

From stabilization to transformation for New York's early childhood workforce

THE ISSUE

New York State has made significant investments to increase access to and affordability of child care. Yet families still have a difficult time finding quality care during the hours they need it, particularly for infants and toddlers. One reason for this is that New York has made only short-term “bandaid” investments in the workforce. A career in child care is either unprofitable, unsustainable, or both. According to the Department of Labor, this workforce are “some of the lowest paid workers in the state, which has led to staffing challenges in the industry.”

Short-term stabilization is just one component. Longer term, systemic transformation is necessary.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHILD CARE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE

- **New York early childhood providers/educators need an immediate, substantial, publicly funded wage supplement to retain professionals and support program quality in the field, supported by a dedicated workforce fund.**¹
The workforce fund has support from the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, the NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the NYS Child Care Availability Task Force. This is an approach that states around the country have implemented, including Maine, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, among others.² So long as child care is funded in large part by privately paid tuition, publicly funded wage supplements are the only way to raise wages without raising child care tuition for private-pay families.
- **New York must ensure that compensation increases are accessible to the entire early childhood workforce**, while protecting collective bargaining and taking steps to minimize benefits cliffs.
- **New York should adopt a salary scale connected to the revised career lattice** to ensure early childhood providers and educators are paid thriving wages across age groups (infant, toddler, and preschool) and across settings (home- and center-based), aligned with their credential/degree, role, and experience in the field.³
- **New York should develop a professional recognition system that validates and acknowledges the qualifications of individual providers and educators** in child care settings, possibly including portable background checks, to create a sustainable infrastructure for parity compensation and clear professional pathways.

¹ <https://scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Child-Care-Workforce-2025-Schuyler-Center-One-Pager.pdf>

² <https://thechildrensagenda.org/2024/05/06/workforce-compensation/>

³ <https://earlychildhoodny.org/docs/parity-compensation-report-pdi-2024.pdf>

Child Care Workforce Collaborative



ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE

Housed at CUNY's Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, this privately funded group was formed in 2023 and includes members of the Child Care Availability Task Force, the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, and representatives from the New York Association for the Education of Young Children, the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, the Early Care & Learning Council, the Day Care Council of New York, and Jenn O'Connor Consulting, LLC. The Center for New York City Affairs at The New School is also a member.

The Collaborative is charged with creating a set of recommendations for increasing compensation for positions in various child care settings. Over the past 18 months, the group has built on the work of the Child Care Availability Task Force and researched different pathways to child care careers, surveyed providers about challenges within their field, and spoken to other states that have increased compensation.

