

Professional Development for Minnesota's Child Care and Early Education Workforce:

A Study of the Supply of and Demand for
Training | *Executive Summary*

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Executive Summary

In recent years, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has implemented policies and program initiatives to improve and expand professional development training for the state's child care and early education workforce. One aspect of this process has been implementing Develop – The Minnesota Quality Improvement and Registry Tool. Develop allows center-based and family child care providers to find and track professional development training required for licensing, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and Parent Aware rating requirements. It also provides a common platform for professional development trainers to become approved, ensuring quality standards, and allows trainers to market training events statewide. Develop was built on a previous professional development registry used since 2008.

With the goal of improving access to training for the child care and early education workforce, DHS contracted with Child Trends to study the supply of and demand for professional development training in Minnesota. Child Trends analyzed administrative data from Develop and conducted online surveys of the workforce and of professional development trainers to understand supply and demand, including use and perceptions of Develop. In addition, Child Trends examined the training needs of the workforce and professional development trainers who do not use Develop. Research questions focused on:

- How the workforce finds training events
- The workforce's training preferences and the types of training available throughout the state
- Barriers to access and whether gaps to access exist in different geographic areas across the state
- Workforce and trainer use of Develop for finding, tracking, and advertising training events

Findings from this study provide critical information about how Minnesota's professional development training system currently functions for the child care and early education workforce and the extent to which progress has been made to ensure equitable access to training events. Recommendations focus on strategies DHS can use to expand and improve access to training across the state and to facilitate the workforce and trainers' use of Develop for finding, tracking, and marketing professional development training.

Overview

Professional development training supports and strengthens the knowledge and skills of the child care and early education workforce in Minnesota, but barriers to professional development limit some providers' access to and use of this resource. The [2011 Minnesota Child Care Workforce Survey](#) provided insight into the workforce's professional development activities and into the challenges—including time, cost, and transportation—that center-based and family child care providers face when seeking professional development. Since then, the context for the workforce has evolved due to changes in federal funding streams and to enhancements to the state's professional development training system. This study presents findings on the supply of and demand for professional development across Minnesota to better understand the child care and early education workforce's opportunities for and barriers to accessing training.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has a long history of supporting the professional development of the child care and early education workforce. The state's current professional development training system, which includes trainer and training course approval and a professional development registry that allows providers to find and track training, was created in response to a session law passed by the Minnesota state legislature in 2007. In 2011, DHS commissioned the Wilder Foundation to conduct a study of the workforce by examining rates of professional development engagement and barriers to professional development access for center-based and family child care providers throughout the state. It found that center-based and family child care providers sought

professional development to improve the quality of their practice and to grow as professionals, but that they still faced barriers to accessing training.¹

The context for the child care and early education workforce in Minnesota has changed since the 2011 survey, due in part to the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant awarded to the state between 2012 and 2016. The RTT-ELC grant supported the statewide expansion of Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating Improvement System, which includes standards related to workforce qualifications and coaching and training requirements for achieving quality ratings within the system. The state also used funds to design and implement Develop – The Minnesota Quality Improvement and Registry Tool. Develop allows eligible programs to complete the Parent Aware application process and allows the workforce to participate in professional development activities, including:

- Completing self-assessments
- Identifying training opportunities online
- Tracking professional development progress, including determining career lattice level
- Downloading training records or sharing them electronically with licensors and others

Minnesota's professional development system has recently been enhanced to include resources like free and low-cost training, new curricula, professional development career advising services, recruitment and support of bilingual and bicultural trainers, and functional improvements to Develop. To better understand how the current professional development training system, and specifically Develop, has been working for the child care and early education workforce and to assess the supply of and demand for training across the state, Child Trends explored research questions about the workforce and trainers. Research questions related to the child care and early education workforce, representing the demand for professional development, ask:

- How do members of the child care and early education workforce find professional development training?
- How useful is Develop for finding and tracking professional development?
- What training methods does the workforce prefer?
- What barriers to and costs of training does the workforce incur?
- What experiences does the workforce have with completing the required training for licensing, accreditation, Parent Aware, or the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)?
- How does the workforce access professional development training?

Research questions related to professional development trainers, representing the supply of professional development, ask:

- Under what circumstances would professional development trainers be likely, or more likely, to use Develop?
- What types of professional development do trainers offer?
- What factors affect the cost of training?
- What marketing strategies and registration access points do trainers use?
- Where are professional development trainings located, and where are there gaps in coverage?

The study presents findings from four sources of data:

- Administrative data from 11,527 center-based and family child care providers from the Develop data system
- Online surveys of 2,208 center-based and family child care providers who do (91 percent) and do not (9 percent) use Develop

¹ Valorose, J. and Chase, R. (2012). *Child Care Workforce in Minnesota 2011 Statewide Study of Demographics, Training and Professional Development: Final Report*. Minnesota Department of Human Services.

- Online surveys of 257 professional development trainers who do (58 percent) and do not (42 percent) use Develop
- Data on the geographic location of workforce members and trainers

Recommendations focus on ways in which DHS can expand and improve access to training across the state for the workforce and strategies for enhancing workforce members' and trainers' use of Develop.

