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The Early Care and Education Workforce of Stanislaus County

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The Early Care and Education Workforce of Stanislaus County

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About CSCCE

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), founded in 1999, is the national leader in early care and education workforce research and policy. CSCCE provides research and analysis on the preparation, working conditions, and compensation of the early care and education workforce. We develop policy solutions and create spaces for teaching, learning, and educator activism. Our vision is an effective public early care and education system that secures racial, gender, and economic justice for the women whose labor is the linchpin of stable, quality services.

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Introduction

Early care and education (ECE) programs provide nurturing environments for young children—and the learning environments of children simultaneously serve as the work environments of early educators. In Stanislaus County, there are approximately 330 family child care home (FCCH) providers who own and operate licensed, home-based programs and approximately 125 child care centers serving children from birth through age five. Centers include sites funded by Head Start or State Preschool, centers enrolling children with child care subsidies, and centers enrolling children with no public funding, either as nonprofit or for-profit entities.

Building on the [California Early Care and Education Workforce Study](#), this report provides a snapshot of the state of the licensed ECE workforce in Stanislaus County. **Chapter 1** offers a profile of its core members: FCCH educators and center-based teachers and assistants. **Chapter 2** describes the state of early educator well-being. **Chapter 3** explores stability for center- and home-based programs and for professionals in the field.

About the Study

The Stanislaus County Workforce Study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) in 2024 in partnership with the Stanislaus County Child Care Partnership Council. A total of 237 individuals participated in the study survey, including 108 FCCH educators, 107 center teaching staff, and 22 center directors.

The survey took place online in English and Spanish. We recruited study participants through email and/or text message invitations to all program leaders (center directors and FCCH providers) using contact information compiled from sources such as Community Care Licensing and the Stanislaus County Office of Education.

Site-level data from center directors are weighted by center type, and FCCH provider data are weighted by small or large program licensure. For more detail, refer to the **Key Terms** box below. We also weight the data by region within the county to account for uneven response rates geographically.¹ These adjustments allow us to align our sample with the full population of sites in the county. Throughout the report, we use an asterisk to annotate tables with small subsamples and encourage readers to exercise caution when interpreting the results.

¹ We created three basic regions based on the ZIP codes of the child care programs: Modesto area, Turlock area, and the outer portions of the county on the eastern and western sides.

We present findings by provider type: FCCH providers; center directors; and center teachers and assistants. We also disaggregate findings in select tables for a closer look, using dimensions such as FCCH size (small or large license) and center context (for instance, operated by a local education agency or community-based).

In some sections of the report, we compare responses from Stanislaus County with responses from our statewide sample. We conducted California-wide surveys in both 2023 and 2024 with different sets of questions. As a consequence, some sections of the report provide state-level comparison data from 2023 rather than 2024.

Key Terms

Large and small family child care homes (FCCH): The FCCH sample includes 41 “large” and 59 “small” FCCH providers, a distinction in licensure that corresponds to the maximum group size (up to eight children for a small license and up to fourteen for a large license). We weight our FCCH data to align with the proportion of small and large licensees operating in the county.

Centers operated by local education agencies (LEAs): In this report, we distinguish centers that are community-based from those operated by LEAs. LEAs include school districts, charter school organizations, and county offices of education.

Core Findings

Profile of the Early Care and Education Workforce

- English and Spanish are the most common languages spoken. Spanish-speaking educators comprise nearly two thirds of center teachers and assistants and nearly one half of FCCH educators.
- Most early educators have completed some higher education. FCCH educators and center assistants often have completed courses or perhaps an associate degree. Meanwhile, approximately one half of center lead teachers hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- Around one third of FCCH providers hold a permit, along with the vast majority of center-based educators. Virtually all center teachers (98 percent) hold a permit at the Teacher level or higher, along with 43 percent of assistants.
- While some small FCCH educators are newcomers to the field, most FCCH providers tend to have longer tenures of experience compared to center teaching staff.

- Small FCCH providers earn in the range of \$13,000 to \$21,000 annually, while large FCCH providers earn between \$40,000 and \$55,000 a year.
- Center teaching staff working for a school district or county office earn a much higher wage than those working in a community-based organization. According to our center directors, the pay range at a school-based program is \$20.60 to \$32.00 per hour, compared with \$16.50 to \$20.00 per hour elsewhere.
- In Stanislaus County, we find slightly lower levels of healthcare coverage (except for lead teachers) compared to our statewide study. Similarly, our statewide data on retirement accounts in 2023 suggests that savings are somewhat more common across California than in Stanislaus County.

Workforce Well-Being

Professional Well-Being

- The majority of early educators feel they are “helping children grow and develop” and “making a difference” with the children in their care, but fewer respondents say they receive praise from parents or feel respected for their work.
- With regard to teaching challenges, early educators most often indicated “working with children with challenging behaviors” was an issue, though only about one half (53 percent) of small FCCH providers selected this option.
- Most professional learning opportunities are compliance-oriented: for instance, 86 percent of center teaching staff completed their most recent training to fulfill a requirement.
- Fortunately, educators typically did not pay for the training themselves. However, large FCCH providers were interested in stipends to cover the cost of training.

Economic Well-Being

- Among all early educators in Stanislaus County, center assistants are the most likely to sometimes or often not have enough to eat (16 percent), an estimate that is similar to our statewide findings for center assistants in 2023. However, we find a lower level of food sufficiency among small FCCH providers in Stanislaus County compared with their peers statewide (40 percent and 60 percent, respectively).
- In the event of an emergency \$400 expense, most early educators would need to cover at least part of the expense through some form of debt. Compared to our statewide sample, FCCH providers in Stanislaus County were particularly likely to report using debt alone or being unable to pay the expense.

