

Military Child Care: Services' Use of Worker Recruitment and Retention Incentives

GAO-26-107831

Q&A Report to Congressional Committees

June 17, 2026

Why This Matters

The Department of Defense (DOD) operates the largest employer-sponsored child care program in the United States. As part of its program, it employs about 19,000 workers who provide care to the children of military service members at approximately 500 child development centers on U.S. military installations. These centers are managed by each military service: the Air Force (which also manages Space Force child development centers), Army, Marine Corps, and Navy.

The military services have faced challenges recruiting and retaining child care workers, contributing to long waitlists and wait times for child care. We reported in May 2024 that these challenges include a lengthy onboarding process and managing complex classroom needs ([GAO-24-106524](#)). To help mitigate challenges recruiting and retaining child care workers, the military services may offer them monetary incentives including recruitment and relocation bonuses and retention allowances. The military services may use recruitment bonuses to attract candidates for open positions, relocation bonuses to relocate workers from one installation to another, and retention allowances to encourage workers to continue their employment. Throughout this report, we refer to these bonuses and allowances as recruitment and retention incentives.

House Report 118-529 accompanying H.R. 8070, the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, includes a provision for us to review recruitment and retention incentives for child care workers in DOD child development centers who are paid using nonappropriated funds (i.e., child care fees). This report describes (1) the number of recruitment and retention incentives the military services provided to these workers in 2024, (2) the states in which they provided the most incentives in 2024, and (3) the benefits and workplace initiatives the military services use to recruit and retain these child care workers. Throughout this report, the term "child care workers" refers to workers who are paid using nonappropriated funds, unless otherwise noted.

Key Takeaways

- Since 2024, the military services have continued to face challenges recruiting and retaining child care workers. For example, officials from three of the military services said the complex and stressful nature of child care work is an ongoing challenge. In addition, officials from two military services reported that temporary changes to hiring processes, such as requiring approval from a department's Secretary to post openings and hire new child care workers, made it more difficult to hire new workers in 2025. However, in January 2026, officials said this was no longer a challenge because they had mostly returned to their previous hiring processes.

- In 2024, the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps collectively provided 4,955 recruitment and retention incentives to child care workers, according to data from the military services. Most of these incentives (4,074) were provided by the Air Force. The three military services provided more retention allowances than recruitment bonuses, and none of the services provided relocation bonuses. We did not include Navy data in our analysis, as described below.
- In 2024, the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps collectively provided the most recruitment and retention incentives to child care workers in California, Florida, Colorado, Texas, and Virginia, according to the military services' data.
- All of the military services also provide benefits and workplace initiatives to recruit and retain child care workers. These include fee discounts for child care workers' children to attend DOD child development centers as well as training, professional development, and tuition assistance to help child care workers grow their skills and expertise. Officials from the military services said they have the flexibility to combine recruitment and retention incentives, benefits, and workplace initiatives differently to meet the needs of each military service as they recruit and retain child care workers.

What funding do the military services use to pay child care workers?

Most military child care workers are paid using nonappropriated funds from the child care fees collected by the military services (and are therefore referred to as nonappropriated fund employees). DOD data show that approximately 93 percent of all child care workers were nonappropriated fund employees in 2024.¹ Military service officials told us they prefer to hire child care workers who are paid using nonappropriated funds, rather than appropriated funds, because doing so gives them more flexibility in setting workers' pay. In addition, military service officials said they can address conduct and performance problems more quickly for workers paid using nonappropriated funds.

What challenges have the military services faced recruiting and retaining child care workers since 2024?

In our May 2024 report, we found that the military services faced several challenges recruiting and retaining child care workers.² The recruitment challenges included competition with other jobs offering higher starting wages and a lengthy onboarding process for new workers. For example, we reported that the onboarding process could take 1 to 6 months because the military services must comply with specific DOD requirements, such as background checks in every state where a child care worker was previously employed. Retention challenges included managing complex classroom needs and limited career progression opportunities. For example, we reported that without additional higher education, child care workers have limited opportunities to progress in their careers at child development centers.

Since 2024, the military services have continued to face challenges recruiting and retaining child care workers, including those we previously reported. Other challenges include a stressful work environment and temporary changes to hiring processes in 2025, according to officials.

Stressful work environment. Officials from the military services noted that aspects of child care work are inherently challenging because of the intensity and stresses of the job. Some workers may not be well suited for child care work, according to Army and Navy officials, in which cases the military services will help workers transition to other positions if their skills align with the requirements of those positions.

