

Child Care Workforce in North Dakota

As North Dakota focuses on economic growth, child care comes to the forefront as one of the state's top ten largest occupations. While child care allows many families the opportunity to work outside the home, we cannot underestimate the two-fold impact of the industry: 1) child care is critical for our state's economy, and 2) child care has an incredible responsibility to mold children. Child care workers face issues including low wages, minimal benefits, and a demanding work environment. In addition to child care being a major employer in the state, positive early learning experiences in child care settings support parents in the workforce, making the issues facing child care workers a concern for all North Dakotans. Consider:



It's about kids.

Workforce Turnover

Turnover is traditionally associated with low wages and lack of benefits. These common qualities of the child care workforce provide insight into the high turnover in child care occupations. According to North Dakota's Child Care Resource and Referral (*North Dakota Child Care Center Staff Salary and Working Conditions, 2002*), in North Dakota:

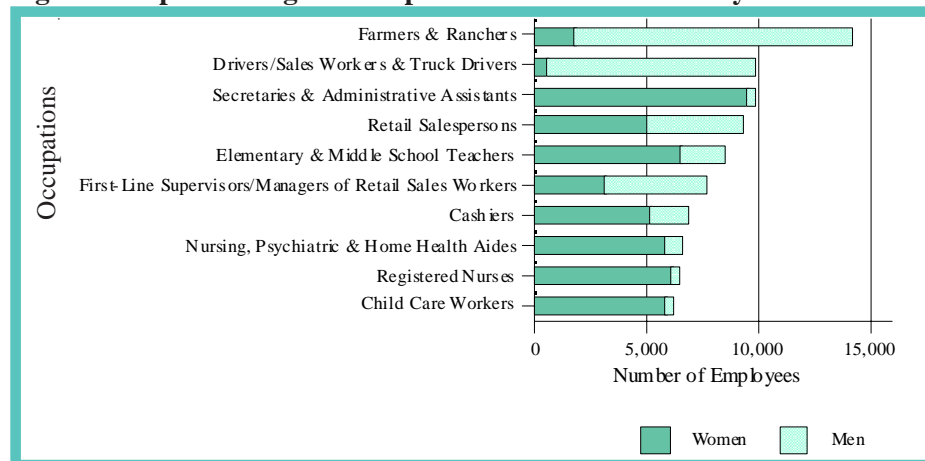
- Half of child care centers offer health insurance for their employees (54%). Dental insurance is offered to only 34%, retirement or pension plans to only 34%, and life insurance to only 27% of child care center staff.
- In 2002, child care centers saw a 30% turnover in total staff, with teacher assistants having the highest turnover (45%).

According to a study done by the Economics Department at the University of Colorado, nationally, the turnover of child care center employees is approximately one-third (37% in 1995; 31% in 1997) (*Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study, 1997*). One in five child care centers have turnover of at least half their staff in a given year (*National Child Care Staffing Study, 1998*).

In contrast, the average turnover nationally was only 20% for all non-farm occupations and 12% for educational service occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics).

- Though the supply of licensed child care cannot accommodate the large number of children under the age of 13, North Dakota's child care industry is substantial in size and is made up of many small, community- and home-based businesses.
- Child care is the *tenth* largest occupation in North Dakota out of 472 listed civilian occupations in the 2000 Census. Of those who reported a primary occupation in North Dakota, 6,020 people said they were child care workers (see Figure 1).
- Between 1990 and 2000 the percent of North Dakotans in the child care workforce remained relatively unchanged. The need for care has increased, however. The proportion of families with children under the age of 18 headed by a single parent increased by 31% during the same time period in the state (U.S. Census Bureau: 1990 Census, Summary File 1, Table P16; 2000 Census, Summary File 1, Table P18).

