



First 5
Imperial

Imperial County Children and Families First Commission

2020 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE STUDY

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2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study

Introduction

The early care and education workforce is a critical component of a healthy and stable society, as professionals in this field are tasked with the exceptional calling to care for the youngest members of a community. This workforce, particularly in Imperial County, has the weight of an enormous responsibility thrust upon it, and therefore a sound process for professional development and capacity building opportunities should be at the forefront of strategies to ensure that the quality of care in these settings is maximized in order to have the most positive impact on children. In recent years, most notably as a result of the implementation of *Race to the Top* in California and other parts of the United States, much emphasis has been placed on continuous quality improvement in early care and education settings. These efforts have led to significant investments in the development of standards of care, the implementation of a state-wide quality improvement rating system (QRIS), and funding to support quality improvement in early care and education settings has been earmarked by First 5 California, the California Department of Education, and First 5 Imperial.

Research clearly supports better outcomes associated with a robust early care and education system, particularly one that works to address social vulnerabilities in communities of high need. For example, in *Early Childhood Development: A Powerful Equalizer*, the authors state that economists agree that “on the basis of available evidence that investment in early childhood is the most powerful investment a country can make, with returns over the life course many times the amount of the original investment.” These impacts undoubtedly influence social and economic interests, contribute to the health and wellbeing of the child, and support the idea to invest in human capital. Communities or institutions that have identified early care and education as vital to human development and socio-economic improvements have a duty to value a childcare provider’s experience and skills by advancing policies

within the system that support quality improvement and professional development.

The judicious allocation of resources to support meaningful outcomes associated with continuous quality improvement in early care and education settings will depend on targeted strategies. First 5 Imperial believes that a central component to identifying these strategies is a comprehensive analysis of the workforce employed to provide care for children 0-5 years of age, hence the rationale for realizing the *2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study*. Results or findings from this study will be used to guide strategic priorities for First 5 Imperial, and/or other agencies interested in this process, in addition to supporting the work of the 2020 Strategic Plan. These efforts will provide an analysis of both family childcare home and center-based program settings, and intends to provide a picture that can help agencies pinpoint information that can help:

- understand the workforce and develop a sounding board that would support strategies and activities designed to support professionals that are responsible for tutoring the youngest members in our community,
- identify elements within the workforce that would benefit from quality improvement practices/activities,
- contribute to the early care and education workforce development, and
- recognize gains in child development over time and isolate areas that lack resources for greater impact.

Background

First 5 Imperial, also known as the Imperial County Children and Families First Commission, on a yearly basis funds programs that support the healthy development of children 0-5 years of age. This commission was established by the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, via County Ordinance 2.108.010, subsequent to the passage of the California Children and Families Act of 1998. Oversight for First 5 Imperial funding is granted under the authority of a nine-member Board of Commissioners. Priorities of the Commission are recognized under its Strategic Plan and focus on areas of development related directly to three result areas, which are: increased family functioning, increased child development, and increased

child health. A strong factor in these strategic priorities revolves around early care and education settings. Hence, the Commission authorized the *2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study* for the purpose of pinpointing services and activities that would support the work of its strategic planning process, in addition to provide a source of reference to other agencies working to enhance services related to early care and education. This evaluation of the early care and education workforce also serves as a follow-up to a similar study conducted by the Commission in 2005, and will work to guide funding allocations for specific areas where quality improvements to the workforce may be supported. For example, ensuing the results from 2005 Workforce Study, First 5 Imperial was soundly able to agree that funding should be used to support childcare professionals interested in acquiring coursework through an accredited institution of higher education that would support educational attainment in child development. This led directly to the creation of the Professional Advancement for Childcare Educators Stipend (PACES) Program.

Effective partnerships, professional relationships and timing significantly contributed to meaningful level of data collection for both center-based preschool programs and family childcare homes that would be utilized to illustrate the ‘best’ interpretation of the early care and education workforce in Imperial County. These partnerships and professional relationships included the Imperial County Resource and Referral Agency, the Imperial County Office of Education’s Early Care and Education Programs, Riverside County Office of Education’s Migrant Head Start Program, Imperial Valley College, and the multitude of individual Family Childcare Homes and Center-Based Programs operating in the area. The level of support and assistance was invaluable, particularly in light of the damage and lasting changes that were thrust upon the early care and education landscape as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the desire to advance the current system as issues of social unrest and discrimination unfold and are part of a greater discussion that involves the need for innovative solutions and practices.

The desire for continuous quality improvement, above all, at the ground level of our early care and education environment, is evident, and research supports the need to develop services to encourage growth in areas that sustain quality improvement, such as supports identified on a quality rating improvement system, in addition to other valuable quality care measures that may not be specifically identified under such a system. The likelihood of sustaining targeted investments that would support quality improvements in the field are highly supported by a well-established

picture, or ‘best’ interpretation of the workforce. The objective of the Commission is for a “best” interpretation that ultimately functions to provide or improve services that support the education and healthy development of the child so that she can begin that long road to adulthood better equipped to succeed and fulfill her place in society.