Temporary changes to hiring processes. Officials from two military services told us that changes to hiring processes temporarily made it more difficult to

recruit and hire child care workers in 2025. For example, Air Force and Navy officials said they were required to obtain permission from their Secretaries to post announcements for child care positions and hire new workers. This caused delays in recruiting and hiring child care workers, according to officials.

However, in January 2026, Air Force and Navy officials said this was no longer a challenge because they had mostly returned to their previous hiring processes. For example, Air Force officials told us that they have returned to their normal hiring process, and are generating a new report to monitor recruitment and hiring numbers going forward. Navy officials noted they no longer need approval from the Secretary of the Navy before hiring new child care workers, but they are required to report to the Secretary which positions they filled.

What are DOD’s and the military services’ roles in recruiting and retaining child care workers?

DOD and the military services have distinct roles in recruiting and retaining child care workers. DOD has developed overall guidance for the military services on policies and procedures for nonappropriated fund employees regarding pay, awards, and allowances.³ This guidance addresses recruitment and retention incentives and gives the military services flexibility to implement these incentives as needed.

Using the DOD guidance, each military service has developed its own guidance that addresses specific areas, such as eligibility requirements, for these incentives.⁴ Each military service’s guidance gives installation officials the authority to decide whether to offer recruitment and retention incentives to child care workers. Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps installation officials also determine the incentive amounts, while Navy officials determine service-wide incentive amounts for all participating installations. In general, these amounts can be up to 25 percent of a worker’s annual basic pay for the associated service period, according to federal regulations.⁵

How did the military services’ recruitment and retention incentive amounts and requirements vary for child care workers in 2024?

In 2024, each military service provided recruitment bonuses and retention allowances to child care workers, and the average amounts of these incentives differed across services (see table 1). The Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps provided varying incentive amounts to child care workers across their participating installations. DOD officials explained that incentive amounts can vary due to geographic locations, cost of living differences, and the supply of and demand for child care workers. In contrast, the Navy provided the same incentive amounts to its child care workers across its participating installations.⁶ Before child care workers can receive any incentives, each of the military services requires them to sign written service agreements specifying the conditions under which bonuses and allowances will be paid.⁷

Table 1: Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentive Amounts and Requirements for Child Care Workers, by Military Service, 2024

Military service	Average recruitment bonus amount in 2024	Average retention allowance amount in 2024	Average relocation bonus amount in 2024 ^a	Service period
Air Force ^b	\$625 (average of recruitment bonuses and retention allowances)		\$0	Two years of service required (after receiving recruitment bonus or retention allowance)
Army	\$700	\$900	\$0	At least 6 months of service required (after receiving recruitment bonus or retention allowance)
Marine Corps	\$960	\$1,076	\$0	Service agreement required, but the time period varies

Military service	Average recruitment bonus amount in 2024	Average retention allowance amount in 2024	Average relocation bonus amount in 2024 ^a	Service period
Navy ^c	\$500	After 90 days: \$500 + 8-hour time-off award After 6 months: \$500 + 8-hour time-off award After 12 months: \$750 + 8-hour time-off award	\$0	Recruitment bonus: must complete orientation before receiving bonus Retention allowance: must complete 90 days, 6 months, or 12 months of employment before receiving allowance

Source: GAO interviews with Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy officials, and related documentation. | GAO-26-107831

Note: The Air Force and Marine Corps information is for calendar year 2024, while the Army and Navy information is for fiscal year 2024.

^aNone of the military services provided relocation bonuses to child care workers in 2024, according to officials from all of the military services.

^bThe Air Force oversees the Space Force's child care program. Air Force officials said that the Air Force employs child care workers who work at Space Force child development centers.

^cThe Navy provides the same recruitment bonus and retention allowance amounts to child care workers across its participating installations. In January 2025, the Navy revised its recruitment bonus to \$1,000 plus an 8-hour time off award (for workers who have completed orientation, training, and 6 months of employment). It also revised its retention allowance to \$1,000 plus an 8-hour time off award (for workers who have completed 12 months of employment).

How many recruitment and retention incentives did the military services provide to child care workers in 2024?

In 2024, the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps collectively provided 4,955 recruitment and retention incentives to child care workers, according to military service data. As detailed below, these included 505 recruitment bonuses and 4,450 retention allowances, with the three military services providing more retention allowances than recruitment bonuses. None of the military services provided relocation bonuses. Individual child care workers may have received more than one incentive, and data on the number of individual workers who received incentives were not consistently available.

