



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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Office of the Director

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

January 5, 2026

The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi
Speaker of the House
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear House Speaker Shekarchi,

I am pleased to present you with the Department of Human Services Rhode Island Start Early Data System annual report, which I have enclosed with this letter as required by 2024 – S 2142 Substitute A, signed into law in 2024. In February 2025, the Office of Child Care developed and launched a statewide early childhood care and education workforce registry that incorporates data set guidelines from the National Workforce Registry Alliance.

This report shows progress to date with this registry including information about staff who work directly with children in all licensed child care and early learning centers, as well as family child care homes in Rhode Island.

RISES System Overview

Rhode Island strategically built a comprehensive early childhood data system—the RI Start Early System—encompassing an Early Childhood Education Professionals Workforce Registry while creating greater efficiencies through information digitization. The benefits of this include better and enhanced quality improvement accessibility, real-time data supporting cross-agency collaboration, improved reporting capabilities, and quality improvements defined in the program's strategic plan.

RI Start Early System functionality features include, as of December 2025:

Workforce Registry: Launched in February 2025, the registry provides the Office of Child Care with the ability to produce real-time data regarding the characteristics of staff employed in licensed child care programs.

Child Care Provider Licensing System of Record: This internal system moved the Office of Child Care away from an antiquated system. Programs have been incentivized to participate in the workforce registry through a number of efforts by DHS including the provision of staff trainings, office hours, and incentivization grants.

Child Care Provider Search Tool: This feature is populated by Child Care Licensing System of Record data to keep families and the community informed of Child Care licensing status, age groups served, location and languages spoken. The system also allows families or those seeking care the ability to search within a specific radius and along their route between two separate addresses—typically work and home.

Case Management System: The September 2025 Case Management System provides DHS funded vendors, charged with supporting the early education provider and workforce community, with high-quality professional development and higher education opportunities, workforce development, and facilities consultation support. Also included in this system release was the capability for the RI Pre-K Grant Application and Renewal process to be digitized to ensure cross-agency collaboration in the oversight and administration of RI Pre-K.

Other Key Considerations:

Workforce registry participation is not yet mandatory but will be in early 2026 with the promulgation of new DHS licensing regulations. Child Care providers have been required to complete licensing renewals within the system since August of 2025. As a result, they have been required to ensure all staff are registered within the system, up-to-date on all required documentation and associated with their unique programs.

Given this context, DHS presents the enclosed data sheet with aggregate information regarding characteristics of staff employed in licensed child care programs to be representative of the state's current child care workforce.

Data accuracy will continue to evolve over time. The agency is confident that as the case management system is built out further, key information about professional development—training, technical assistance, and licensing compliance—will position the program to standardize its efforts and further strategically invest in the system to improve outcomes for RI children and families.

DHS is continuing to make enhancements to the Workforce Registry and looks forward to providing further updates as they are realized.

Respectfully,



Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director
RI Department of Human Services

CC: Raymond Simone, Chief of Staff, House Speaker's Office
Stephen Kavanagh, Deputy Chief of Staff, House Speaker's Office



2025 EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DATA SHEET



Overview

The Early Childhood Workforce Data Sheet provides an annual overview of the educators who support young children across the state. This report summarizes key characteristics of the early care and education workforce, including demographics, job roles, qualifications, and workforce indicators. Data are drawn from the Rhode Island Start Early System (RISES) and reflect information submitted by programs and educators during the 2025 reporting year.

Key Considerations

- In 2026, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will implement child care regulations that require all providers to have a RISES Workforce Registry profile. This change aims to enhance the accuracy of workforce data and enable DHS to track trends over time more effectively.
- As DHS works to enhance the system, new features are being added to incorporate more comprehensive information.
- These figures do not currently include early childhood education (ECE) teachers employed by Local Education Agencies (LEAs), as they are not licensed by DHS. Future iterations of this report will incorporate all ECE teachers to ensure comprehensive representation.

Early Childhood Workforce- By the Numbers

9,602

Total ECE Workforce Members

The Workforce Registry includes a total of 9,602 workforce members, including educators and support staff (active and inactive) that have enrolled in the system as of December 15, 2025. This number includes all members who have ever been entered into the RISES system, inclusive of educators working in programs as well as administrators and others transitioning to other programs and/or other sectors. Since some data is user provided, this number is preliminary and subject to change.