- Small FCCH providers were the most likely to be enrolled in some sort of public assistance program in Stanislaus County, on par with their peers statewide (53 percent for both). Center teaching staff in Stanislaus County were more likely to enroll in Medi-Cal for themselves or their children, increasing their overall participation in public assistance programs.

Emotional and Physical Well-Being

- High levels of perceived stress were common among early educators, though center assistants were particularly likely to meet the threshold both in Stanislaus County and statewide (71 percent and 69 percent, respectively). Meanwhile, large FCCH providers were somewhat more likely to meet the threshold in Stanislaus County than statewide (57 percent and 44 percent, respectively).
- Chronic health conditions are common in the ECE workforce; however, compared to our 2023 statewide survey, center teaching staff in Stanislaus County reported chronic health conditions less often.
- When considering health risks at work, center teaching staff in Stanislaus County were more worried about working with unvaccinated children in comparison to FCCH providers in the county and to center teaching staff statewide. Center assistants in the county, meanwhile, were more often concerned about getting injured (61 percent).

Stability of the Field

- While center directors rarely took on personal credit card debt for program expenses, nearly one half (45 percent) of FCCH providers did so in the previous year. Additionally, 39 percent of FCCH educators were unable to pay themselves at least once.
- FCCH educators were also more likely to report lingering business challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic: 41 percent of FCCH educators reported delaying repairs or upgrades, and 37 percent were carrying debt they took on during the pandemic.
- An estimated 44 percent of FCCH providers and 64 percent of center directors reported serving fewer four-year-olds since the previous year. This change occurred as more four-year-olds became eligible for TK. Fewer sites, however, increased enrollment of three-year-olds in the same period.
- Nearly all site leaders reported difficulties recruiting staff. Most often, the greatest challenge was finding a candidate with the desired qualifications, reported by 34 percent of FCCH educators with staff and 95 percent of center directors.

- Looking three years ahead, nearly two thirds of FCCH providers planned to continue operating their program. Approximately one half of center teaching staff envisioned continuing to work in their current program in three years, and the other half were divided in their responses. Two other options were selected by at least 10 percent of center teaching staff: “working in a TK classroom” (either as a lead or assistant teacher) and “don’t know.”
- We asked educators who plan to stay in the same program about the factors that help retain them. FCCH educators most often indicated “I enjoy running my own business,” while center-based staff most often valued their relationships with co-workers.
- Current preschool teachers were asked about the job or jobs they would consider if teaching four-year-olds were not an option. Roughly one half would consider teaching age three, and the other half would pursue working in TK. Very few center teachers expressed an interest in a possible infant-toddler room position (16 percent).
- Some early educators would be interested in a PK-3 Credential, most likely by joining a teacher prep program that allowed them to keep their day job.

I. Profile of the Early Care and Education Workforce



In this chapter, we provide a snapshot of the early care and education workforce in Stanislaus County.

Demographics

Table 1.1 provides the gender, languages spoken, and household composition of our study sample. We exclude the characteristics of center directors because they are few in number.

Early educators are overwhelmingly women. In Stanislaus County, English and Spanish are the most common languages spoken. Spanish-speaking educators comprise nearly two thirds of center teachers and assistants and nearly one half of FCCH educators.

Additionally, nearly 5 percent of FCCH educators in our sample speak Arabic, and 4 percent speak Tagalog or Filipino.

Table 1.1. Early Educator Demographics

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Gender*	(N=41)	(N=46)	(N=60)	(N=36**)
Woman	97%	98%	100%	98%
Man	3%	2%		2%
Language Fluency	(N=41)	(N=46)	(N=60)	(N=35**)
English	95%	92%	89%	94%
Spanish	45%	44%	65%	63%
All other languages	11%	18%	3%	8%
Children in Household	(N=40)	(N=46)	(N=58)	(N=36**)
Any child under age 5	26%	36%	37%	15%
Any child age 6-17	40%	69%	37%	49%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*The survey included the options of “nonbinary” or “prefer to self-describe,” but none of the members of the sample selected these options. Nonetheless, CSCCE is aware that data collection has not always accounted for gender diversity beyond a male/female binary. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of early educators who identify as nonbinary or another gender identity, and we recognize that the gendered oppression of women in the ECE workforce is related to the gender-based oppression of nonbinary, trans, and genderqueer educators.

**Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Education and Experience

In **Table 1.2**, we describe the educational attainment and years of experience of the ECE workforce in Stanislaus County. FCCH providers frequently have completed some college coursework or attained an associate degree. Center-based educators, meanwhile, frequently hold at least an associate degree. Around one half of center teachers hold a bachelor’s degree. Among degree holders, the most common majors are Early Childhood Education and Child Development.

Table 1.3 describes early educators by their Child Development Permit levels. Around one third of FCCH providers hold a permit, along with the vast majority of center-based educators. Virtually all center teachers (98 percent) hold a permit at the Teacher level or higher, along with 43 percent of assistants.

Table 1.2. Early Educators' Educational Attainment

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Educational Attainment	(N=41)	(N=49)	(N=60)	(N=38*)
High school diploma or less	24%	31%	4%	15%
Some college	49%	33%	13%	29%
Associate degree	17%	23%	35%	32%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11%	13%	48%	24%
Common Majors**	(N=13*)	(N=16*)	(N=53)	(N=16*)
Early Childhood Education	66%	36%	73%	51%
Child Development	54%	30%	41%	47%
Psychology	10%	18%	3%	0%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

**Among holders of an associate degree or higher.

Table 1.3. Early Educators' Child Development Permit Levels

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=33*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=32*)	Center Teachers (N=57)	Center Assistants (N=35*)
No permit	64%	64%	1%	13%
Assistant Teacher	3%	3%	1%	28%
Associate Teacher	9%	14%	0%	16%
Teacher or higher	24%	19%	98%	43%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

**Among holders of an associate degree or higher.

Table 1.4 displays early educators' years of experience in the field. Among small FCCH providers is a cluster of educators who have been operating less than five years (approximately 33 percent). By contrast, very few large FCCH providers in our sample have been operating for such a short amount of time; instead, approximately one half of large FCCH providers have more than 15 years of experience.