To consider how the number of incentives compares to the number of child care workers, we calculated the number of incentives provided per child care worker in 2024 and found that:

- Overall, the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps collectively provided 0.34 incentives per worker.
- Across these military services, the number of incentives provided per worker were 0.06 (Army), 0.18 (Marine Corps), and 0.85 (Air Force) (see table 2).

We did not include Navy data in the analysis. In July 2025, Navy officials told us they track recruitment bonuses and retention allowances together with performance awards, and could not readily separate them. As a result, we determined that these data were not reliable for the purpose of quantifying the types of incentives the Navy provided to child care workers. In late May 2026, in its technical comments on a draft of this report, DOD provided Navy data categorized by type of incentive. Because we received these data just before the report issued, we had insufficient time to assess their reliability.

Table 2: Number of Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentives the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps Provided to Child Care Workers, 2024

Military service ^a	Number of recruitment bonuses provided	Number of retention allowances provided	Number of relocation bonuses provided	Total number of incentives provided	Number of child care workers	Average number of incentives provided per child care worker ^b
Air Force ^c	429	3,645	0	4,074	4,820	0.85

Military service ^a	Number of recruitment bonuses provided	Number of retention allowances provided	Number of relocation bonuses provided	Total number of incentives provided	Number of child care workers	Average number of incentives provided per child care worker ^b
Army	56	399	0	455	7,419	0.06
Marine Corps	20	406	0	426	2,307	0.18
Total	505	4,450	0	4,955	14,546	0.34

Source: GAO analysis of summary data from the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps. | GAO-26-107831

^aThe information in this table covers all child care workers employed by these military services at any point during 2024.

^bBecause individual child care workers may receive multiple incentives in a calendar year, these numbers do not indicate the percentage of workers who received incentives.

^cThe Air Force oversees the Space Force's child care program. Air Force officials said the Air Force employs 354 child care workers who work at Space Force child development centers and are included in the Air Force data. They also told us that the Space Force does not have its own child care workforce.

Why did the military services provide more retention allowances than recruitment bonuses in 2024?

In 2024, the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps provided more retention allowances than recruitment bonuses because (1) more child care workers were eligible for retention allowances, and (2) the military services have used these allowances to address challenges retaining workers, according to officials.

- Across the military services, more child care workers were eligible for retention allowances than recruitment bonuses because only new workers are eligible for recruitment bonuses. In addition, child care workers can generally receive multiple retention allowances in a year; however, workers can receive no more than one recruitment bonus.
- Officials from some military services told us they provided more retention allowances than recruitment bonuses because retaining child care workers has been particularly challenging. For example, Air Force officials said they awarded retention allowances to help mitigate the lengthy onboarding process and the demands of child care work.

Although the military services provided more retention allowances than recruitment bonuses in 2024, officials said both incentives have been helpful in maintaining and increasing staffing levels. They said the incentives were particularly important throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Navy officials said that after the pandemic, they faced increased competition for child care workers, and the incentives helped strengthen their local recruitment efforts. Both Army and Navy officials said the incentives have helped increase the number of child care workers in areas with high staffing needs. Army officials also said they appreciate having the flexibility to provide the incentives to child care workers when needed.

Why did the military services provide no relocation bonuses to child care workers in 2024?

Officials from all of the military services said they did not provide any relocation bonuses in 2024 because they typically do not directly relocate many child care workers. Additionally, when child care workers transfer locations under other processes, the cost is typically covered.⁸ For example, military service officials said many child care workers are spouses of service members, so their relocation expenses are covered by the service members' permanent change of station process. As a result, the military services do not need to use relocation bonuses in those cases.

