

Introduction

The primary goal of the Santa Cruz County AB212 program is to build a skilled and stable workforce to provide high-quality child care and development services through state subsidized child care programs. The Santa Cruz County AB212 program addresses the need to retain and enhance a qualified child care workforce. In program year 2006-2007 we will increase the retention of both new and veteran CDE funded early care and education staff and reward their professional growth and continued education.

The Santa Cruz County AB212 program will award financial incentives directly to eligible child care providers based on:

- Their continuity of current employment
- Completion of prescribed trainings

Current Needs and Resources

Research indicates that the quality of care characterized by low adult-child ratios and a stable, professional staff has a dramatic, positive, long-term impact on children's language arts skills, math achievement and development. (Abecedarian Project, 2000). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to retain our child care workforce. Yet, child care programs in Santa Cruz County continue to struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff. According to the *California Child Care Workforce Study report on Santa Cruz County (Fall 2001)*, the turnover rate for teachers was 28% and for assistant teachers was 30%. Turnover rates – defined here as the percentage of employees who left employment in the previous 12 months - were markedly higher among staff working exclusively with children on a daily basis. These high turnover rates including shifting staff within programs, constant change in staff, and poor adult/child ratios, impact both the supply and quality of services available to young children and function to disrupt healthy development in every arena of their growth.

Recruiting and retaining child care professionals continues to be a major challenge. Low wages among child care employees impede recruitment and retention of well-qualified staff (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerer and Howes, 2001). Hourly wages for the Santa Cruz County child care workforce ranges from a low of \$7.19 for an assistant teacher, to a high of \$11.38 for teachers, with directors earning between \$13.32-\$17.04 per hour (*Current Data on Child Care Salaries & Benefits in the United States* from the Center for the Child Care Workforce, March 2002). The availability of jobs in other fields that offer better pay and benefits, coupled with the high cost of living, particularly the high cost of housing in Santa Cruz County, increases the pressure to pursue other employment opportunities. Staff shortages occur at every level from aides to directors and the additional difficulty and inability to find substitutes may cause programs to operate below minimal licensing standards or below licensed capacity.

The Santa Cruz County Child Care Planning Council has successfully operated a seamless CARES/AB212 program for the past four years. As of January 1, 2006, our CARES funding ended due to declining local First 5 revenue. In order to design a new stand-alone AB212 program the Planning Council conducted a survey of all CDE programs and met with CDE center directors to determine the needs of CDE staff and how best to help them provide high quality care to the children in their programs.

Surveyed programs reported significantly lower turnover rates over the course of each 12-month program period 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 than were reported in 2001 (prior to AB212 program implementation). Survey results show that in 2004-2005, CDE programs experienced a turnover rate of 17.3% and in 2005-2006 this rate dropped to just 10%. This represents a significant reduction in staff turnover (down 43.3%) from the results of the 2001 studies quoted above. The AB212 program's focus on retention has clearly had a positive impact on turnover rates of the child care workforce in Santa Cruz County.

In addition to encouraging retention amongst child care providers, the Planning Council also recognizes the importance of supporting the continuing professional growth of our child care providers. According to Whitebook et al. "Stability in and of itself...does not result in skilled care-giving or high-quality programs. Tenure as a child care provider, for example, has not been found consistently to lead to high-quality care-giving. Both specialized training in child development and formal education levels, in contrast, have been found consistently to predict high-quality interactions and optimal child development in center-based care. Thus, centers seeking to improve and maintain quality must minimize overall turnover *and* maximize the stability of more skilled members of the workforce." (By a Thread, Whitebook et al., P. 44)

A skilled and stable workforce is crucial in helping children maximize their learning potential, and in helping parents seek and maintain employment. We believe that increasing the quality of care that children receive in our state funded child care programs must be equally supported through efforts to retain as well as efforts to increase the Professional Growth and Education of our child care providers.

This view is substantiated by the following points made by Marcy Whitebook et al. in her book By a Thread.

- Increased wages *are* directly correlated to increased staff retention. (page 39)
- Retention of highly trained staff *is* correlated to sustainability of program *quality* indicators. (page 42)

Ultimately, we are interested in the quality of care our children receive and we know that both staff retention (page 43) and education (page 42) contribute to the quality of care provided. Based on the above premises, we believe that by offering stipends as a reward for increased professional growth we can accomplish two things, which both lead to an increased quality of care provided in our state funded programs:

1. Stipends act as a wage augmentation, thereby increasing the retention of AB212 awardees in their jobs and in the field, which leads to higher quality of care provided, and
2. Increased professional growth that is required of all providers in order to obtain the stipends directly lead to higher quality care provided and increase the likelihood of veteran staff retention.

