



Pennsylvania Must Strengthen Its Professional Development Registry to Support Early Childhood Educators

In 2006, Pennsylvania created a [Professional Development Registry](#) to identify early childhood educators in the state. The PD Registry allows individuals and child care programs to track their professional achievements and provide data about the early childhood workforce.¹ The registry collects demographic information, wages, education credentials and allows participants to schedule professional development training through professional learning organizations. Program directors also use the registry to track staff and program completion of OCDEL requirements for training and certifications.

Pennsylvania requires licensed child care programs with a quality rating of STAR 2, 3, or 4 to maintain annually updated program and staff profiles within the registry. Through American Rescue Plan funding received during the pandemic for Pennsylvania's child care sector, OCDEL also required licensed programs with a quality rating of STAR 1 to input organization profiles and verify staff eligible to apply for different funding opportunities that became available. As of June 2022, the PD Registry includes profiles for over 90,000* individual and program users, an increase of over 27% from June 2021, due mainly to the requirement for STAR 1 programs to enter their data.

Pennsylvania is a member of the National Workforce Registry Alliance. In September 2020, the Alliance's Partnership Eligibility Review cohort accepted the state's registry into its national data collection process. Pennsylvania joined 16 other states as a member of the cohort.



The registry is an essential tool in collecting early childhood workforce data; however, the data is not publicly available, creating transparency challenges for policymakers to understand the workforce crisis facing the child care sector. In addition, the registry does not link with other statewide workforce registries that also collect early childhood educators' information, creating siloed data that may not be the most accurate and duplicating requirements across child care programs. Additionally, wage data is self-reported and not mandatory to update, making it often inaccurate in identifying current compensation for professionals.

* Represents all program/provider users as of June 30, 2022. Child care programs account for 6,875 users and individual child care program participants account for 51,320 users.

Start Strong PA Advocates for the Workforce

For Start Strong PA is a statewide campaign of partners advocating for increased access to high-quality, affordable child care, beginning with infants and toddlers. The campaign is concerned with the current workforce crisis facing child care providers and families looking for high-quality care. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers struggled to find qualified staff to maintain classroom enrollment. The sector has historically faced low wages, insufficient support, resources, and infrastructure that pushes quality staff to find alternative career opportunities. Over the last several years, the campaign has advocated for increased compensation, wage parity with the K-12 system for teachers with similar degrees, and improved opportunities for professional development to achieve higher degrees and credentials. The registry provides a starting point to identify a complete picture of the early childhood workforce and data transparency around compensation and academic credentials. However, improvements to the registry and how the workforce data is shared are needed for it to be helpful.

In addition to needed updates to the registry, Start Strong PA is working with policymakers on legislation establishing a Child Care Workforce Commission to review and analyze early childhood workforce data and make related recommendations. The campaign also is partnering with the Department of Labor and Industry to cross-reference wage data with registry profiles to identify preliminary compensation data based on academic credentials for early childhood educators. However, the dataset is limited based on the registry's potential inaccuracies on credentials and wages.

An experienced, professional, and well-compensated early childhood workforce is necessary to ensure every child can be cared for in a safe, high-quality early learning environment. Families rely on the early childhood workforce to maintain employment and contribute to the state's economy. Based on a Start Strong PA [survey](#) of the early childhood education field in March 2022, 91% of child care programs in Pennsylvania reported a staffing shortage, with nearly 7,000 open child care positions. Almost half of the reporting programs have closed at least one classroom due to staffing shortages. Ultimately, the staffing crisis impacts access to high-quality child care, and the survey showed that fully staffing child care programs would result in an additional 30,000 children being served.

In order to identify needed policy solutions to support the early childhood workforce, the registry needs to be strengthened and provide publicly accessible data to understand the workforce picture in Pennsylvania better. Specifically, access to the following data will help policymakers, advocates, and the field make more informed decisions about the early childhood workforce:

- Demographic information, including race, ethnicity, gender, and geographic location;
- Compensation corresponding with staff positions by age group and education;
- Educational degrees and certifications for staff;
- Years of experience in the early childhood field; and
- Program-specific information, including quality-rating, whether a program has a national accreditation, if a program holds a subsidy agreement and if health care benefits are offered to employees.

Other States Make Registries Mandatoryⁱⁱ

Illinois

Gateways to Opportunity: Illinois Professional Development System

Operational since 2009

Over 100,00 members

Mandatory for all staff working in licensed and regulated programs; Required to be updated annually

Member of National Workforce Registry Alliance's Partnership Eligibility Review



Ohio

Ohio Professional Registry

Operational since 2007

Nearly 340,000 members

Mandatory for all staff working in licensed and regulated programs; Required to be updated annually

Member of National Workforce Registry Alliance's Partnership Eligibility Review



South Carolina

South Carolina Endeavors Registry

Operational since 2002

Nearly 35,000 members

Mandatory for all staff working in licensed and regulated programs; Required to be updated annually

Member of National Workforce Registry Alliance's Partnership Eligibility Review



West Virginia

West Virginia State Training and Registry System

Operational since 2015

Over 32,000 members

Mandatory for all staff working in licensed and regulated programs; Required to be updated every 3-years

Member of National Workforce Registry Alliance's Partnership Eligibility Review



Recommendations to Improve the Registry

1. Include mandatory requirements for all licensed child care programs and their staff to input and maintain their individual profile information in the registry, including wage data.
2. Provide de-identified registry data publicly, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, program quality-ratings, and county. This data should include the data mentioned above for analysis.
3. Identify other early childhood workforce registries within Pennsylvania and integrate the systems to capture workforce data across all early learning professionals. Examples may include T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Program, Professional Learning Organizations, PELICAN, and Head Start.
4. Require OCDEL to produce a report every three years that provides a clear picture of the early childhood workforce, using state-level and county data, and include recommendations on how Pennsylvania can better support the early childhood profession.



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Sources

- i “Pennsylvania’s Professional Development (PD) Registry.” *The Pennsylvania Key*, Sept. 2018, <https://www.pakeys.org/pdregistry/>.
- ii “Member Profiles.” *National Workforce Alliance Registry*, 7 Sept. 2022, <https://www.registryalliance.org/member-profiles/>.



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