Among center-based educators, respondents are spread across our four categories. Center assistants are more likely to be in their first five years in the field (17 percent, compared to 8 percent of teachers) and much less likely to have more than 25 years of experience.

Table 1.4. Early Educators’ Years of Experience

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=31*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=32*)	Center Teachers (N=60)	Center Assistants (N=37*)
Less than 5 years	3%	33%	8%	17%
5 to 15 years	38%	44%	35%	29%
16 to 25 years	28%	11%	22%	37%
More than 25 years	31%	12%	35%	17%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Compensation

Poor compensation is endemic to the ECE field, driven by historical and contemporary factors. The cost of most early care and education is borne by parents, who pay at least 32 percent of their household income in California, a similar share that a family might pay for their housing (California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2022). Parents’ inability to pay higher prices directly limits the wages that centers can offer or FCCH providers can earn. As a result, the ECE workforce effectively subsidizes the cost of early care and education through their low wages and inadequate benefits (Montoya et al., 2022).

Wages

Table 1.5 shows the median annual earnings of FCCH providers in Stanislaus County, estimating a range of earnings. For small FCCH educators, whose operating expenses eat into the meager fees they are able to charge parents, we find particularly low wages (between \$13,000 and \$21,000 annually). For more information on our FCCH earnings methodology, refer to our report on [ECE compensation in California](#) (Montoya et al., 2022).

In Table 1.5 (and also Table 1.6, which displays the yearly wages of center-based teaching staff in Stanislaus County), our sample size is smaller than in other sections of the report. In

all CSCCE surveys, we allow educators to skip sensitive questions, and lower participation in wage questions is typical. For instance, only one half of FCCH providers answered the survey questions that we use to calculate the wage ranges in **Table 1.5**.

Table 1.5. Family Child Care Home Provider Annual Earnings

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	FCCH Providers
Small license (N=35*)	\$13,000 to 21,000*
Large license (N=31*)	\$40,000 to 55,000*

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Table 1.6 provides the pay range for center-based educators as reported by directors and administrators. The median starting pay for both lead and assistant teachers is higher in centers operated by LEAs, though the gap is very small for assistant teachers (\$16.70 per hour at an LEA-operated center, compared to \$16.00 at a community-based center). The upper limit of the pay range, however, varies much more dramatically. In particular, lead teachers in LEA-operated centers have the highest median wage of \$32.00 per hour, compared with only \$20.00 per hour at community-based centers.

Table 1.6. Center Teaching Staff Median Hourly Pay Range

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Centers, 2024

	Director-Reported Pay Range (N=35*)
Lead Teachers	
Local Education Agency-Operated	\$20.60 to \$32.00*
Community-Based	\$16.50 to \$20.00**
Assistant Teachers	
Local Education Agency-Operated	\$16.70 to \$19.00*
Community-Based	\$16.00 to \$16.50**

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The pay range reflects the lowest and highest median wages being paid by sites. Data are unweighted.

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

**Interpret with significant caution (fewer than 15 respondents).

The sample size for **Table 1.6** is very small; however, the LEA administrator sample covers about one half of the LEA-operated sites in Stanislaus County. By contrast, community-based directors represent only 18 percent of sites of that type. As such, readers should exercise caution, particularly when interpreting the pay ranges for community-based centers.

Benefits

Employers with 50 or more full-time equivalent (FTE) employees are required to offer health insurance or face steep fines (Covered California, 2024). As a consequence, virtually all center-based staff working in a school district or other large organization have access to employer-sponsored health insurance. Smaller centers, meanwhile, are not subject to the mandate, and FCCH educators are self-employed small business owners.

To explore centers' provision of health insurance, we asked directors to detail the benefits available to staff at their center. Because many directors declined to answer the questions, we are unable to provide overall estimates of the availability of employer-sponsored benefits. Instead, we focus on the sources of benefits reported directly by early educators themselves.

Table 1.7 reports the share of early educators with health insurance and retirement savings. These benefits are not necessarily provided by their current employers—indeed, in the case of FCCH providers, there is no option for an employer-sponsored plan.

Based on a statewide survey carried out by CSCCE in 2023, we estimate that 94 percent of FCCH providers hold health insurance, along with 97 percent of center teachers and 96 percent of assistants (Muruvi et al., 2024a). In Stanislaus County, however, we find slightly lower levels of healthcare coverage (except for lead teachers; see **Table 1.7**).

Similarly, our statewide data on retirement accounts in 2023 suggests that savings are somewhat more common across California than in Stanislaus County. While 28 percent of FCCH providers statewide have started saving for retirement, only 19 percent of large FCCH providers and 8 percent of small FCCH providers in the county have such savings. Among center-based educators, a similar trend emerges: more than 70 percent of center educators statewide have retirement savings, yet in Stanislaus County only 58 percent of lead teachers and 62 percent of assistants reported having these funds.