5,126

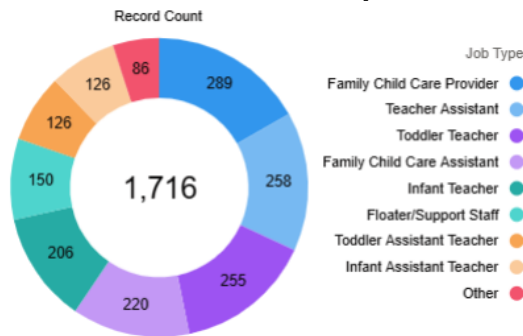
Active Workforce Members

The workforce registry includes a total of 9,602 members, of which 5,126 are currently active and employed in early childhood programs. These active members represent the core workforce delivering care and education across licensed settings statewide.

Workforce by Job Type

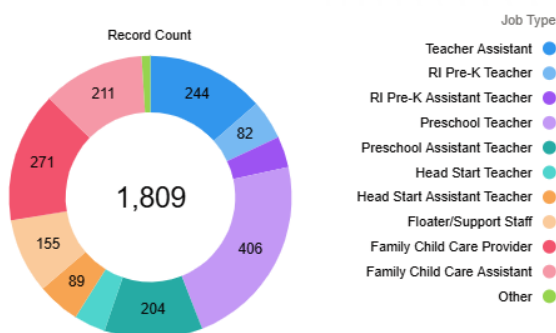
There are 4,670 workforce members working in Infant, Toddler, Preschool/Pre-K, or School-Age teaching roles in licensed center-based or home-based programs. This number includes educators only and does not include administrative, regulatory, or other support staff. Because the Workforce Registry also includes administrators and non-teaching roles (such as nurses or van drivers), the total number of active workforce members is higher than the number shown in this job type section.

Infant/Toddler Educators (1,716 total)



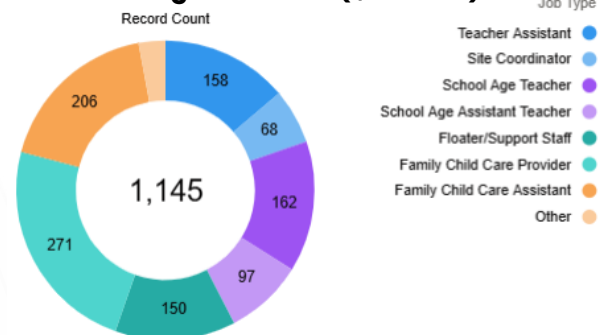
The I/T workforce is diverse across roles: Family Child Care Providers (17%), Teacher Assistants (15%), Toddler Teachers (15%), Family Child Care Assistants (13%), and Infant Teachers (12%), with remaining staff serving as assistants, floaters, or aides. Family child care and lead teaching roles make up the largest share of I/T educators.

Preschool / PreK Educators (1,809 total)



The PS/PK educator workforce is varied across roles. Preschool Teachers represent the largest share (22%), followed by FCC Providers (15%) and Teacher Assistants (13%). FCC Assistants make up 12%, Preschool Assistant Teachers 11%, and Floater/Support Staff 8.58%. The remaining roles, each account for 5% or less of the workforce. Lead teaching and Family Child Care roles together make up the largest portion of educators.

School Age Educators (1,145 total)



School age educators serve in a range of roles, with the largest share working as Family Child Care Providers (24%) and Family child Care Assistants (18%). Other key roles include School Age Teachers (14%), Teacher Assistants (14%) and Floater/Support Staff (13%). Smaller portions of the workforce serve as coordinators, aides or administrative staff.



2025 EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DATA SHEET

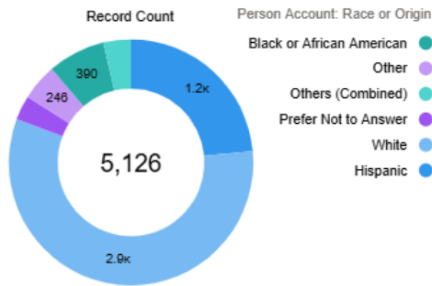


Demographics of the Early Childhood Workforce

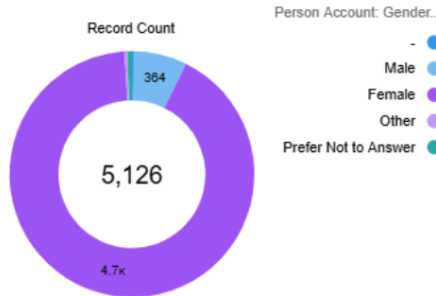
These demographic visuals highlight the range of the early childhood workforce across race, gender, and age.