The Santa Cruz County AB212 program will reward child care providers in state funded programs for:

- Maintaining stable employment in the child care field,
- Investing in their professional development and

- Applying their new skills in their current classrooms

Based on the above justification, the Planning Council has developed the following program design:

We propose to use AB212 funds to operate a county-wide professional development program to support implementation of required state sponsored (CDD and CPIN) trainings. CDD and CPIN sponsor numerous trainings to support program quality improvement for CDD centers. These trainings offer quality information that all staff would benefit from accessing (recent and upcoming examples include: DRDP revision, CPIN English Language Learners, CA Preschool Standards, Early Steps to Reading Success and Literacy Practices). CDD often limits attendance to two individuals per agency. Directors are then responsible for training teachers and support staff at their respective sites without sufficient time during work hours to provide such training and without the ability to pay for teacher's time outside of work. Furthermore, not all directors have the necessary training expertise.

The Child Care Planning Council currently operates a Consortium of all local CDD directors. Of this Consortium, a small Director Advisory group will be recruited and rewarded for serving as a professional development team. This team will create a three part training series (based on the content of the CDD and CPIN trainings) to include preset, training and post implementation components. All participating CDD directors will provide the preset and follow-up components to their staff at their centers. The Director Advisory group will deliver a full day county-wide training for all CDD staff modeled on the state sponsored training day. All participating Program Directors must agree to collaborate with the Planning Council on implementation of the AB212 program including participation in trainings, oversight of workplace implementation, review and sign off for teachers contracts for stipends.

A secondary goal is to foster a learning network of CDD staff through county-wide training opportunities. Teachers and programs benefit from collaborative learning networks and profit from sharing information on implementation. Expertise and diversity from across the centers will strengthen all programs. Santa Cruz AB212 funding will provide stipends to teachers for learning and implementing these required program improvement efforts and will assist programs in motivating and compensating teachers for their efforts. The Santa Cruz AB212 program will aide with retention by supporting teachers in their professional practice and meeting state requirements that will benefit children

Sample Training Module/ Implementation Structure

Pre Set (at site) (1 to 2 hour time commitment)

Possible activities

Staff or classroom team meeting to evaluate current practice in area

Review of current child and family profile for area
KWL (What you know, want to know, learned)
Personal Reflection
Survey

Training Event (Centralized for all participating) (3 to 5 hours time commitment)
Content Delivery – based on roll out from CDD or CPIN Training of Trainer Event

Post Implementation (at site and outside of work) (3 to 8 hours time commitment)
Implement activities from training (to include lesson planning, assessment, team meetings, self- reflection)

Follow up (Centralized for all participating or in small groups regionally) (3 to 5 hours time commitment)
Reporting back on implementation
Problem solving
Second stage training or refinement
Celebration!!!!

Program parameters:

- Stipends will range from between \$500 and \$1000 for directors and staff based on the number of eligible participants.
- Total time commitment from teachers 10- 15 hour.
- All participants will receive certificates of Professional Growth Hours completed towards renewal of their Child Development Permits.
- The Professional Development team of directors would receive compensation for planning and presenting training modules (between \$500 and \$1000).
- Limited stipend for participation available to other participating directors.
- Stipend may be pro- rated for level of completion.
- All training events would be offered outside of operation hours.
- Event hours and locations would be determined by needs assessment across centers to ensure maximum participation

Priorities

Stipends will be given to eligible child care aides/assistants, teachers and directors in state subsidized center-based programs.

Measurable Outcomes

The following measurable outcomes will be used to assess and document the effectiveness of the 2006-07 AB212 program in retaining and raising the educational level of qualified child care employees.

Outcomes will be measured by two means:

1. A review of data collected from applications for awards will measure the completion of professional development training hours.
2. A follow-up report regarding implementation of learned strategies will measure staff competency in the training areas.
3. A survey of the CDE funded centers will measure annual staff retention rates.

Outcomes:

1. Participants will have increased their credentials to provide child care as a direct result of participating in the Santa Cruz County AB212 program through completion of trainings related to Early Childhood Education and therefore maintaining or increasing the Child Development Permit level:
A database report showing that 100% of awardees have completed trainings related to Early Childhood Education and have maintained or moved up the Child Development Permit Matrix.
2. Staff turnover rates at state funded programs will decrease from 2005 levels (10% for Teachers and Assistant teachers) as indicated by:
Surveyed programs reporting lower turnover rates over the course of each 12-month program period.
3. Participants will demonstrate increased competency in key content areas (based on trainings offered):
Participating staff will be required to document their growth in training areas through various follow-up activities monitored by center directors.