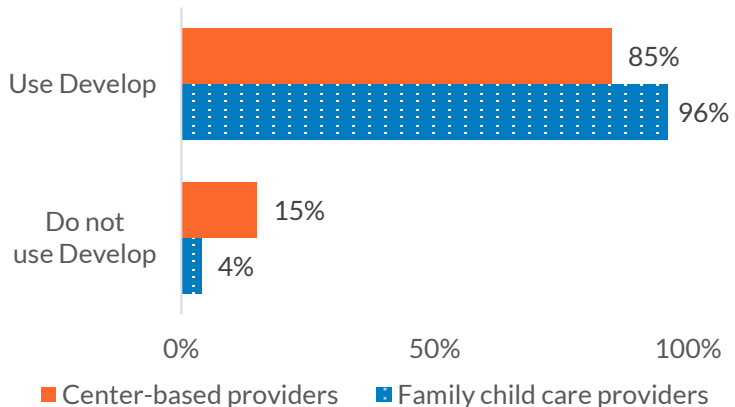
Summary of Findings

Overall, most members of the child care and early education workforce and professional development trainers reported using Develop. Family child care providers reported using Develop at higher rates than center-based providers (Figure 1). The workforce still faced a range of barriers to accessing professional development depending on the care setting in which they worked and their location across the state; cost and location emerged as primary barriers. In addition, while trainers reported being willing to travel long distances to conduct training, they also indicated that distance to training impacted training costs. This

relationship between the workforce's experiences with cost and location barriers and trainers' experiences with cost and location challenges indicate a need for additional support in this area. The study's key findings include:

- **Most members of the child care and early education workforce and professional development trainers use Develop to some extent.** The majority of workforce members and trainers who responded to surveys reported using Develop. Many of those who did not use it actively still identified it as one way they find or advertise training.
- **The child care and early education workforce considers Develop useful and easy to use.** Family child care providers in particular identified Develop as a helpful tool for tracking professional development records.
- **Trainers sometimes use different venues to advertise professional development events than those commonly used by the workforce to search for training.** Both the workforce and trainers commonly use Develop to either find or advertise training. Members of the workforce often reported searching for upcoming conferences sponsored by state and local early childhood education (ECE) organizations, and a modest number used social media. However, fewer than one in four trainers used social media to advertise training, and less than 5 percent reported using local ECE organizations.
- **Family child care providers and providers in rural areas face different barriers to accessing professional development training than center-based providers and providers in the seven-county metro area.** Relative to center-based providers, family child care providers were more likely to report not taking training due to a lack of new or interesting training opportunities. In addition, rural providers were more likely than their metro peers to report their location as a barrier to accessing professional development training.
- **Family child care providers reported having more trouble than their center-based peers in completing the professional development requirements for licensing, credentialing, or other standards.** Family child care providers were more likely to find it somewhat difficult to complete professional development requirements for licensing, accreditation, and early childhood credentials.

Figure 1. Develop Use by Provider Type



Source note: Child Trends workforce survey data 2018

- **Center-based providers can often access training opportunities through their employers.** Most center-based providers reported that their employer helped them find training opportunities and/or hosted training opportunities onsite. Child Care Aware districts often work with center directors to deliver free or low-cost onsite training, with funding support from DHS.

Summary of Limitations

- **Few workforce members with a language preference other than English completed the survey.** Child Trends conducted recruitment efforts aimed at non-English speaking child care and early education workforce members. These efforts included inviting representatives from organizations that work with multilingual or non-English speaking workforce members to the table for an advisory committee meeting. Ultimately, however, few workforce members reported preferring to receive training in languages other than English, and few workforce members took the survey in languages other than English.
- **Other provider subgroups may not be fully represented in the data.** While surveys captured a large group of center-based and family child care providers, the number surveyed does not represent all members of the workforce. Other subgroups of workforce members—for example, those with limited or no access to the internet—would not have been able to participate in the online survey.
- **Sample sizes fluctuated throughout the survey.** In the workforce survey and the professional development trainer survey, more respondents answered questions at the beginning of the survey than at the end. To gather as much information as possible on each dimension of the survey, analysis did not omit participants who responded to only some of the survey questions.

Summary of Recommendations

- **Market Develop to center directors to increase use among the workforce.** More family child care providers than center-based providers used Develop, and center-based providers most often indicated not using Develop because they tracked their training in other ways or because their center did not require it. To expand the use of Develop, DHS should consider ways to market Develop to center directors, who are tasked with ensuring that their staff meet training and education requirements and have opportunities for professional development.
- **To increase the use of Develop among trainers, further market and expand the technical supports offered to trainers.** Trainers who did not use Develop frequently struggled with getting their courses approved in the system, posting training opportunities, and receiving trainer approval. Trainers have access to technical assistance for Develop through state and local agencies; however, these findings indicate a need to increase awareness of these services and expand available resources.
- **Enhance existing online training opportunities.** A majority of center-based and family child care providers identified online training as one preferred method for taking professional development training. To increase use of online training, examine the variety and novelty of available training content and consider additional marketing strategies to promote use. Since most providers also identified in-person training as a preferred method, consider adopting ‘hybrid’ training models in which participants attend part of the training in-person and complete the rest online.
- **Offer training on a wide range of topics, especially for family child care providers.** Family child care providers commonly reported that they did not take training because they had already participated in the available training options and/or were not interested in the content. To ensure a wider range of available training, DHS could use administrative data on training titles to examine variety, take steps to solicit more feedback on training, and further explore data from Develop’s training evaluation tool.
- **Identify ways to incentivize trainers to offer opportunities in areas where they are willing to travel but may not travel consistently.** Child Care Aware currently offers occasional financial reimbursements for mileage and hotels for trainers willing to travel. Increasing awareness of these resources or expanding available resources could help facilitate more trainer travel. Alternatively, DHS could consider ways to support workforce members with the costs of attending training farther away or bringing trainers to their area.

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