparisons to other workers with the same education level in different fields show a discrepancy – early childhood workers are paid less than peers with the same education.
- The livable wage calculation (slide 19) seems low. These calculations were done in 2020, and given inflation and current costs of housing, we may want to look at newer data. “Livable” wage does not equal a comfortable life, and many earning at this level still need to rely on public benefits.
- Looking at the public PreK system, there has been some attempt to get more equitable pay. If a program receives VPK money, the salaries offered need to be “comparable” to elementary educators.
- It would be nice to see data displayed by geographic region, along with cost of living in each region. It's hard to see the difference between Greater Minnesota and the metro area in this data.
- These numbers reflect those who are in the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program. This excludes many FCC businesses.

Wage Scale Proposal

Oriane Casale, DEED representative on the Task Force and co-author of the Minnesota Early Care and Education [Wage Scale](#), presented information on the proposal (see slides 22-27).

Discussion themes included:

- This proposal is meant as a floor, not a ceiling. The proposal is meant to bring lower wage earners up to a higher wage, not take higher earners down to a lower level. This proposal may need to be re-visited to increase the wage proposal due to the current very tight labor market.
- In order to be viable, a profession has to acknowledge education and experience, allow people to grow within the occupation. Otherwise, workers will leave.
- The Power to the Profession three levels (ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III) are interesting. The education requirements and roles may not always line up in all settings (someone may be a lead teacher with a CDA certificate or 24 credits, rather than a 2-year degree, for example).
- A student can earn a 4-year degree and not get a license in Minnesota, which can be confusing for students hoping to become educators. Pathways should be clarified at all levels.
- Some programs who participate in Parent Aware are unable to find staff to meet the staffing qualification requirements of the Parent Aware program. Qualified workers and quality programs are intertwined issues.
- This proposal is meant to close the gap between current wages and a livable wage. This wage scale compensates workers more for furthering education, which is meant to help with retention – it provides a growth opportunity in the profession.
- The ECE field has a higher concentration of BIPOC workers than the workforce as a whole. BIPOC workers absorb impact of low wages, and the field is over 90% women. There is a legacy and history behind low wages for women.
- In-home child care providers in California recently formed a union, which is working to increase minimum wage and a higher increase in levels of CCAP pay. That may be one way to increase wages, access to benefits like healthcare.

- In MN, the majority of CCAP payments and Early Learning Scholarships are utilized by centers, not FCCs. Tying more money and benefits to those programs would not help FCCs as a stability measure.
- Is there a way to think bigger, outside of the current CCAP system? Potential solutions may include an ongoing stipend or monetary support for funding child care. With the pandemic, that door has opened with stabilization grants – can we continue that model?
- It is hard for FCCs to see themselves in this proposal. They are business owners and a part of the workforce, and considerations are different for them. FCCs may choose to take on more children and make more money, or serve fewer children – they have more choice in their wages and the sizes of their programs.
 - A small group agreed to come back with recommendations on what supports might be needed specific to FCCs.
- There is a movement in various industries to develop standards across a wage scale – for example, in nursing homes. Construction is an example of an industry that drives a prevailing wage, rather than a standard minimum wage.

Next Steps and Close Out

Krystal Shatek will report out from this meeting at the next full Task Force meeting. Future meetings will occur on the second Wednesday of each month (listed below), from 6pm-8pm.

- Wednesday, April 13
- Wednesday, May 11
- Wednesday, June 8
- Wednesday, July 13
- Wednesday, August 10
- Wednesday, September 14
- *October TBD*

Next Working Group Meeting: April 13, 2022, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.