Working in Child Care in Chowan County

The North Carolina Child Care Workforce Survey 2003

As part of the North Carolina Needs and Resources Assessment, a statewide survey of the child care workforce was conducted in the spring and summer of 2003. This study provides comprehensive data on child care providers and on the facilities in which they work. Survey response rates in Chowan County were 90% (n=9) of center directors, 61% (n=31) of teachers and 78% (n=7) of family child care providers. Detailed information about survey methods and response rates is in the appendix. Totals may not equal one hundred percent due to rounding.

The child care workforce in Chowan County has experienced improvements in centers providing paid sick leave, the net hourly income and education of family child care providers, centers offering professional support benefits and teacher turnover while remaining stagnant or suffering losses in centers that provide fully paid health insurance, teachers and family child care providers with health insurance and the education levels of teachers, and directors. The constant challenge of supporting workforce professional development while raising wages and lowering turnover is clearly at play in Chowan County as it is across the state. County representatives can take some pride in the positive changes they have made for the workforce and build on these successes as the county continues working on the perennial challenges facing its child care programs and providers.

Child Care Centers

The percentages of responding child care centers by their organizational structure and by their star ratings are shown in Table 1. Organizational categories were collapsed for simplification. For-profit centers included programs ranging from single-classroom facilities consisting of a multi-age group of children and one teacher/director to multi-site facilities enrolling hundreds of children and employing a director, assistant director, lead teachers and assistant teachers. Faith-based, non-profit centers included programs with a Letter of Compliance (GS-110) as well as centers with a star-rated license. Other non-profit centers included non-profit independent centers that were community or board sponsored, non-profit public-school programs and Head Start sites. Programs that could not be easily classified into one of these three groups were combined into a separate group.

Table 1
Profile of the Responding Centers in Chowan County (n=9 program sites)

Center License		Organizational Structure	
4 or 5 Stars	0%	For-profit Centers	56%
3 Stars	56%	Faith-based Non-profit Centers	11%
Under 3 Stars*	44%	Other Non-profit Centers	33%
		Other	0%

*Includes 1- and 2-star licensed centers, GS-110 (Letter of Compliance) centers and centers with a temporary or provisional license.

Centers enrolled a median of 38 children ages birth to five (not including school-agers) and employed a median of 4 full-time and 1 part-time teachers and assistants. Total enrollment in the responding centers was 419 children, and one of the centers had children on their waiting list with a median of 41 children waiting.

Staffing. The child care center staff that participated in the survey represented a wide variety of positions in the early childhood field and worked with children of all ages. All respondents who completed a director survey held the titles of director (100%, 9).

As for staff who completed a teacher survey, 87% were teachers or lead teachers and 13% were assistant teachers. Teaching staff typically worked only with children age birth to five (86%).

Wage Scales. Center directors reported wage scales for center teaching staff that included low starting wages and limits on the highest wages paid to teachers and assistants (see Table 2). Assistant teachers and substitute caregivers continued to earn lower wages than other teaching staff. This compares to the following from 2001: a median starting teacher wage of $5.88 per hour and a median starting assistant teacher wage of $5.43 per hour.

Table 2
Pay Scales in Child Care Centers in Chowan County (n=9)

	2003
Starting Teacher Wage in Center	$6.33
Highest Teacher Wage in Center	$8.00
Pay Increase from Starting to Highest-Paid Teacher	26%
Starting Assistant Teacher Wage in Center	$5.83
Highest Asst. Teacher Wage in Center	$6.00
Pay Increase from Starting to Highest-Paid Asst. Teacher	3%

Note: Median wages are reported. Data are based on directors' reports.

Employment Benefits. Employment benefits offered by centers in Chowan County are shown in Table 3. These benefits compare to 13% of centers in 2001 that offered fully paid health insurance and to 25% that offered paid sick leave. Among teaching staff that had ever worked over 40 hours per week (33%), 44% said that their centers paid them time and a half for the overtime hours that they worked. Federal wage and hour law requires that non-exempt workers such as child care providers receive time and a half for overtime hours.

Table 3
Employment Benefits in Child Care Centers in Chowan County (n=9)

	2003
Fully Paid Health Insurance	0%
Partially Paid Health Insurance	22%
Free Child Care	11%
Reduced Child Care Fee	33%
Parental Leave	22%
Paid Sick Leave	56%
Paid Vacation	63%
Paid Holidays	78%
Paid Retirement Benefits	22%

Family Child Care Homes

The Chowan County family child care homes responding to this survey had been in business for a median of 7.0 years. Providers worked 53 hours per week on average, and 43% worked without help from a paid assistant. Among the special services offered by the responding homes were evening care (29%, 2), drop-in care (71%, 5) and holiday care (29%, 2). Total enrollment as of January 2003 ranged from 2 to 7 children ages birth to five with a median of 6 young children in each home.