Table 1.7. Early Educators With Health Insurance and Retirement Savings

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=35-37*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=41-43)	Center Teachers (N=50-51)	Center Assistants (N=27-29*)
Health insurance from any source	88%	92%	100%	87%
Retirement savings from any source	19%	8%	58%	62%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Among the early educators with health insurance (**Table 1.7**), the most common source of health insurance depends on the setting. FCCH providers frequently rely on a spouse or parent for coverage, but small FCCH providers also often enroll in Medi-Cal (**Table 1.8**). Center-based educators most often have employer-sponsored health plans, but family members and Medi-Cal are also sometimes sources. In particular, only about one half of center assistants enroll in health insurance through an employer.

Table 1.8. Early Educators' Sources of Health Insurance

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=37*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=41)	Center Teachers (N=50)	Center Assistants (N=29*)
Employer	N/A	N/A	65%	53%
Spouse/parent	37%	37%	18%	21%
Direct purchase	20%	11%	1%	16%
Covered California	23%	12%	7%	0%
Medi-Cal	15%	37%	15%	27%
Medicare	10%	7%	1%	0%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: Estimates exclude educators who have no health insurance. Additionally, educators may have more than one type of insurance (for instance, Medicare in combination with a direct purchase).

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

II. Workforce Well-Being



This chapter describes aspects of well-being for the ECE workforce in Stanislaus County, including professional and personal dimensions.

Professional Well-Being

Workplaces that provide a supportive environment can enhance educators' job satisfaction and mitigate some stresses of ECE work. Professional well-being further impacts educator turnover and retention (Curbow et al., 2000; Whitebook et al., 2016; Zinsser et al., 2016). CSCCE has examined statewide trends in professional well-being in a [recent report](#) (Muruvi et al., 2024b).

Job Rewards

As **Table 2.1** shows, the majority of early educators feel they are “helping children grow and develop” and “making a difference” with the children in their care. In particular, FCCH educators overwhelmingly agreed with both statements. Fewer respondents say they receive praise from parents or feel respected for their work. Center teaching staff were

least likely to agree with the statement “I feel respected for the work that I do” (only 45 percent). Center teaching staff also infrequently “get praise from the parents” (32 percent), unlike FCCH providers (57 percent for large providers and 59 percent for small providers).

Table 2.1. Early Educators Experiencing Job Rewards

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=36*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=43)	Center Teachers (N=49)	Center Assistants (N=34*)
I see that my work is making a difference with a child	97%	86%	70%	76%
I feel like I am helping the children grow and develop	97%	96%	92%	73%
I feel the satisfaction of knowing I am helping parents	93%	79%	71%	69%
I get praise from the parents for the work that I do	57%	59%	32%	32%
I feel respected for the work that I do	50%	56%	45%	45%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Teaching Challenges

Our survey included a list of teaching challenges providers might experience in the classroom or program. **Table 2.2** reports on the percentage of early educators in Stanislaus County who see certain aspects of their work as challenging.

Early educators most often indicated “working with children with challenging behaviors” was an issue, though only about one half (53 percent) of small FCCH providers selected this option. In fact, small FCCH providers were least likely to select each type of teaching challenge.

Table 2.2. Early Educators Reporting Teaching Challenges

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=34*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=42)	Center Teachers (N=50)	Center Assistants (N=34*)
Working with children with challenging behaviors	65%	53%	82%	65%
Finding time for planning	55%	34%	56%	39%
Spending time with individual children	34%	25%	49%	55%
Conducting child assessments	25%	17%	20%	26%
Finding time for observing children	15%	8%	21%	40%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Professional Development

Employment in early education frequently comes with state- or employer-mandated training, most of which aligns with health and safety requirements. Some early educators must also complete training as part of the Child Development Permit requirements, and there are further requirements for sites participating in a quality improvement program. As a consequence, most professional learning opportunities are compliance-oriented. This situation leaves educators with less time to seek out training based on their own professional interests or individual needs. **Figure 2.1** shows the share of educators who most recently attended training to fulfill a requirement.

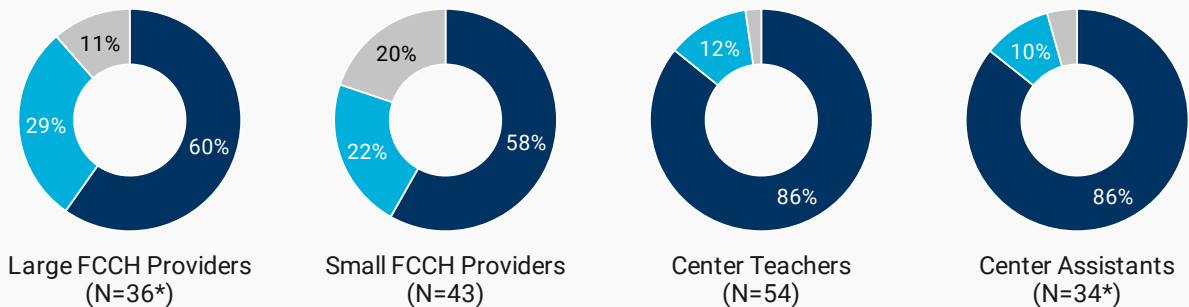
Center teaching staff were particularly likely to have completed their most recent training to fulfill a requirement (86 percent). A noteworthy proportion of FCCH educators, meanwhile, selected “don’t know” (11 percent of large providers and 20 percent of small providers).

Our survey also asked whether their most recent training was free or paid for by someone else (**Table 2.3**). Typically, early educators did not report paying for the training themselves. Most often, respondents reported their most recent training was free. A noteworthy minority of FCCH providers, meanwhile, reported they paid for the training themselves (28 percent of large providers and 34 percent of small providers).