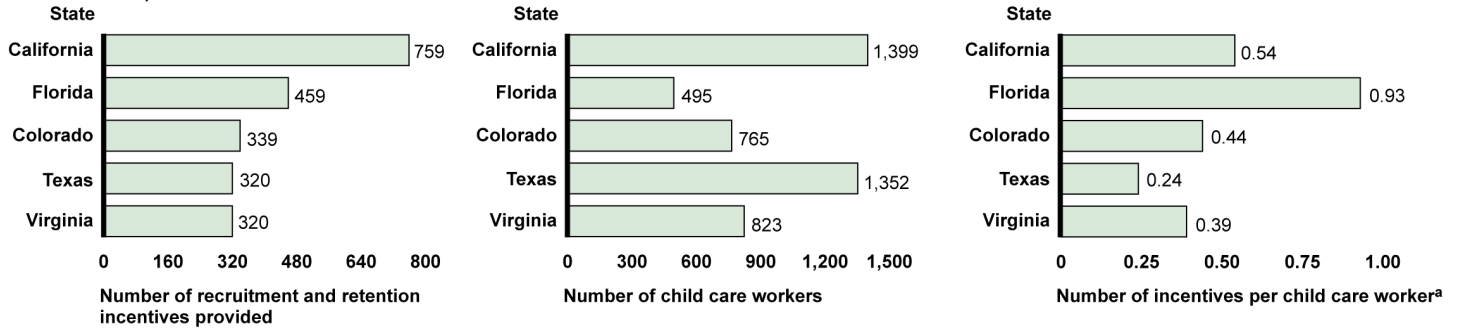
Military service officials told us they may also offer pay or other compensation that makes relocation bonuses unnecessary. For example, Army officials told us that the pay flexibilities for child care workers allow the Army to offer pay

increases to workers to incentivize relocation, rather than rely on relocation bonuses.

In which states did the military services provide the most recruitment and retention incentives in 2024?

In 2024, the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps collectively provided the most recruitment and retention incentives to child care workers in California, Florida, Colorado, Texas, and Virginia, according to military service data (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: States Where the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps Collectively Provided the Most Recruitment and Retention Incentives to Child Care Workers, 2024



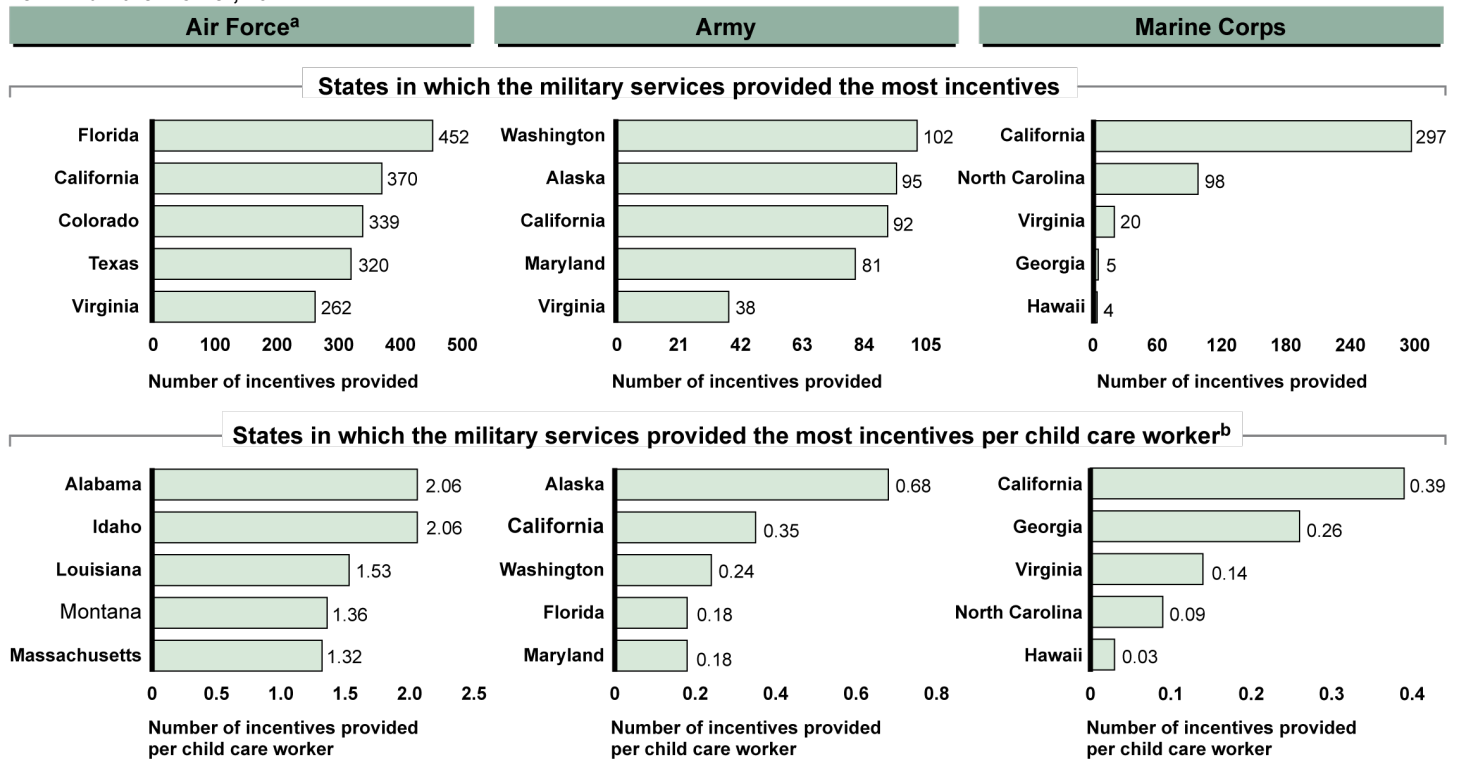
Source: GAO analysis of summary data from the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps. | GAO-26-107831