Approach and Process for Accessing the Workforce

In February of 2020 First 5 Imperial authorized staff to conduct an assessment on the early care and education workforce, which would serve to evaluate the current workforce and provide a record that could be compared to a similar assessment produced by the Commission during FY 2005-2006.

Subsequent to authorization by the Commission, the data collection phase was mapped out and guided by specific questions directed to the early care and education workforce, which essentially consists of childcare center-based programs (preschool, daycare centers and/or infant and toddler centers) and family childcare homes. Though these two groups share a multitude of similarities, specific properties entailed by their environments required the development of distinct surveys that could be used to capture shared and dissimilar elements from two distinct groups that make up the traditional early care and education workforce. For example, though the center-based program and a family childcare home may share a “licensed capacity” they would not both be identified as being able to contract with the California Department of Education for a California State Preschool Program. Also, it may be the case that one organization may have multiple center-based programs, though this cannot be the case for a family childcare home.

Therefore, out of the need to engage in data collection efforts that would maximize the differences between these two sub-groups of the same workforce, two separate surveys were established: the Family Child Care Provider Survey and the Center Director Survey. Regardless of the differences in these groups, these two surveys are designed to provide a profile of each group, in addition to establishing a method for blending the data collected for both groups into one early care and education workforce. The data collection design is clearly broken down into three major themes: a) Childcare Home/Center Characteristics, b) Educational Characteristics, and c) Provider Demographic and Other Information.

Summary Profile of the Family Childcare Home

A Family Childcare Home is a type of early care and education setting where the childcare provider works with children in their own home. Through the home the provider operates as a small business that serves as an early care and education setting, where the State of California will license the home to care for 8 to 14 children. Often, though not always, the childcare home provider may operate with the help of an assistant. The Imperial County Resource and Referral Agency listed over 250 Family Childcare Homes that were operational during the data collection phase of the workforce study, where a total of 171 of these homes participated by submitting a survey questionnaire. Because of the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall rate of participation may have been hampered due mainly to the closure of a number of these settings. Though the participation rate was significantly higher than the 2005-2006 survey, which is approximately 68% for the 2020 study.

In some cases, providers may have opted out of providing an answer for a specific element of the survey, and information may have varied though the overall analysis attempts to account for these issues. For instance, reasons for not answering specific elements may have been: the provider felt that the particular questions did not apply; they judged that the information was confidential; did not feel comfortable sharing the information; or due to their current economic status and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their childcare home. An evaluation of the information, by looking at standard deviations, the size of the workforce group, confidence intervals and/or the overall number of surveys collected, suggests consistency throughout and supports the rationale to construct arguments for investing in targeted strategies that would support early care and education providers. The summary profile for the family childcare home section of the workforce is arranged under the three major themes noted above: a) Family Childcare Home Characteristics, b) Family Childcare Home Educational Characteristics, and c) Family Childcare Provider Demographic and Other Information.

Family Childcare Home Characteristics

The section addressing Family Childcare Home Characteristics involves developing a general idea or picture of distinguishing traits that are considered an integral part of this type of childcare setting. Elements of the characteristic section of the survey take into consideration information

relevant to licensing, number and ages of children served, if services are available for children with disabilities, if the site serves children eligible for subsidized care, and training on special instruments that have been identified as contributing to quality of care such as environmental rating scales or developmental assessments. This assessment is based on information provided by 171 family childcare providers surveyed and all licensed sites serve children 0-13 years of age, with only 10 of these providers reporting that they were not serving any children during the data collection phase of the workforce study. Reasons for not offering childcare services varied, which may have included a shortage of children in need of care, personal issues, enrollment in school, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though these 10 family childcare homes (5.8%) were not serving children, all information provided by these sites was included in the report primarily based on the fact these individuals are unequivocally part of the workforce and certainly represent a portion that has the potential to offer early care and education services.

Licensed Capacity of the Family Childcare Home

Of the 171 family childcare homes participating in the survey all (100%) had a current childcare license issued by the State of California's Community Care Licensing Division. Licensing capacities approved by the agency are either for a small license where up to 8 children may receive consecutive care or a large license where up to 14 children may receive consecutive care. Therefore, licensing information for the 171 family childcare homes indicates that:

- 60 homes were licensed to care for up to 8 children (35.1%).
- 111 homes were licensed to care for up to 14 children (64.9%).
- The total number of consecutive slots available to care for children was 2,034.
- The average capacity for all sites factors out to approximately 10 children per site.

The meaningful proportion of family childcare homes that completed a workforce survey, and accounted for virtually all sites operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, were located in the cities of Brawley, Calexico and El Centro, (80.1%) and comparatively reported serving a greater share of the overall childcare capacity with 1,133 slots allocated to these areas (80.5%). Table A1 lists the family childcare homes and slots by the City where early care and education services are provided.