Figure 2.1. Most Recent Training Completed to Fulfill a Requirement

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

Yes No Don't know



Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Table 2.3. Source of Payment for Most Recent Professional Development

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=34*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=41)	Center Teachers (N=53)	Center Assistants (N=34*)
My employer paid	N/A	N/A	23%	44%
It was free	60%	51%	59%	53%
I had to pay for it myself	28%	34%	14%	3%
Don't know/Other	13%	15%	4%	0%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Finally, our survey asked educators which strategies would be most supportive of their access to professional development (Table 2.4). Respondents could select multiple options. Large FCCH providers were particularly interested in stipends to cover the cost (65 percent); small FCCH providers and center teachers were most interested in online training (52 percent and 55 percent, respectively); and center assistants were most interested in paid time off during work hours for training (55 percent).

Table 2.4. Strategies Needed to Access Professional Development

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=32*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=42)	Center Teachers (N=53)	Center Assistants (N=33*)
Paid time off to attend training during my regular work hours	N/A	N/A	41%	55%
Stipends to cover the cost of the training	65%	47%	31%	52%
Training available online	43%	52%	55%	36%
Training available in the evening and on weekends	33%	38%	45%	18%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: Respondents could select multiple strategies.

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Economic Well-Being

In this section, we discuss indicators for economic well-being, including food sufficiency, paying for an emergency expense, and public assistance participation. We provide comparison data from CSCCE’s statewide survey of the ECE workforce collected in 2023, and we describe statewide trends in greater depth in a [recent publication](#) (Muruvi et al., 2024a).

Food Sufficiency

Table 2.5 reports on food sufficiency among the ECE workforce in Stanislaus County and statewide. Our survey leveraged an item from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (Flood et al., 2023), which defines food sufficiency as having “enough of the kinds of food we want to eat.” By this measure, center assistants in Stanislaus County had the lowest food sufficiency, with 16 percent reporting they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. This estimate is similar to our statewide findings in 2023. By contrast, we find a lower level of food sufficiency among small FCCH providers in Stanislaus County than their peers statewide (40 percent, compared to 60 percent).

Table 2.5. Food Sufficiency Among Early Educators

Early Care and Education Workforce

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Stanislaus County (2024)	(N=33*)	(N=38*)	(N=42)	(N=31*)
Enough of the right kinds of food (food sufficient)	65%	40%	56%	60%
Enough food, but not always the right kinds (marginally food sufficient)	35%	58%	40%	23%
Sometimes/often not enough to eat (low or very low food sufficiency)	0%	2%	5%	16%
Statewide (2023)	(N=238)	(N=269)	(N=499)	(N=74)
Enough of the right kinds of food (food sufficient)	64%	60%	63%	53%
Enough food, but not always the right kinds (marginally food sufficient)	32%	35%	33%	33%
Sometimes/often not enough to eat (low or very low food sufficiency)	4%	5%	5%	15%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Paying for an Emergency Expense

To gauge financial well-being, our survey asked respondents how they would pay off a \$400 emergency expense, an indicator derived from the Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (Federal Reserve Board, 2024). **Table 2.6** shows how educators responded, taking into account whether they would need to take on some form of debt, including credit card debt, a line of credit, a payday loan, or pawning something. Most early educators would need to cover at least part of the expense through some form of debt. Compared to our statewide sample, FCCH providers in Stanislaus County were particularly likely to report using debt alone or being unable to pay the expense. For instance, 57 percent of large FCCH providers in Stanislaus County would need to pay by taking on one or more forms of debt.

Table 2.6. How Early Educators Would Cover a \$400 Emergency Expense

Early Care and Education Workforce

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Stanislaus County (2024)	(N=36*)	(N=41)	(N=44)	(N=33*)
Pay outright	29%	29%	36%	52%
Pay using some debt (e.g., partial credit card payment)	5%	6%	6%	8%
Pay using only debt (e.g., taking on credit card debt)	57%	50%	47%	33%
Can't pay	8%	15%	11%	7%
Statewide (2023)	(N=238)	(N=269)	(N=379)	(N=73)
Pay outright	45%	43%	37%	33%
Pay using some debt (e.g., partial credit card payment)	12%	9%	11%	12%
Pay using only debt (e.g., taking on credit card debt)	40%	41%	42%	47%
Can't pay	3%	7%	10%	8%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Public Safety Net Programs

Table 2.7 reports the share of early educators who participate in one or more forms of public assistance. In Stanislaus County, small FCCH providers were the most likely to be enrolled in some sort of public assistance program (53 percent), on par with their peers statewide (53 percent). Center teaching staff in Stanislaus County, meanwhile, were more likely to enroll in Medi-Cal for themselves or their children, increasing their overall participation. Center teachers were also far more likely to be enrolled in the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) in Stanislaus County than statewide (21 percent and 2 percent, respectively). Finally, very few respondents reported using CalFresh (food stamps), suggesting this resource may be underused among early educators, despite their low rates of food sufficiency reported earlier (**Table 2.5**).

Table 2.7. Early Educator Use of Public Safety Net Programs

Early Care and Education Workforce

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Stanislaus County (2024)	(N=29*)	(N=40)	(N=41)	(N=30*)
One or more forms of public assistance	38%	53%	41%	41%
Medi-Cal for child	11%	14%	31%	17%
Medi-Cal for self	10%	21%	22%	22%
CalFresh/food stamps	0%	8%	1%	4%
Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC)	3%	6%	21%	7%
Statewide (2023)	(N=228)	(N=253)	(N=362)	(N=70)
One or more forms of public assistance	46%	53%	29%	38%
Medi-Cal for child	13%	19%	12%	15%
Medi-Cal for self	25%	24%	16%	21%
CalFresh/food stamps	7%	11%	7%	15%
Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC)	2%	4%	2%	3%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Emotional and Physical Well-Being

Stress and Depression

Our survey additionally included two validated measures of emotional well-being: the non-diagnostic four-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4), which assesses the degree to which a respondent perceives situations in their life as stressful (Warttig et al., 2013), and the Center of Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D-10), a 10-item self-report measure of depression (Roberts et al., 2019). For greater detail on this topic, refer to CSCCE's [recent report](#) (Muruvi et al., 2023).