Note: The Air Force oversees the Space Force’s child care program. Air Force officials said that child care workers who work at Space Force child development centers are included in the Air Force data.

^aBecause individual workers may receive multiple incentives in a calendar year, these numbers do not indicate the percentage of workers who received incentives.

The states in which the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps provided the most recruitment and retention incentives varied by military service in 2024, both by total incentives provided and incentives provided per child care worker (see fig. 2).

Figure 2: States in Which the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps Each Provided the Most Recruitment and Retention Incentives in Total and Per Child Care Worker, 2024



Source: GAO analysis of summary data from the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps. | GAO-26-107831

^aThe Air Force oversees the Space Force's child care program. Air Force officials said that child care workers who work at Space Force child development centers are included in the Air Force data.

^bBecause individual workers may receive multiple incentives in a calendar year, these numbers do not indicate the percentage of workers who received incentives.

What benefits have the military services used to recruit and retain child care workers?

In addition to the recruitment and retention incentives discussed above, the military services provide benefits to recruit and retain child care workers. These benefits include child care fee discounts and priority enrollment for workers' own children, commissary privileges to purchase food and other goods at subsidized rates, and tuition assistance to pursue additional education, according to military service officials.

Child care fee discounts and priority enrollment. DOD requires that each military service offers discounts for the children of child care workers and prioritizes workers' access to child care slots.⁹ As of January 2026, each military service had implemented a 100 percent child care fee discount for a child care worker's first child to attend DOD child development centers.¹⁰ For each additional child, the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy offer a 25 percent discount, and the Air Force offers a 37 percent discount. Additionally, DOD requires that child care workers receive the highest priority for enrolling their children at child development centers.

Commissary privileges. The Army, Navy, and Air Force offer commissary privileges for child care workers at some installations as part of a DOD pilot program on commissary access. This benefit allows workers to purchase food and other goods from the installation commissary at subsidized rates, according to officials. Specifically,

- The **Army** offers commissary privileges to child care workers at 17 of its 50 installations. Officials said child care workers have provided positive feedback about the commissaries' low costs and convenient locations.

- The **Navy** offers commissary privileges at several installations, according to Navy officials. Officials said the Navy has received positive feedback from child care workers about this benefit, especially in locations with a high cost of living. They said they would like to extend the program to workers in other locations.
- The **Air Force** offers commissary privileges at installations near Army installations, because the two military services compete for the same child care workers, according to Air Force officials. They said they would like to provide this benefit to all Air Force child care workers.

Tuition assistance. As we previously reported in May 2024, each military service offers tuition assistance to its child care workers, with some differences in how they provide this benefit.¹¹ According to military service officials, the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy offer tuition assistance for courses leading to a degree or certificate related to child care. In contrast, the Air Force offers tuition assistance for courses leading to any degree higher than those a worker previously earned. In addition, the Air Force and Navy offer tuition assistance to all of their child care workers, while the Army and Marine Corps allow individual installations to decide whether to offer tuition assistance.

Employee transfer programs. Each military service has an employee transfer program that child care workers can use to transfer locations within their respective military services.¹² The Air Force, Army, and Navy programs all allow child care workers to request a noncompetitive transfer to another installation without a break in their work. Workers can transfer into a position at the same grade, series, pay, and employment category as the position they left. For example, Army officials told us its transfer program is effective in keeping child care workers who are military spouses in their positions when they move to a new area. Similarly, the Marine Corps program allows child care workers to transfer to another installation without a break in their work. It also provides workers with priority placement in the same type of position as the position they left.