Earnings and Expenditures. Family child care providers' median gross monthly earnings are based on child care tuition fees, subsidy payments and Child and Adult Care Food Program reimbursements for January 2003. Their expenditures included items such as food, toys, substitute care, advertising, training fees, diapers, crafts, transportation, supplies, field trips and gifts for the children. Home occupancy costs such as utilities, home improvement or repairs, cleaning and rent or mortgage payments are not included. Based on these data, estimated net yearly earnings were $17,933. Food costs represented about 71% of providers' monthly expenditures, and 86% (6) of Chowan County providers defrayed this expense by participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Median hourly earnings were $6.28, estimated by dividing net monthly earnings by the number of hours each home was open (see Table 4). In comparison, family child care providers had a net hourly income of $5.26 in 2001.

Table 4
Earnings and Expenditures of Family Child Care Homes in Chowan County (n=7)

	2003
Total Monthly Earnings (median)	$2,081
Total Monthly Expenditures (median)	$415
Hours Worked per Week (median)	53
Net Hourly Income (median)[1]	$6.28

Benefits. Family child care providers usually work alone or with the help of an unpaid or underpaid family member. Child care tuition covered providers' vacation time in 57% (4) of homes, and 40% (2) of providers charged for days when they were sick. These measures help identify the degree to which providers run their child care programs as a business designed to meet the providers' personal and professional needs. Nonetheless, 29% (2) of the providers that responded said that they cared for children even when the providers were sick.

Profile of the Child Care Workforce

The child care workforce in Chowan County, as in North Carolina, is overwhelmingly female and includes a large proportion of workers who have children of their own (see Table 5). Among the teaching staff that responded, 46% indicated that their children were enrolled in the centers where they work. Of these respondents, 70% received free or reduced child care from the center; 21% received government assistance to help them pay for child care (note: respondents can receive both kinds of assistance).

Many people working in the early childhood field face severe economic challenges that affect themselves and their families. For example, 60% of the teachers and assistants and one of the family child care providers that responded said that they had no health insurance coverage from any source. Additionally, 32% of teachers and assistants and none of the family child care providers had received some type of public assistance (e.g., Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF) in the last three years. This compares to 2001 in which 28% of teachers and assistants and none of family child care providers had no health insurance from any source and 49% of teachers and assistants and none of family child care providers received one or more forms of public assistance in the past three years.

[1] Item Response Rate: 71%

Table 5
Demographic Profile of the Child Care Workforce in Chowan County

	Center Directors* 2003	Teachers and Assistants 2003	Family Providers* 2003
Median Age	39	29	54
Female	100%	100%	100%
People of Color	71%	61%	57%
Have Children	88%	77%	86%
Single Parent of Child 0-18 Years Old	13%	30%	14%
At Least One Child 0-18 Years Old	75%	73%	43%
Annual Family Income Below $20,000	17%	48%	20%

*Data are based on 9 center directors and 7 family providers.

Education of the Child Care Workforce

Child care provider education is a critical factor influencing children's early learning opportunities. This section profiles Chowan County providers' educational attainment and aspirations as expressed in the current survey. See Table 6 for education data on center directors (directors, director/owners and assistant directors), family child care providers, teachers (teachers and lead teachers) and assistant teachers (assistant teachers, teacher aides and floaters). Gains in degree-earning providers are a positive sign that the workforce is growing to meet the needs of young children. Center directors have completed higher levels of education than teachers and family child care providers, though all groups do not match the minimum education requirements for teachers and administrators in public elementary, middle and high schools. Some directors (0%), teachers (10%) and family child care providers (14%, 1), however, have a college degree in fields other than early childhood education or child development and have taken at least one course in the field.

Chowan County child care providers have a strong interest in working toward higher levels of education. As shown in the tables, many directors, teachers and family child care providers had completed college courses. Furthermore, 43% of the teachers and assistants and none of the family child care providers said that they were currently taking courses leading to a degree or credential in the early childhood field. Among all of the responding teachers and assistants, 21% were working towards a two-year degree or higher. Of the survey respondents who were not taking courses, one of the directors, 57% of the teachers and assistants and 33% (2) of the family child care providers that responded said they were interested in doing so.