Table 2.8 reports on educators experiencing two types of challenges to their mental health. The table shows: 1) the proportion of educators who scored six or more on the PSS-4,

which corresponds to high levels of perceived stress; and 2) the proportion of educators with a score of 10 or more on the CES-D-10, which is indicative of significant depressive symptoms.

Table 2.8. Early Educators With Perceived Stress and Depressive Symptoms

Early Care and Education Workforce

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Stanislaus County (2024)	(N=33*)	(N=40)	(N=48)	(N=31*)
High levels of perceived stress**	57%	52%	56%	71%
Significant depressive symptoms***	34%	20%	39%	45%
Statewide (2023)	(N=207)	(N=216)	(N=360)	(N=75)
High levels of perceived stress**	44%	51%	64%	69%
Significant depressive symptoms***	24%	26%	41%	29%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

**Reflects the proportion of respondents who scored six or more on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4), the threshold for high levels of perceived stress.

***Reflects the proportion of respondents who scored 10 or more on the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D-10), the threshold for significant depressive symptoms.

High levels of perceived stress were common among early educators, though center assistants were particularly likely to meet the threshold both in Stanislaus County and statewide (71 percent and 69 percent, respectively). Meanwhile, large FCCH providers were somewhat more likely to meet the threshold in Stanislaus County than statewide (57 percent and 44 percent, respectively).

Significant depressive symptoms affect fewer educators, but a noteworthy minority met the criteria on the CES-D-10 scale. Once again, large FCCH providers were more likely to be affected in Stanislaus County (57 percent, compared with 44 percent statewide).

Chronic Health Conditions

Working with young children is highly physical and can take a toll on the body. Our survey asked about a number of health challenges. **Table 2.9** reports on the number of early educators who have been diagnosed with one or more chronic health issues. Educators in homes and centers were similarly likely to report having at least one condition (around one half of respondents in each group), with the lowest rate among center assistants in Stanislaus County (45 percent).

Compared to our 2023 statewide survey, center teaching staff in Stanislaus County reported chronic health conditions less often. While the rates for each type of condition were all reduced, we estimate half as many respondents were impacted by cardiovascular conditions compared to statewide; additionally, very few center assistants reported pulmonary conditions in the Stanislaus County sample.

Table 2.9. Early Educators With Chronic Health Conditions

Early Care and Education Workforce

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Stanislaus County (2024)	(N=31*)	(N=36*)	(N=42)	(N=26*)
Any chronic condition	56%	52%	59%	45%
Condition with chronic pain (e.g., back pain, arthritis)	39%	29%	32%	24%
Cardiovascular condition (e.g., heart disease)	26%	15%	9%	9%
Pulmonary condition (e.g., asthma, COPD)	5%	11%	15%	3%
Statewide (2023)	(N=228)	(N=253)	(N=330)	(N=59)
Any chronic condition	57%	60%	70%	64%
Condition with chronic pain (e.g., back pain, arthritis)	38%	41%	39%	32%
Cardiovascular condition (e.g., heart disease)	20%	17%	23%	17%
Pulmonary condition (e.g., asthma, COPD)	9%	12%	17%	15%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Health Risks at Work

Our survey also asked respondents about their level of concern regarding health risks they face on the job. The response options included “not at all concerned,” “slightly concerned,” “moderately concerned,” and “very concerned.” **Table 2.10** shows the proportion of our sample that selected either “moderately” or “very concerned.”

Center teaching staff in Stanislaus County were more worried about working with unvaccinated children in comparison to FCCH providers in the county and to center teaching staff statewide. In particular, we estimate that 61 percent of center teachers felt moderately or very concerned about this issue. Center assistants in the county were more often concerned about getting injured on the job (61 percent).

Table 2.10. Early Educators’ Concerns About Health Risks at Work

Early Care and Education Workforce

	Large FCCH Providers	Small FCCH Providers	Center Teachers	Center Assistants
Stanislaus County (2024)	(N=37*)	(N=43*)	(N=52)	(N=35*)
Working with young children who are not vaccinated	34%	38%	61%	48%
Getting injured while performing my regular duties	41%	41%	37%	61%
Being exposed to infections at work	40%	34%	53%	48%
Statewide (2023)	(N=256)	(N=286)	(N=372)	(N=75)
Working with young children who are not vaccinated	43%	36%	49%	40%
Getting injured while performing my regular duties	43%	39%	42%	36%
Being exposed to infections at work	53%	46%	56%	53%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The table reports the proportion of educators who selected “moderately” or “very concerned” on a four-point scale of “not at all concerned,” “slightly concerned,” “moderately concerned,” and “very concerned.”

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

III. Stability of the Field



In this chapter, we first examine the stability of child care programs, including their operational challenges and their adaptability in the face of major shifts due to the receding COVID-19 pandemic and the growing presence of transitional kindergarten (TK). We also examine early educators' career intentions and ambitions.

Program Stability

Business Challenges

Table 3.1 reports business challenges that Stanislaus County FCCH providers and child care centers have experienced from 2023 to 2024. FCCH providers were more likely to report each of the challenges. In particular, while center directors rarely took on personal credit card debt for program expenses, nearly one half (45 percent) of FCCH providers did assume credit card debt to cover business expenses. Similarly, 39 percent of FCCH educators were unable to pay themselves at least once during the time period.