TABLE A1

Family Childcare Homes/Slots by City		
City	Sites	Slots
Brawley	28	338
Calexico	67	812
Calipatria	2	28
El Centro	42	480
Heber	7	92
Holtville	5	46
Imperial	18	210
Niland	0	0
Seeley	2	28
Salton City	0	0
Westmorland	0	0
Total	171	2,034

Children Served by Family Childcare Homes

As noted, the 171 family childcare homes have the capacity to serve 2,034 children consecutively, though the potential is higher due to the fact that many of these sites can offer care at non-traditional hours. For the duration of the data collection phase only 161 of these sites were serving children and accounted for 94.1% of the total supply of slots available, and the total number of children that were receiving some type of care in these settings was 1,407; the total operating capacity for the 171 providers was 73.4% of the licensed capacity. Table A2

illustrates the overall number of children that were being served by 171 family childcare homes by the city where early care and education services were offered. This does not indicate that the identified city of care is also the city of residence for the child/family. Noteworthy is the fact that there were not any sites caring for children in the cities of Niland, Salton City and Westmorland. Furthermore, the total number of children may include, in some instances, more children than the site's licensed capacity due to their ability to offered "staggered" care if they operate during non-traditional hours. For

TABLE A2

Family Childcare Children Served By City	
City	Children
Brawley	239
Calexico	533
Calipatria	22
El Centro	361
Heber	59
Holtville	33
Imperial	143
Seeley	26
Total	1,407

instance, a provider may be offering care for the children of a nurse, emergency responder or essential worker that may be working a nightshift or other non-traditional hours. Therefore, a provider licensed to offer care to up to 8 children may in fact serve 10 or 12 children. The maximum number of children served by one provider was 31.

For all children served, a family childcare home traditionally cares for children less than 13 years of age, and for the most part the majority of these children are under 6 years of age. It may also be the case, particularly due to the distance learning protocols established by the State of California as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or the need to care for a child with special needs, that these providers may have children that are older under their care as well. For the purposes of the workforce study, data for child ages was classed into groups that may require distinct levels of early care and education, which are:

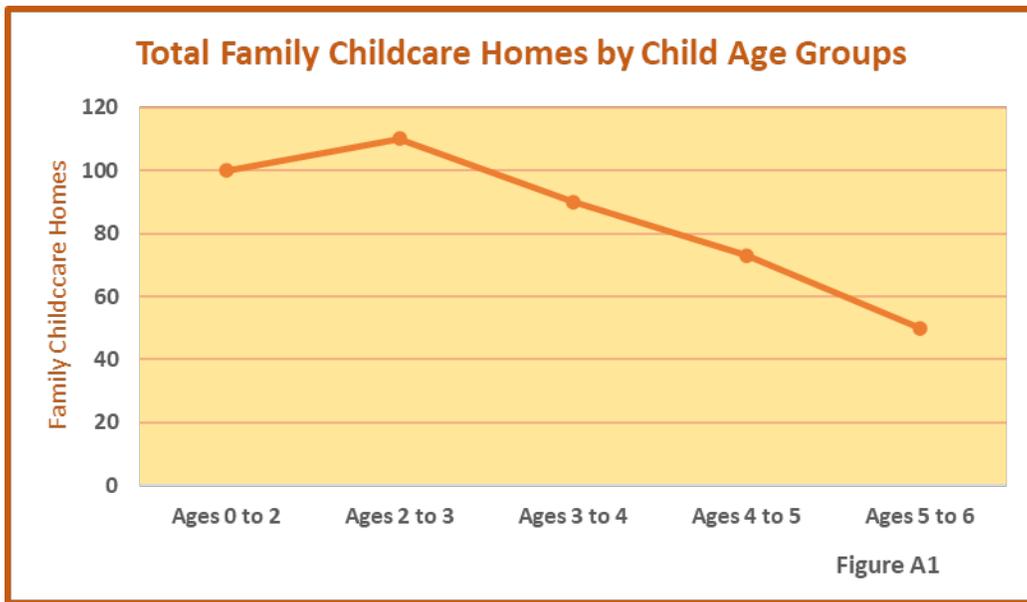
- Ages 0 to 2 (infants)
- Ages 2 to 3 (toddlers)
- Ages 3 to 4 (preschoolers)
- Ages 4 to 5 (preschoolers/TK)
- Ages 5 to 6 (Kindergarten)
- Ages 6 and up (Other K-12)

The most abundant number of children in care pertained to the group identified as ages 6 and up; this group accounted for 499 or 35.5% of the total, though it is important to highlight the combined age groupings for children 0-5 years of age (made up of five age sets from infant to kindergarten) accounted for 64.5% of all children served. Therefore, family childcare providers served children from diverse ages, of which the overwhelming majority were children under 6 years of age. Characteristics for age-groups of children under six included the following:

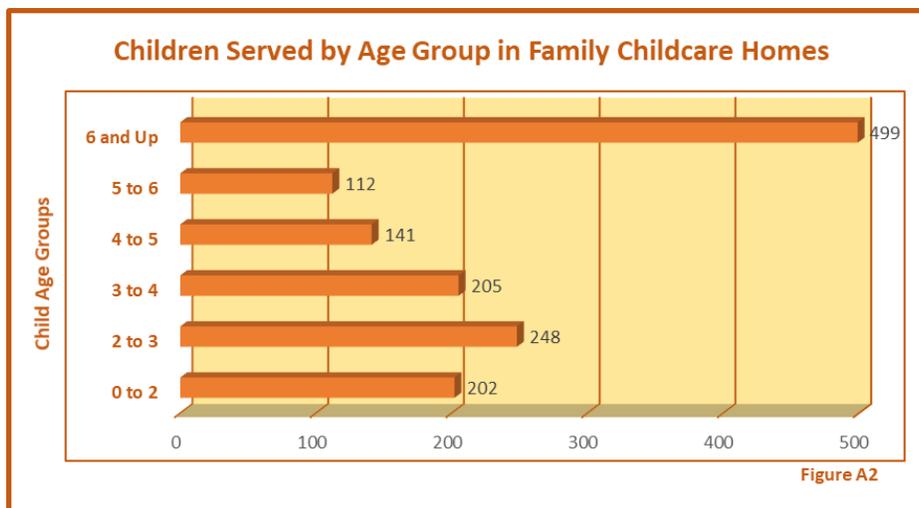
- 100 providers served 202 children 0-2 years of age.
- 110 providers served 248 children 2-3 years of age.
- 90 providers served 205 children 3-4 years of age.
- 73 providers served 141 children 4-5 years of age.
- 50 providers served 112 children 5 years of age.

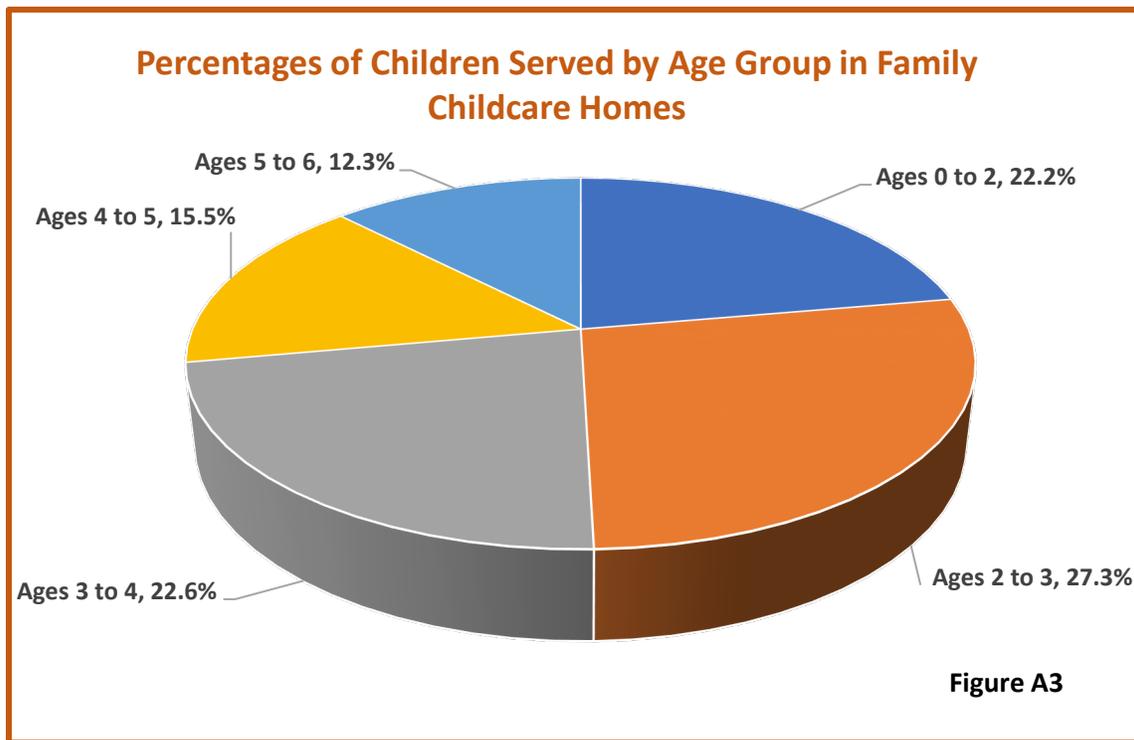
The information collected emphasizes that family childcare homes provided significantly more care for children in the younger age groups; grouping children in the 0 to 2, 2 to 3, and 3 to 4 age brackets together accounts for as many as 46.6% of the total, which is greater than all children over the age of 6. Furthermore, a greater percentage of family

childcare homes were offering care for children 0 to 4 years of age. For example, 62.1% of the 161 providers caring for young children served 202 children 0 to 2 years of age; whereas 45.3% indicated that they were serving children 4 to 5 years of age. In addition, 100 of these sites were serving at least one child in the 0 to 2 age group, and the 2 to 3, 3 to 4, 4 to 5 and 5 to 6 age groups were correspondingly served by 110, 90, 73, and 50 family childcare homes. The diagram (Figure A1) below reveals this pattern.