- Race data shows that the workforce is primarily White (57.21%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (23.54%), Black/African American (7.59%), with the remaining educators identifying as other races or choosing not to answer.
- Gender continues to be predominantly female (91.74%).
- Age spans from 16 to the 80s, with the largest share of educators between 20–29 years old (33.4%), followed by 30–39 (19.81%), and 50–59 (15.17%).

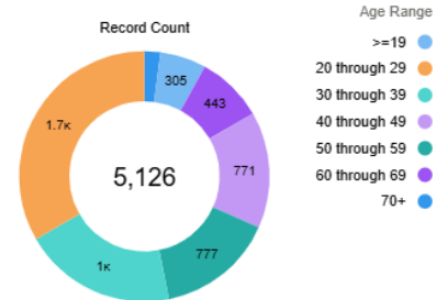
Active Workforce Members by Race



Active Workforce Members by Gender



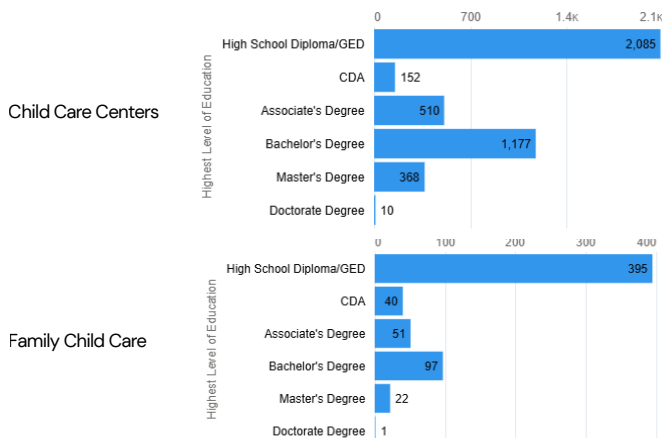
Active Workforce Members by Age



Educational Background of the Early Childhood Workforce

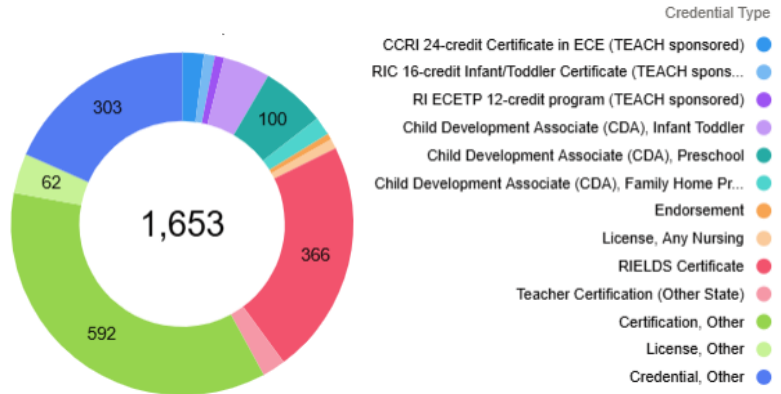
Continuing education is essential for early childhood professionals, as it ensures they remain informed about current research, best practices, and evolving standards in child development. Ongoing professional learning strengthens educators' ability to provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate experiences that support the needs of young children and their families. Additionally, continued education promotes professional growth, enhances teaching effectiveness, and contributes to improved outcomes for children during their most critical years of development.

Active Workforce Members by Highest Education



Education levels vary by program setting. From the staff members working in child care centers, most hold a high school diploma or GED, followed by bachelor's degrees, then associate and master's degrees, with a small number holding doctoral degrees or CDA credentials. In family child care settings, most members also hold a high school diploma or GED, followed by bachelor's and associate degrees, with smaller numbers holding master's degrees, CDA credentials, or doctoral degrees. These visuals show differences in education levels by setting and highlight the range of preparation across the early childhood workforce.

Active Workforce Members by Professional Credentials



Active workforce members hold a diverse range of education- and profession-based credentials, and individuals may hold more than one credential. The largest proportion possesses Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials across infant/toddler, preschool, and family child care settings, followed by TEACH-sponsored ECE certificates and credit-bearing programs such as RI ECETP and CCRI. Smaller segments of the workforce hold teaching certifications, nursing licenses, endorsements, or other specialized credentials. This distribution illustrates the varied levels of formal preparation and the multiple career pathways present within the early childhood workforce.

Workforce Turnover

Currently, there is insufficient data within the system to provide comprehensive turnover statistics based on the key considerations outlined at the beginning of the report. However, as the usage of the system becomes mandated through regulation and as data from all Local Education Agency (LEA) educators is incorporated, the system will enable tracking of educators who exit the early childhood education (ECE) field entirely, or transition from ECE into the public school system.