Table 3.1. ECE Programs Experiencing Business Challenges Since 2023

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Sites, 2024

	FCCH Providers (N=85)	Center Directors (N=16*)
I missed rent, utility, or vendor payment for my program	28%	13%
I have taken on personal credit card debt to cover program expenses	45%	6%
I have been unable to pay myself	39%	12%
I have been unable to pay my staff	8%	6%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Our survey asked about lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (**Table 3.2**). During shelter-in-place, California issued emergency guidance about the operation of child care programs that caused sites to make significant changes to their policies, group sizes, and more (Early Edge California, 2024). The upheaval for families also led to changes in when or how they accessed child care (California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2020). **Table 3.2** reports how some of these effects have persisted, even though the state of emergency was lifted in early 2023.

The most common impact site leaders reported was an increase in challenging behaviors among children: 77 percent of directors selected this option, along with 42 percent of family child care providers. A lag in children’s development was also commonly noted by directors (54 percent), but not FCCH providers (11 percent). However, FCCH educators reported delaying repairs or upgrades (41 percent) or said they were carrying debt they had taken on during the pandemic (37 percent). Center directors, who are less often owners of their businesses, rarely selected either of these options.

Table 3.2. Lingering Impacts of COVID-19 on ECE Programs

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Sites, 2024

	FCCH Providers (N=94)	Center Directors (N=22*)
I have noticed more children with challenging behaviors than what was normal in my program	42%	77%
I had to delay repairs and upgrades and have not been able to do them	41%	9%
I took on debt and have not been able to pay it off	37%	14%
I changed my policies related to being sick and have not changed them back	23%	27%
I still do not let parents inside my building	18%	5%
I lost some of my families and have not been able to get new ones	15%	23%
Children's development is still lagging behind what was usual in my program	11%	54%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Shifting Enrollment and Staffing

While less than one quarter of site leaders in **Table 3.2** mentioned families leaving their program during COVID and being unable to get new ones to enroll, other significant shifts are taking place with enrollment. Statewide, ECE enrollment fell sharply in 2020 and rebounded only partially. As families were beginning to slowly return to child care, California enacted a broad expansion to transitional kindergarten starting in the fall of 2021. Each year since 2021, an increasing share of four-year-olds became eligible for TK, and this grade level will be a universal option for all four-year-olds by Fall 2025. Other ECE offerings for four-year-olds technically contribute to California’s universal preschool strategy, but only TK is funded to be universal (Powell et al., 2024).

Table 3.3 shows the share of Stanislaus Country site leaders who reported increased enrollment of infants, toddlers, and three-year-olds, as well as a decline in four-year-olds. While relatively few sites reported an increase in serving younger children, 44 percent of FCCH providers and 64 percent of center directors reported serving fewer four-year-olds since the previous year. This finding demonstrates that other ECE programs are feeling the effects of TK expansion, and they are still working to tap into other sources of enrollment.

Table 3.3. Shifts in Enrollment in the Past Year

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Sites, 2024

	FCCH Providers (N=88)	Center Directors (N=22*)
Accepting more infants and toddlers	25%	0%
Began accepting infants or toddlers	14%	5%
Serving more three-year-olds	17%	36%
Serving fewer four-year-olds	44%	64%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Recruiting Staff

Chapter 1 provided a snapshot of early education staffing in Stanislaus County. Staffing shortages predate the arrival of the pandemic, but they became more intense with the overlapping effects of COVID-19 and TK expansion (Powell et al., 2024). **Table 3.4** reports that most sites currently face recruiting challenges, including 93 percent of FCCH providers (among those who reported having a paid assistant) and 95 percent of center directors. Most often, the greatest challenge was finding a candidate with the desired qualifications: 34 percent of FCCH educators and 95 percent of center directors.

Table 3.4. Program Leaders Reporting Recruitment Challenges

Stanislaus County Early Care and Education Sites, 2024

	FCCH Providers (N=52)	Center Directors (N=19*)
Any recruitment challenge	93%	95%
Difficulty finding staff with desired qualifications	34%	95%
Difficulty finding staff due to the compensation we offer	43%	53%
Difficulty finding staff available for the hours we need	34%	37%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Note: The FCCH provider sample is smaller for this table because many FCCH providers do not recruit paid assistants.
*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Future Plans of Early Educators

Looking Ahead Three Years

In the remaining tables, we examine data on the stability of educators’ career paths. First, in **Table 3.5**, we report the job that early educators imagine they will hold three years into the future. Nearly two thirds of FCCH providers planned to continue operating their program. Very few respondents planned to work in a center or in transitional kindergarten.

Approximately one half of center teaching staff envisioned continuing to work in their current program in three years, while the other half were divided in their responses. Two other options were selected by at least 10 percent of center teaching staff: “working in a TK classroom” (either as a lead or assistant teacher) and “don’t know.”

Table 3.5. Early Educators’ Job Plans in Three Years

Stanislaus Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=36*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=45)	Center Teachers (N=51)	Center Assistants (N=34*)
Still working in my program	64%	62%	44%	45%
Working in a different center/at a center**	7%	3%	3%	9%
Starting an FCCH program	N/A	N/A	0%	2%
Working in a TK classroom	3%	3%	17%	11%
Working in a K-12 classroom	0%	0%	1%	1%
Working in a different job in ECE or TK-12	0%	6%	9%	5%
Working in a job outside of ECE or TK-12	3%	4%	0%	2%
Retired	10%	6%	9%	9%
Don't know	11%	16%	17%	16%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

**This item was phrased differently depending on the respondent’s current role: for center teaching staff, the option was “working in a different child care center,” and for FCCH providers, the option was “working in a child care center.”