In 2003, one of the directors, 29% (2) of family child care providers and 23% of teachers and assistants indicated that they had attained an Associate, Bachelor's or Master's Degree in some field.[2] In comparison, 50% of directors, 13% of family child care providers and 28% of teachers and assistants in 2001 had earned an Associate, Bachelor's or Master's Degree in some field.

[2] These percentages may not equal the sum of the percentages in Table 6 due to rounding.

Table 6

Education of the Center Directors, Family Child Care Providers and Teachers in Chowan County

	Center Directors* 2003	Teachers and Assistant Teachers 2003	Family Providers* 2003
Highest Education Completed			
Bachelor Degree or More in ECE/CD	0%	3%	0%
Bachelor Degree or More in Other Field	0%	0%	0%
Associate Degree in ECE/CD	11%	3%	14%
Associate Degree in Other Field	0%	16%	14%
High School + Any College Courses	89%	61%	43%
High School + Workshops	0%	3%	29%
High School Only	0%	13%	0%
Less than High School	0%	0%	0%
Other Education Credentials			
N.C. EC Credential	78%	89%	71%
N.C. EC Administration Credential	89%	14%	0%
Child Development Associate (CDA)	33%	11%	14%
Educational Pursuits			
Currently Taking ECE/CD Courses	63%	43%	0%
Interested in Taking Courses**	50%	57%	33%

*Data are based on 9 center directors and 7 family providers.
**Percentages were drawn from the survey respondents who were not currently taking courses.

Earnings of the Child Care Workforce

Child care provider earnings in Chowan County remain low (see Table 7). The median self-reported wage of child care teachers and assistants in Chowan County does not compare favorably to the starting wage of public school teachers ($14.58 per hour). Child care center directors' median self-reported wage barely competes with that of the public school teachers despite the added responsibility of running a business and working year round. Some child care providers (11% of teachers, 25% of assistant teachers and 29% (2) of family child care providers) said that they worked another paid job in addition to their job as a child care provider. The median number of hours worked in these additional jobs was 10 for teachers, 5 for assistants and 27 for family child care providers. In 2001, the median director salary was $9.88 per hour; in 2003, it increased to $12.00 per hour. In 2001, the median teacher salary was $6.34 per hour; in 2003, it increased to $6.65 per hour.

Table 7

Self-Reported Earnings of the Child Care Workforce in Chowan County

	Center Directors* 2003[3]	Teachers and Assistant Teachers 2003	Family Providers* 2003
Salary Supplement Included			
Highest Hourly Earnings (90th Percentile)	$14.09	$10.10	$7.41
Median Hourly Earnings (50th Percentile)	$12.18	$6.65	$6.67
Lowest Hourly Earnings (10th Percentile)	$8.23	$5.90	$5.24
Salary Supplement Not Included			
Highest Hourly Earnings (90th Percentile)	$14.09	$10.05	$7.37
Median Hourly Earnings (50th Percentile)	$12.00	$6.65	$6.28
Lowest Hourly Earnings (10th Percentile)	$8.10	$5.90	$5.01

*Data are based on 9 center directors and 7 family providers.

Professional Support for the Child Care Workforce

Early childhood research has shown that higher education and compensation of child care providers can lead to positive outcomes for children. Programs such as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project and salary supplements have addressed the educational and financial needs of child care providers while lowering staff turnover. At the program level, child care centers offer staff opportunities to develop their teaching skills and professionalism through coursework and by creating a supportive work environment. The workforce survey included a number of questions on these professional support topics.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project. According to center directors, 56% of centers in Chowan County had at least one staff member that had received a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. A proportion of teachers and assistant teachers (34%) and of family child care providers (29%, 2) said that they had received a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. Among the child care providers that responded, 100% (9) of the center directors, 100% of the teachers and 100% (7) of the family child care providers had heard of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project.

[3] Item Response Rate: 56%

Salary Supplements. Among Chowan County teachers and assistant teachers, 39% received a Smart Start funded salary supplement. The median supplement amount was $450 per year. Of those receiving the supplement, 100% said it encouraged them to continue in the child care field. Additionally, 33% (3) of directors received a supplement at a median of $450 per year. Finally, 50% (3) of family child care providers received a supplement at a median of $1,124 per year. Of these providers, one said receiving a supplement encouraged them to stay in the field.