Other. Military service officials shared examples of other benefits they provide to child care workers. For example, Navy officials said they provide an employee referral incentive to child care workers who refer a new hire. In addition, Army officials said they offer student loan repayment to child care workers.

What workplace initiatives have the military services used to retain child care workers?

All of the military services have workplace initiatives to develop child care workers' skills, improve the classroom environment, and recognize workers' performance, according to military service officials. They said these initiatives help retain child care workers by improving their experiences.

Skills-based training and professional development. The military services have taken steps to create and implement training and professional development opportunities for child care workers. For example:

- The **Army** has a classroom assessment system that aims to create a positive learning experience and enhance learning by focusing on child and teacher interactions and providing feedback to workers.¹³ Officials said they have observed improved classroom management and received positive feedback from workers, which has helped with retention. The Army also has a training on the well-being of child care workers that aims to enhance the quality of interactions between workers and children and prevent child abuse. Officials said the training helps workers become more aware of when they are experiencing caregiver fatigue so they can take steps to address it.

- The **Navy** has a professional development program to strengthen child care workers' skills and an initiative to improve workplace and community culture, officials told us. The military service also provided training to center directors and trainers for child care workers and set new requirements for teacher training days, according to officials.
- The **Marine Corps** has a pilot program on two installations that helps prepare child care workers to become assistant directors at child development centers, according to officials. To participate in the program, child care workers must meet the minimum requirements for the assistant director position. Officials said the program provides mentorship and tuition reimbursement to child care workers while they perform assistant director duties.
- The **Air Force** examined initial training requirements for child care workers. The military service is also taking steps to avoid overwhelming new employees with too much training, according to officials.

Additionally, we reported in 2024 that DOD, the Navy, and the Army had taken steps to assist child care workers with their career progression as a way to retain experienced child care workers.¹⁴ For example, DOD established a lead educator position for experienced child care workers to move from the classroom into management-level positions. Lead educators oversee multiple classrooms and provide coaching and mentoring to other child care workers.

Classroom environment improvements. The Navy has improved the experiences of newly hired child care workers by providing more opportunities for mentorship and support in the classroom, according to officials. For example, officials said the Navy implemented new standards that increased the number of management staff and lead teachers at child development centers. The military service also increased the number of workers in preschool classrooms to address behavior challenges. In addition, officials told us the Navy has a formal daytime rest period for workers where they may eat, rest, read, listen to music, or engage in other nonwork activities. Officials said these and other efforts have created a less stressful classroom environment for child care workers.

Awards and recognition. Officials from each military service said they provide nonmonetary recognition of child care workers. For example, child development centers on Army installations may have an employee of the month program, and staff receive pins to recognize their achievements, according to officials. Additionally, Navy officials told us that installations can hold potlucks and offer awards that highlight employees' accomplishments.

How have the military services combined incentives, benefits, and initiatives to recruit and retain child care workers?

Military service officials said they have the flexibility to combine recruitment and retention incentives, benefits, and workplace initiatives differently to meet the needs of each military service as they recruit and retain child care workers. For example,

- **Navy** officials said it has been helpful to offer recruitment bonuses together with competitive pay and benefits when recruiting new child care workers.
- An **Air Force** official said that offering a combination of incentives and benefits—including retention allowances and the employee transfer program—has helped increase child care staffing levels.
- **Army** officials said it has been useful to offer a range of benefits and initiatives because they address the varied needs and preferences of their workforce. They said the benefits that Army child care workers use the most are the child care fee discount and commissary privileges.

- Both **Army and Marine Corps** officials said it is helpful to offer a variety of incentives because recruitment and retention needs vary across installations. For example, Army officials said they have used the recruitment bonus to recruit child care workers in remote areas. Marine Corps officials noted that some installations have no difficulty recruiting child care workers, while others may need to use recruitment bonuses.

Across all of the military services, officials cited one specific benefit—the 100 percent child care fee discount for a child care worker’s first child—as particularly helpful for recruiting and retaining child care workers. Officials said this benefit has been highly appealing to child care workers and has had significant effects on worker recruitment and retention. However, a Navy official noted that workers without young children will need and want different benefits.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Defense for review and comment. DOD provided technical comments, which we incorporated, as appropriate.

How GAO Did This Study

To describe recruitment and retention incentives for nonappropriated fund employees in child development centers, we reviewed DOD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 1405; other DOD guidance; and related guidance from the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. We also interviewed DOD and military service officials about the guidance and how they implemented it.