The subsequent bar and pie charts illustrate the number or percent of children served for each of the recognized age-groups and the respective percentages for these groups as they relate to information collected for all family childcare homes during the study.





Other Family Childcare Home Characteristics

The workforce study survey worked to collect complementary information relevant to the characteristics of the family childcare home that would contribute to continuous quality care or enhanced services that would support children from diverse backgrounds. Of the 171 family childcare homes that were surveyed, information that related to other services identified or serving children from diverse backgrounds include:

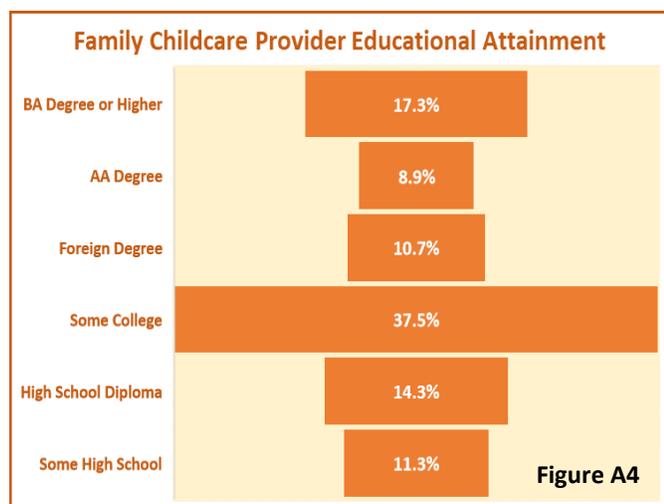
- As many as 30 family childcare homes integrated the Teachstone® Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) into their practice (17.5%). CLASS is a tool used to assess teacher-child interactions.
- The number of family childcare homes using the Desired Results Developmental Profile to assess the cognitive development and growth of the child was 22 (12.9%).
- The number of family childcare homes incorporating an Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) into their practice is 29 (17%).
- Only 17 family childcare homes include the use of a developmental assessment using the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* into their practice (9.9%).
- The number of children with disabilities or special needs that receive childcare services is 58. Only 30 providers were currently serving those

children, and an average number of children served was 2 per site and the most served by a single provider was 6.

- A significant number of family childcare homes were offering care to families receiving subsidized payments for childcare (AP Programs/CalWORKs); as many as 140 or 81.8%.
- Head Start/Migrant Head Start is contracting with 41 family childcare homes to place migrant children 0-5 years of age in care at those sites.

Educational Characteristics of the Family Childcare Home

The continual access and participation in professional development or capacity building activities is integral to building human capital and sustaining efforts relevant to continuous quality improvement. This is essentially true for any workforce, and fundamental to the early care and education profession, as these efforts not only support the childcare provider but directly translate the individual's capacity to work with children in an education setting and provide support in their ability to incorporate innovative strategies that may have otherwise not been evident. One aspect of this is related to the education level of the provider; educational attainment and/or the potential for further educational attainment are key indicators of professional development. To support the function of the workforce study, the family childcare provider's education and professional development is measured through the overall education obtained by childcare providers, either through high school or institutions of higher education, and other professional development activities that those providers participate in, such as workshops, conferences, specialized training, or other levels of education. Information on educational attainment was submitted by 168 providers that included information on the Education section of the survey. Figure A4 illustrates educational attainment defined by seven levels of education relevant to the proportion of family childcare providers. As represented on the Family Childcare Provider Educational Attainment graph, surveys indicate that: 11.3% had acquired "Some High



School”; 14.3% had received a “High School Diploma”; 37.5% had acquired “Some College”; 10.7% had a “Foreign Degree”; 8.9% had obtained an “AA Degree”; 16.1% had obtained a “Bachelor’s Degree”; and 1.2% had a “Post-Grad Degree.” The information reported further demonstrates that that 96 of 171 family childcare providers answered as having earned Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Child Development (CD) units. Within this group of 96 family childcare providers that obtained post-secondary education units in ECE or CD, the maximum number of units that a given provider had earned in ECE was 180 and 127 in CD. The average number of units a family childcare provider had in ECE was 34 and the average in CD was 22. There were more providers that had earned units in ECE (92) than in CD (20). Therefore, it is evident that a meaningful number of family childcare providers not only obtained postsecondary education, but are also interested in ECE and CD coursework; this represents 76.8% of family childcare providers that have taken college level courses (including those with a degree from another country).

