

Highlights of [GAO-12-248](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Finance, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Research shows that well trained and educated ECCE workers are key to helping children in care reach their full developmental potential. Federal and state governments spend billions of dollars each year to improve ECCE programs, including the quality of its caregivers and teachers. Because of the importance of this workforce and the federal investment in it, GAO examined (1) what is known about the composition, education, and income of the ECCE workforce and how these characteristics relate to quality, and (2) what activities are the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education, and the states financing to improve worker quality? GAO surveyed state child care administrators, interviewed HHS, Department of Education (Education), and other federal and state officials; interviewed ECCE experts and researchers; analyzed Census Bureau and Head Start data; conducted a literature search; and reviewed relevant federal laws and regulations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. HHS and Education generally agreed with the report's findings and conclusions and also provided additional information on several specific points in the report.

View [GAO-12-248](#) or key components. For more information, contact Kay E. Brown at (202) 512-7215 or brownke@gao.gov.

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EARLY CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION

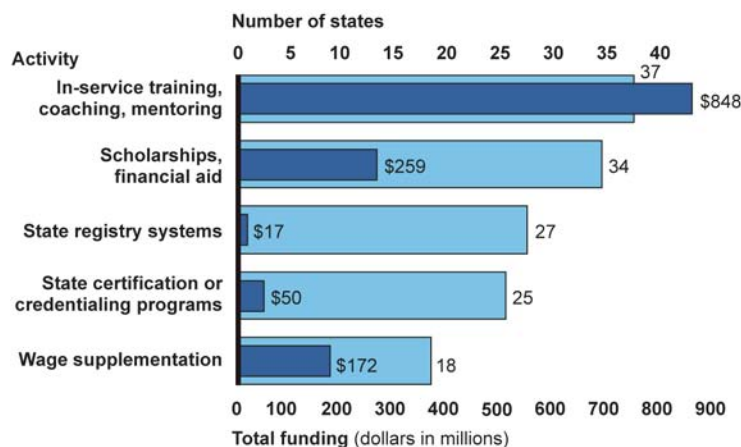
HHS and Education Are Taking Steps to Improve Workforce Data and Enhance Worker Quality

What GAO Found

The paid early child care and education (ECCE) workforce was made up of approximately 1.8 million workers in a range of positions, most of whom had relatively low levels of education and income, according to Census's 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) data. For example, nearly half of all child care workers had a high school degree or less as did 20 percent of preschool teachers. Average yearly income ranged from \$11,500 for a child care worker working in a child's home to \$18,000 for a preschool teacher. Experts and government officials that we spoke with said, in general, better educated and trained ECCE workers are more effective than those with less education and training. They also noted the need for more comprehensive workforce data—such as on workers with specialized ECCE training. While existing ECCE workforce data provide valuable insight into worker characteristics, critical data gaps exist. For example, these data omit key segments of ECCE workers, such as some caregivers who provide child care in their own homes, and also do not separately identify preschool teachers working in elementary schools. HHS and Education have taken steps to improve ECCE workforce data, such as providing guidance and funding to states to encourage the collection of state-level data and working with federal agencies to improve workforce data collected nationally.

HHS, Education, and the states use training, scholarships, and other activities to improve ECCE worker quality, but program and funding data are scarce. For example, HHS funded online training to help Head Start teachers meet new teacher credentialing requirements. Both HHS and Education have collaborated on initiatives to improve ECCE worker quality, such as the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants. For the most part, however, neither HHS nor Education track expenditures on worker quality improvement. In our survey, states reported that the most common workforce improvement activities were in-service training, coaching, and mentoring for current workers (all 37 state survey respondents) and scholarships to workers enrolled in higher education programs (34 states)(see fig.). Of those who knew funding sources for these activities, states reported relying primarily on state and federal child care funds.

Responding States' Workforce Improvement Activities and Funding, FYs 2007 through 2010



Source: GAO analysis of state survey data, 37 of the 51 states responded (including the District of Columbia).