To describe the number of incentives provided to child care workers and the states with the most incentives, we obtained and reviewed summary data for calendar year 2024—the most recent year of available data at the time of our review—from the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps. The data included the number of recruitment bonuses, relocation bonuses, and retention allowances that each military service provided to child care workers, by installation, city, and state. We did not include Navy data in the analysis. In July 2025, Navy officials told us they track recruitment bonuses and retention allowances together with performance awards, and could not readily separate them. As a result, we determined that these data were not reliable for the purpose of quantifying the types of incentives the Navy provided to child care workers. In late May 2026, in its technical comments on a draft of this report, DOD provided Navy data categorized by type of incentive. Because we received these data just before the report issued, we had insufficient time to assess their reliability.

To assess the reliability of the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps data, we conducted interviews, asked for follow-up responses, and reviewed documentation from each military service on how it collects and maintains the data. We also manually reviewed the data for potential outliers and errors and asked related follow-up questions, as needed. We found the data to be sufficiently reliable for the purpose of quantifying the types of incentives provided to child care workers.

To describe benefits and workplace initiatives that the military services use to recruit and retain child care workers, we reviewed related DOD and military service guidance. We also interviewed DOD and military service officials about their use of such benefits and initiatives.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2024 to June 2026 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence

obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

List of Addressees

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United States Senate

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, and the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Air Force, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and other interested parties.

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Endnotes

¹These data are from DOD's Office of Child and Youth Programs *Fiscal Year 2024 Child and Youth Program Annual Summary of Operations* report. These are the most recent data DOD has available on its child care program.

²GAO, *Military Child Care: Services Should Assess Their Employee Retention Efforts*, [GAO-24-106524](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 14, 2024).

³Department of Defense Instruction 1400.25, Volume 1405, *DOD Civilian Personnel Management System: Nonappropriated Fund Pay, Awards, and Allowances* (June 26, 2014) (incorporating change 1, effective Mar. 31, 2022).

⁴Department of the Air Force, *Installation Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining CYP Employees and Family Child Care Providers*. Department of the Army Regulation 215-3, *Nonappropriated Funds Instrumentalities Personnel Policy* (effective June 7, 2024). Department of the Navy, *Navy Child and Youth Programs Non-Appropriated Fund New Employee Employment Incentive Guidance* (December 2024). The Marine Corps uses documents such as Department of Defense Instruction 1400.25, Volume 1405, *DOD Civilian Personnel Management System: Nonappropriated Fund Pay, Awards, and Allowances*, and its strategic workforce plan to support its Child and Youth Program staffing needs and retention efforts.

⁵See 5 C.F.R. §§ 575.109, .209, and .309. Under some circumstances, the 25 percent limitation may be waived.

⁶The Air Force oversees the Space Force's child care program. Air Force officials said that the Air Force employs 354 nonappropriated fund child care workers who work at Space Force child development centers and are included in the Air Force data. They said the Space Force does not directly employ any child care workers paid using nonappropriated funds.

⁷See 5 C.F.R. §§ 575.110, .210, and .310.

⁸The permanent change of station process relocates military service members, and their families if applicable, from one installation to another for long-term assignments. Additionally, as we reported in 2024, each of the military services has relocation programs or tools that help child care workers change locations, including an employee transfer program to help employees transfer between child development centers without having to compete with other applicants. See [GAO-24-106524](#).

⁹Department of Defense, *Taking Care of Our Service Members and Families* (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 22, 2022), and Department of Defense, *Taking Care of People: Fee Discounts for Child Development Program Direct Care Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 30, 2022). Also see Department of Defense, *Policy Change Concerning Priorities for Department of Defense Child Care Programs* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 21, 2020). Last, see Department of Defense Instruction 6060.02, *Child Development Programs (CDPs)* (Aug. 5, 2014) (incorporating change 2, effective Sept. 1, 2020).

¹⁰See 10 U.S.C. § 1793(d).

¹¹[GAO-24-106524](#).

¹²The military service transfer programs are the: Air Force's Employee Transfer Assistance Program, Army's NAF Civilian Employee Assignment Tool, Marine Corps' NAF Relocation Tool, and Navy's Child and Youth Program Employee Transfer Program.

¹³In 2024, we reported that the Army was piloting this program. See [GAO-24-106524](#).

¹⁴[GAO-24-106524](#).