Another important observation, particularly for family childcare providers from Imperial County, involves the actual institution of higher education they attended to participate in college level coursework. This information is illustrated in the following breakdown (Table A3) where as many as 93 family childcare providers included the name of the institution of higher education that they had attended:

TABLE A3

Institution of Higher Ed. Attended by Family Childcare Provider	
College/University	Total Providers
Imperial Valley College	30
University of California Riverside Extension	41
San Diego State University	2
Union Institute & University	8
University of California, Davis	4
University of California, Los Angeles	1
Arizona Western College	3
University of Phoenix	1
Foreign Degree	10
Other	1
Attended More Than One Institution of Higher Ed.	8

A total of 32.2% identified Imperial Valley College as the institution of higher ed that they had attended; 44.1% identified University of California, Riverside Extension; 2.2% identified San Diego State University; 8.6% identified Union Institute & University; 4.3% identified University of California, Davis; 1.1% identified University of California, Los Angeles; 3.2% identified Arizona Western College; 1.1% identified University of Phoenix; and as many as 10.8% had obtained a degree in a foreign country (Mexico). In addition, 8.6% attended multiple institutions of higher education, the majority of these attending Imperial Valley College and another institution.

Family childcare providers also benefit significantly from other professional development opportunities. These types of opportunities apply to the general services provided to children under the care of the provider, enable the provider to increase knowledge levels, assist in business development and can apply toward the future accreditation of the childcare home. Ninety-nine or 58% of providers indicated that they attended non-college professional development trainings related to early care and education within the previous 12 months. Of 99 family childcare providers accumulating professional development hours, the maximum hours that a provider had accumulated in trainings were 108 and the minimum was 1. The average number of hours that these providers had accumulated is 20, which incidentally was also the most common with 7 individuals completing 20 hours of professional development.

A number of family childcare providers have increased their capacity to work with children that have been diagnosed with a disability or identified as being a “special needs” child. As many as 49 or 28.6% of family childcare providers have obtained specialized units that emphasized serving children with special needs. The maximum number of units a provider obtained in this area was 30, and the average number of units for the 49 providers was 9.7 units. In addition, 71 family childcare providers indicated that they had participated in workshops focusing on serving children with special needs. Training hours accrued under this category was from 2 being the minimum to 90 being the maximum, and the average was 6.7 hours for the 71 family childcare homes.

Family childcare homes were also asked about participation in special trainings for working with English Language Learners. A total of 18 providers indicated their involvement in this type of specialized training, which represents 10.5% of the workforce answering this question, of which an average of 24.2 hours was obtained, with a maximum of 150 hours.

Other important educational characteristics to consider when assessing the educational and professional development of family childcare providers are:

- No family childcare providers held a California Public School Teaching Credential.
- No family childcare providers held a Public School Teaching Credential from another State.
- There were no family childcare providers that have been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, though there had been 12 that had been accredited in the past though their accreditation lapsed.
- Ten family childcare providers have obtained a degree from an institution of higher education in a foreign country (Mexico).

Family Childcare Home Demographics

The demographic makeup of family childcare providers contributes to the description used to complete a summary profile that adequately identified who these providers are, and perhaps construct arguments to better serve them and meet their needs. This section includes information relevant to age, ethnicity and language(s) spoken, in addition to determining how many of these providers hire additional caregivers or “assistants.”

Furthermore, an assessment of demographic characteristics can assist agencies and other stakeholders to developing strategies for continuous quality improvement to support this workforce. Under this section, all 171 of identified family childcare providers contributed to demographic data collection efforts.