Other Center-Provided Support. Child care centers can support the professional development of staff without creating a significant financial burden on their programs. Seven key types of professional support that centers can provide staff are an orientation, written job descriptions, written personnel policies, paid education and training expenses, paid breaks, compensatory time for training and paid preparation or planning time (see Table 8). Among the responding centers, 67% (6) offered at least five of these types of support and 33% (3) offered three or fewer. Providing a professional work environment may be a low-cost means for centers to prevent staff turnover. By comparison in 2001, 50% of centers offered at least five types of support and 38% offered three or fewer.

Table 8
Professional Support Benefits for Staff in Child Care Centers in Chowan County (n=9)

	2003
Orientation	78%
Written Job Description	67%
Written Personnel Policies	89%
Paid Education/Training	78%
Paid Breaks	44%
Time Off for Training	78%
Planning/Preparation Time	44%

Experience and Turnover of the Child Care Workforce

Young children need experienced, well-educated teachers with whom they can form close attachments over time. Chowan County has a combination of seasoned child care professionals who have remained with their current programs for years and of less-experienced providers who have either just begun in the field or in a new child care program (see Table 9). Among survey respondents median experience in the child care field was 10.4 years for directors, 5.0 years for teachers and assistants and 7.0 years for family child care providers. In 2001 by comparison, directors had been in the workforce for 11 years, teachers and assistants for 4.1 years and family child care providers for 11.3 years.

Table 9
Child Care Workforce Experience in Chowan County

	2003
Teachers Years in Current Center	2.6
Teachers < One Year in Current Center	11%
Teachers Years in Child Care Field	5.0
Assistant Teachers Years in Current Center	1.5
Assistant Teachers < One Year in Current Center	25%
Assistant Teachers Years in Child Care Field	7.0
Directors Years as Director in Current Center (n=9)	4.0
Directors Years in Child Care Field (n=9)	10.4
Family Child Care Providers Years as FCC Provider (n=7)	7.0

The current survey included two measures of turnover: (1) for center-based teacher turnover, the percentage of child care teachers who left their centers during the previous year and (2) for individual directors, teachers and family child care providers, the percentage of workers who are planning to leave the child care field in the next 3 years (see Table 10). As a proportion of all full-time teachers and assistants, 11% left their centers during the previous 12 months.[4] Turnover rates within centers ranged from 0% to 17% of full-time staff. Of the centers that responded, 50% (5) had no full-time staff turnover during the previous year while none of the centers had turnover above 100% of current full-time staff. In 2001, 22% of full-time teachers and assistants left their centers during the previous 12 months.

[4] Turnover data reported by center directors with less than one year of employment in the centers were not included in the turnover calculation.

Table 10
Child Care Workforce Turnover in Chowan County*

	2003
Full-Time Teacher and Assistant Teacher Turnover	11%
Full-Time Teacher Turnover	12%
Full-Time Assistant Teacher Turnover	8%
Part-Time Teacher and Assistant Teacher Turnover	0%
Part-Time Teacher Turnover	0%
Part-Time Assistant Teacher Turnover	0%
Teachers Leaving the field in 3 Years	0%
Assistant Teachers Leaving the field in 3 Years	0%
Directors Leaving the Field in 3 Years	0%
Family Child Care Providers Leaving the Field in 3 Years	0%

*Turnover and director data are based on 7 respondents. Data on family providers are based on 7 respondents..

Survey respondents planning to leave most commonly indicated that higher earnings would encourage them to stay. Different motivators among the groups stemmed from the unique roles and responsibilities of each group, though all three were generally interested in additional support (e.g., increased program funds, better employment benefits and more substitute teachers), for the work they do.

More at Four in North Carolina

More at Four is a statewide pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year olds. The primary purpose of More at Four is to ensure that these children can access the high quality child care that will prepare them to succeed when they enter kindergarten and beyond. Child care programs that participate in the initiative provide high quality early childhood services on which the More at Four program has been built. Participating facilities can include DCD-licensed child care centers and preschools, public schools and Head Start programs. (Only DCD-licensed sites are included in this study.) More at Four requires that participating classrooms in these facilities meet specific program criteria based on early childhood curriculum, teacher qualifications and child-teacher ratios. (More information about More at Four is available at www.governor.state.nc.us.)