The educators who planned to continue at the same program were asked an additional question: “What are the reasons you are likely to stay?” **Table 3.6** reports common reasons for staying. Educators could select multiple options. FCCH educators most often indicated “I enjoy running my own business,” including 63 percent of large FCCH providers and 75 percent of small FCCH providers. This option was not included in the center teaching staff survey, which instead offered three options about relationships with other staff. The most common factor keeping center-based staff at their site was “get[ting] along with co-workers.” Some respondents stayed because they “couldn’t leave these kids/these families,” including 35 percent of small FCCH educators and 40 percent of center teachers. These findings illustrate the importance of the work environment and time spent with colleagues.

Table 3.6. Top Factors Keeping Early Educators at Their Site

Stanislaus Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=24*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=29*)	Center Teachers (N=22*)	Center Assistants (N=18*)
I enjoy running my own business	63%	75%	N/A	N/A
I get along with my co-workers	N/A	N/A	82%	64%
I get along with my supervisor	N/A	N/A	63%	30%
I feel respected by co-workers/supervisor	N/A	N/A	42%	59%
I couldn't leave these kids/families	31%	35%	40%	22%
I feel supported at work	16%	4%	35%	47%
My wages allow me a decent living	26%	15%	18%	31%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Note: The sample for this table is smaller than **Table 3.5** because the question was only posed to respondents who planned to keep working at the same site in three years.

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Opportunities for Changing Jobs Due to TK Expansion

Finally, our survey probed how transitional kindergarten may reshape job opportunities for the ECE workforce. We posed two hypothetical questions. First, we asked current teachers of four-year-olds in centers what they would do if their job no longer included teaching that age group. Respondents could select as many options as they wanted.

As reported in **Table 3.7**, teachers were most interested in working with three-year-olds or pursuing a job or preparation program for TK (75 percent and 43 percent, respectively). Fewer center teachers expressed interest in a possible infant-toddler classroom position (31 percent). Assistants were less likely to be interested in working with three-year-olds (55 percent) and slightly less likely to pursue a job or prep program for TK (33 percent). Instead, they were more likely to be interested in working with infants and toddlers (39 percent).

Table 3.7. Top ECE Jobs Preschool Teachers Would Consider

Stanislaus Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Center Teachers (N=31*)	Center Assistants (N=30*)
Job in a three-year-old classroom	75%	55%
Job or prep program for TK	43%	33%
Non-classroom job in a center (e.g., coach or supervisor)	37%	13%
Job in an infant-toddler classroom	31%	39%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

Our survey described the new opportunity to obtain a PK-3 Early Education Specialist Credential, which authorizes its holder to teach TK. To ensure educators understood the process, we stated, “To attain the credential, candidates must have a bachelor’s degree and either complete a traditional teacher preparation program or qualify with a combination of coursework, assessments, and experience teaching four-year-olds in child care centers.” We then asked what they would need to do to pursue this credential (**Table 3.8**).

Educators could select only one option from the responses. The most common choice was to pursue the credential in the evenings, while they continued in their job by day. Approximately one third of center teachers and assistants chose this option, along with only one quarter of FCCH providers. An estimated 23 percent of center teachers, however, responded that they did not have time to pursue a PK-3 Credential. FCCH respondents were more likely than center-based teachers and assistants to select “don’t know” (24 percent of large FCCH providers and 20 percent of small providers, compared to 7 percent of center-based teachers and 10 percent of assistants).

Table 3.8. Early Educators' Thoughts on How to Pursue a PK-3 Credential

Stanislaus Early Care and Education Workforce, 2024

	Large FCCH Providers (N=38*)	Small FCCH Providers (N=46)	Center Teachers (N=52)	Center Assistants (N=39*)
I would keep my job and pursue the credential at night	29%	23%	35%	39%
I would quit my job to pursue the credential	0%	2%	2%	4%
I can't: I do not have the time	7%	22%	23%	5%
I can't: I do not have the money	17%	14%	9%	22%
I am not interested	22%	19%	23%	20%
Don't know	24%	20%	7%	10%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

*Interpret with caution (fewer than 40 respondents).

These findings align with data showing that early educators frequently pursue additional degrees or credentials while continuing to work. Pathways that require reducing current work hours or quitting work all together are typically not feasible (Copeman Petig & McLean, 2019).

Conclusion

Early educators in Stanislaus County have a deep sense of connection to and fulfillment through their work. Yet they do not always feel respected, and they face challenges making ends meet. These experiences are not unique to Stanislaus County; however, we do find that wages and economic well-being are more strained within the county than statewide, particularly for FCCH educators.

Focusing on wages can help improve well-being and reduce turnover for the ECE workforce. State-level subsidy rate reform may help bring more funding to increase wages, but these dollars will only reach a portion of the ECE workforce. Local action may be necessary to increase wages across all settings serving young children. These actions are increasingly urgent as TK expansion upends enrollment patterns elsewhere in early care and education. Many preschool teachers are willing to work with three-year-olds, but programs will need support in identifying, training, and compensating staff to work with infants and toddlers.

The data in this report point to additional strategies that Stanislaus County can explore to support early educators. In addition to worthy wages, educators need supportive working environments and quality learning opportunities that go beyond compliance. For example, challenging behaviors among children have surged since the pandemic. Stanislaus County could provide professional learning opportunities or resources to help educators respond to this need. Early educators also frequently report high levels of stress. Although this finding is likely related to more than one factor, Stanislaus County could assist programs in understanding the drivers of work-related stress (for instance, by reviewing the [Model Work Standards](#)).

Finally, whichever strategies Stanislaus County draws on to support the ECE workforce, it is essential to design initiatives in consultation with early educators. By working in partnership with individuals from different roles and settings, the county can incorporate their expertise to build strong, effective programs.

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