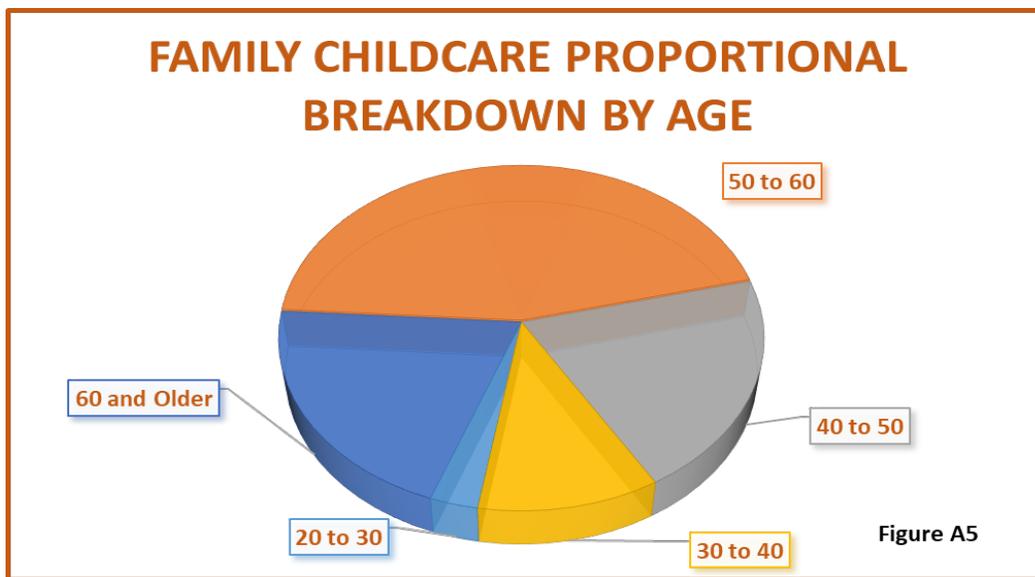
Family Childcare Provider Age

The “age” of the overall workforce is clearly an important factor in developing a profile of the family childcare workforce. Table A4 lists a break-down of ages in five distinct age ranges for the workforce. The information in this table suggests that the workforce is relatively mature. Less than 3% of the workforce is under 30 years of age, where the youngest provider is identified as being 25 years old.

As much as 86% of the workforce is over 40 years of age, and 65% is 50 years of age or older, where the oldest provider is 83 years of age. The average age is 51 years, which is one year younger than the median age for the group, which suggests that 50% of the workforce is over 50 years of age. The percentage per age range is illustrated with the pie chart in Figure A5.

TABLE A4

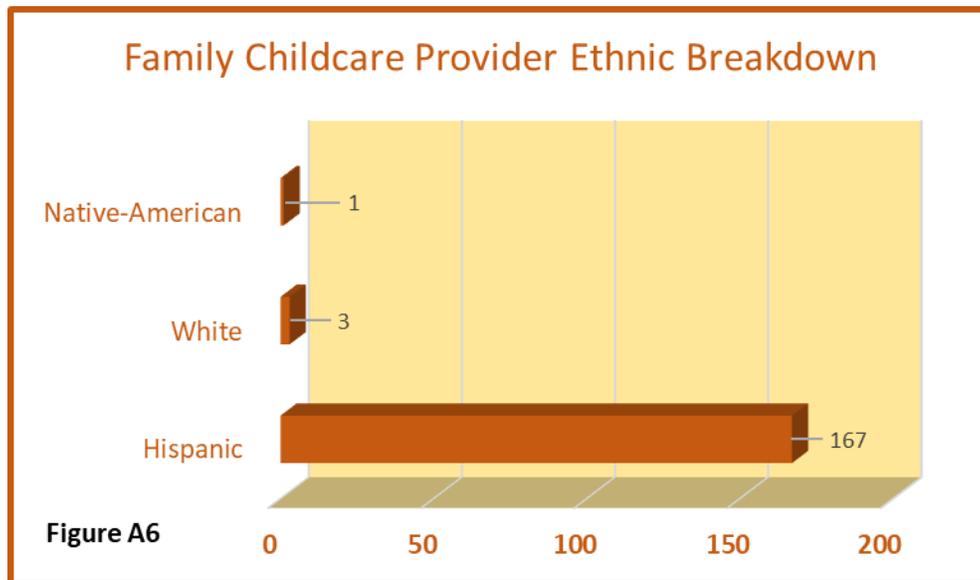
Family Childcare Provider Breakdown by Age Groups	
Age Range	Providers
25 to 30	5
30 to 40	19
40 to 50	35
50 to 60	77
60 and Older	35
Total	171



Family Childcare Provider Ethnic Breakdown

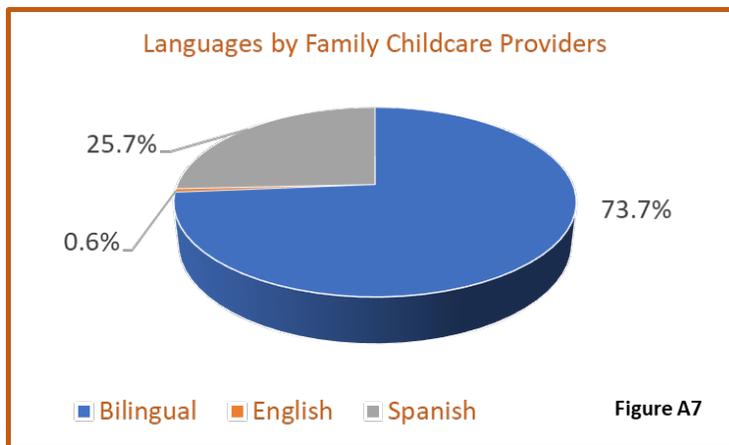
As noted above, another significant factor for assessing provider demographics is the ethnicity of the provider. Of the 171 providers contributing information under this category, an overwhelming majority has indicated that they are Hispanic/Latino; this majority reflects 167 or 98% of all providers responding. The second largest ethnicity is White (non-Hispanic) with a total of 3 providers. One provider answered as being Native-American. In conclusion 98% of providers are Hispanic/Latino and

less than 2% are other ethnicities (2 White non-Hispanic; 1 Native American).