All DCD-licensed child care centers that were participating in More at Four as of March 2003 were sent surveys as a part of this study (230 More at Four sites with 2,715 teachers). Both center directors and all teachers in the programs were asked to respond to the survey. The number of directors of More at Four programs was reduced to 201 when phone calls to centers revealed that several directors managed more than one More at Four site. The total number of More at Four directors who completed a survey was 165 for a response rate of 82%. More at Four teacher data in this report comes only from the 447 teachers working in More at Four

programs who said that they have at least one More at Four participating child in their classroom. A response rate for More at Four teachers cannot be determined without knowing which teachers in the original survey sample were More at Four teachers and which simply worked at a program that More at Four children attended. Overall teacher response in More at Four sites was 57% of total teachers in these programs, which suggests that the response rate of More at Four teachers was similarly high. The survey data on More at Four sites and providers were collected for the first time in the current study, so this report serves as a baseline assessment of several More at Four population variables.

A Profile of Participating More at Four Sites in North Carolina

The responding More at Four programs were in 65 counties across the state. They represented the full mix of programs participating. Of the More at Four sites that responded, 96% said that the teachers in their four-year old classroom used one of the More at Four approved curricula. Of these curricula the Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood was the most common by far (84%), and the next most common curriculum in use was the Bright Beginnings Pre-K Curriculum (11%).

Many of the responding More at Four sites indicated that they did not yet meet all of the More at Four criteria. The criteria presenting the greatest challenges included having at least one lead teacher with the B-K/Preschool add-on teacher licensure (58% did not meet this criterion), paying teachers with the B-K/Preschool add-on teacher licensure rates equal to public school teachers (66% did not meet this criterion) and having a director with a Level III Child Care Administration Credential (52% did not meet this criterion). Site directors indicated that their programs needed help in the following areas to meet standards: funding to offer better teacher pay and benefits (69% needed help with this), funding to cover income lost due to reduced class size (48%) and finding teachers who meet More at Four qualifications (45%). Of those who indicated “teachers who meet qualifications” as an area in which help was needed, 84% had teachers who received a scholarship from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project.

More at Four in Chowan County

In Chowan County there were no directors working in licensed centers that were More at Four sites as of March 2003.

Appendix
Survey Methods and Response Rates

Child care programs selected for survey participation were drawn from January 2003 licensing reports of the North Carolina Division of Child Development. Programs that served only school-age children or that provided care only during the summer months were not included in this study. In Chowan County survey packets were mailed to 100% of the licensed centers (n=11) with enough questionnaires for 11 directors and 50 teachers and to 100% of the licensed family child care homes (n=9). Center packets included a cover letter, questionnaire and postage-paid envelope for the director; cover letter, questionnaire and postage-paid envelope for each teacher and raffle tickets for the director and teachers. Family child care providers received a cover letter, a questionnaire with postage-paid envelope, and a raffle ticket. As a sign of thanks and an incentive for participation, window stickers with an early childhood slogan were also included in the survey packets. In addition, everyone who returned a completed questionnaire and raffle ticket was entered in county- and state-level raffles for prizes.

The written questionnaires used in this survey were based on forms for child care center directors, teachers and family child care providers previously created and used by the authors of this study. The questionnaires were modified to include items relevant to child care centers participating in More at Four and to the Performance Based Incentive System created by the North Carolina Partnership for Children.

Staff followed the initial survey mailing with a reminder postcard, repeated phone calls and survey mailings and site visits (only in counties with low response rates) to child care centers and to family child care homes to ensure high survey response rates. Study representatives also maintained regular contact with local child care partnerships and resource and referral agencies to encourage involvement at the local level. Upon receipt of center director and family child care provider surveys, staff called survey participants to clarify responses on the questionnaires to ensure the accuracy of the information collected.

The survey sample of 11 Chowan County centers was reduced to 10 when phone calls revealed that some centers had closed, were extension sites of other centers or were Head Start sites supervised by one area coordinator. Based on director reports, the adjusted teacher count was 51. A total of 9 director surveys, 31 teacher surveys and 7 family child care provider surveys were received. This yielded a response rate of 90% for directors, 61% for teachers and 78% for family child care providers. The goal was to obtain response rates of 70% for directors, 50% for teachers and 70% for family child care providers to ensure strong representation of the county's child care workforce as a whole. Response rates below these goals are not necessarily inadequate but do require a more careful interpretation of the study findings.

The majority of response rates (91%) to individual questions were above 80%. Items with significantly low response rates have been noted in the report.

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For more information about the North Carolina Child Care Workforce Survey, please contact the Research Department at Child Care Services Association, (919) 967-3272 or research@childcareservices.org.

For more information about the North Carolina Needs and Resources Assessment, please visit the project web site at www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncnr_assessment.

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