Figure 1. Top Ten Largest Occupations in North Dakota by Gender: 2000

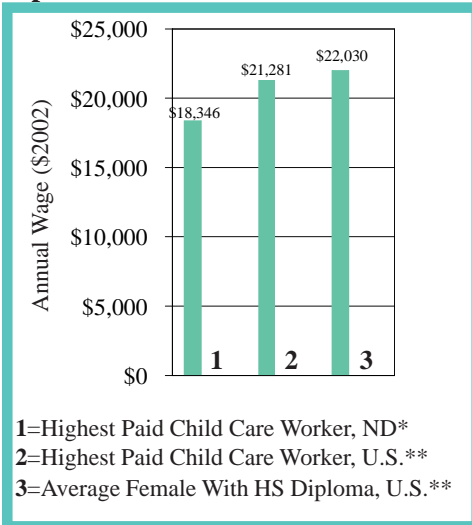


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, EEO Data Tool, www.census.gov/eo2000/

Child Care Workforce: Wages

- As shown in Figure 2, the mean annual wage of child care workers in North Dakota (\$15,590 in 2002) was 10% less than the national annual average wage for child care workers (\$17,310 in 2002).
- Compared to other occupations with high proportions of females, the average annual wage of a child care worker in North Dakota was \$6,000 less than secretaries and administrative assistants and \$17,400 less than elementary school teachers in the state in 2002 (see Figure 2).
- Despite higher educational levels, the highest annual wage of a child care worker in North Dakota is \$3,700 less than the national average for women with only a high school diploma (see Figure 3).

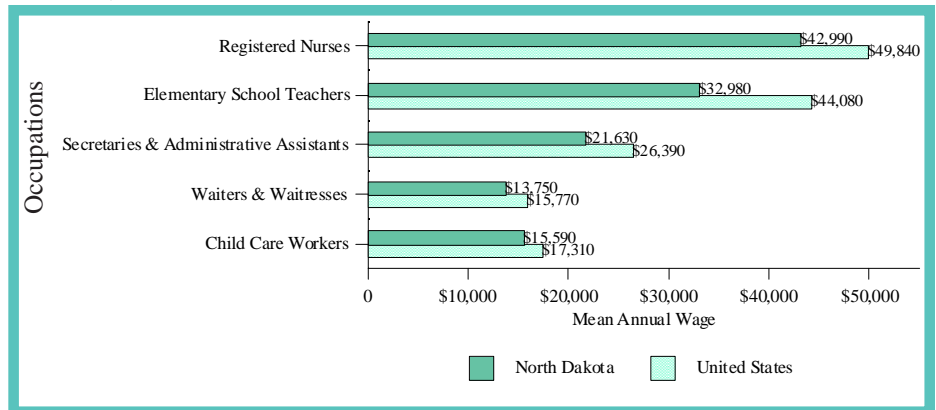
Figure 3. Annual Wages Among Child Care Workers, Compared to Average for U.S. Females With High School Diplomas: 2002



Sources: *North Dakota Child Care Center Staff Salary and Working Conditions, 2002; **National Child Care Staffing Study, 1998 (wages inflated to 2002 standards using CPI Inflation Calculator)

Additional child care information, including data and definitions, is available at www.ndkidscount.org.

Figure 2. Mean Annual Wage for Occupations With High Proportions of Females, North Dakota and United States: 2002



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002, www.bls.gov/oes/2002/oes_nd.htm

Child Care Workforce: Educational Attainment

Quality care can set a child on a positive path for life, paving the way for societal benefits such as a well-educated workforce, less crime, and short- and long-term economic returns. Quality care is a factor of a trained workforce, but there are limited eligibility requirements for child care providers. However, there has been an increase in levels of educational attainment among child care workers in North Dakota. Consider:

- According to the Children's Defense Fund, in 2002, 42% of states required pre-service training for child care providers in centers, and only 20% of states required pre-service training for family child care providers (Key Facts, 2003, www.childrensdefense.org).
- North Dakota requires child care center staff to attend up to 13 hours of annual training for employment eligibility. Family child care providers are required to participate in up to 10 hours of training each year (National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, nrc.uchsc.edu/STATES/ND/northdakota.htm).
- Though nationwide educational levels remained relatively stable between 1990 and 2000, North Dakota's child care workforce became more educated. The proportion of child care workers in North Dakota with some college or an associate degree increased from 39% to 50% over the decade (33% to 35%, nationally) and workers with a bachelor's degree or more increased from 8% to 10% (9% nationally) (U.S. Census Bureau: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2000; 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Earnings by Occupation and Education, SSTF 22C, CDROM; 2000 EEO Data Tool, www.census.gov/eo2000/).
- According to a survey of child care center staff by North Dakota's Child Care Resource and Referral, 35% of child care workers had attended some college or had an associate degree, and 31% had at least a bachelor's degree (North Dakota Child Care Center Staff and Working Conditions, 2002). These results indicate that child care workers in centers may have more education than non-center child care workers.