Languages Spoken in the Family Childcare Home

The provider’s primary language and language used in the family childcare home is an important measure, particularly in Imperial County, where the framework for providing services is highly dependent on the bi-cultural nature of the



area and the use of English and Spanish within educational settings. Data collected for this workforce study suggests that there is a uniform relationship between ethnicity in the family childcare home, the primary languages spoken by these providers, and the overall demographic of the county; the primary language of family childcare providers surveyed in the study is either English or Spanish. Of the 171 providers, a total of 24 said their primary language is English and 147 Spanish. As many as 125 are considered bilingual, and the most common secondary languages of providers are English and Spanish with 103 and 23, respectively. Figure A7

illustrates the languages that were identified by family childcare providers that were spoken by them at their sites. The representation clearly shows the bilingual nature of the profession and that the other significant percentage (25.7%) speaks only Spanish. In the majority of cases family childcare providers listed Spanish as their primary language.

Family Childcare Home Assistants

A number of providers employed childcare assistants to help care for children, namely in family childcare homes that were identified as having a 'large' license or licensed to serve up to 14 children consecutively. Fifty-three percent (53%) of providers stated that they worked with paid childcare assistants; 40 providers employed one assistant, 39 providers employed two assistants, and 9 providers employed three assistants. There were a total of 145 paid assistants identified as working in family childcare homes. In addition, 76% of these assistants had obtained training in the areas of Early Care Education or Child Development.

Summary Profile of Center-Based Programs

The second major subgroup contingent to the early care and education workforce are professionals working in center-based programs. Center-based programs are childcare sites in facilities that are specifically licensed to care for young children, where care may be provided to infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children in a private or public environment. Like family childcare homes, centers provide care and early education services to children, though unlike family childcare homes, these setting are in licensed facilities that may offer a classroom environment, are generally licensed to serve more children, and may have a set schedule of operation. Also, a center may operate as a sole proprietorship, may be administered by an agency or school district, and/or several centers may fall under the authority and supervision of one entity. At the time of the data collection phase of the *2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study*, there were 62 center-based programs operating in Imperial County, where 49 of these sites provided a complete *Center Director Survey* to First 5 Imperial through direct interviews and contacts with center-based program directors, and/or site visitations that were supported through direct COVID-19 relief

efforts. These efforts were made possible with the assistance of center-based staff, the Imperial County Resource and Referral Program, and the Imperial County Office of Education. From the beginning to the end of the data collection phase this partnership worked persistently to collect information for the study, though the realization was that the proportion of center-based programs that completed a survey would have been higher, namely due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic having forced some of these facilities to close their doors to the public either temporarily or permanently.

Information for the workforce study was collected from Private Childcare Centers, California State Preschool Programs, Head Start/Migrant Head Start and/or other Federal Programs. The focus on the collection of information for center-based programs was consistent throughout and supported the overall purpose of the study. Though the basis of information assessment for the workforce study is the same, due to the nature of center-based programs, and the differences between center-based programs and family childcare homes, the data gathered during the *Center Director Survey* is unique to the profile of the subgroup of early care and education professionals that work in center-based programs and will vary in detail. Perhaps the most important quality is that the two subgroups will share a similar scope with respect to an assessment of professional development and capacity building, though the two profiles may reflect distinct interpretations.

Therefore, information that was gathered for center-based programs includes the following four data themes: a) Center-based Program Characteristics, b) Center-based Program Educational Characteristics, c) Center-based Staff Wages, and d) Center-based Provider Demographics and Other information.

Center-based Program Characteristics

As with the first subgroup of the workforce study, this section will be used to develop a general idea or picture that will identify traits that are integral to the day-to-day operations of center-based programs in Imperial County. This section will offer a breakdown of the characteristics identified for center-based programs in the survey as they are provided by center directors. Program characteristics are directly related to licensing, number and ages of children enrolled, if services are available for children with disabilities, if centers are providing early care and education for children eligible for subsidized care, and training on special instruments that have been identified in the survey that contribute to quality of care, like

environmental rating scales or developmental assessments. Assumptions on center-based program characteristics are based on Center Director Surveys collected for 49 center-based programs, where all licensed sites are reporting that they had children 0-5 years of age enrolled in their programs at the time of the survey, though many have had to modify their early care and education model as a result of COVID-19 and as many as 4 sites were also providing care to older children. Regardless of their current ability to provide direct care to children or if they are providing early education services via distance learning, this snapshot is relevant in that it illustrates the workload for participating centers and can be used to make conjectures or frame models for supporting the overall workforce in Imperial County.

Licensed Capacity of Center-Based Programs

For the 49 center-based programs that offered data on the licensed capacity of their facilities the analysis suggests that there was a total of 2,376 slots available to care for children, and the availability of care at these sites ranged from the capacity to serve 19 children to a maximum of 105 children. Of all center-based programs surveyed the average number of child slots assigned per site was slightly over 47 and the median site was licensed for slots that could hold up to 40 children; as many as 6 of 10 (60%) of all available slots for center-based programs are assigned to those sites ranging between the median or higher, therefore less than 50% of the 49 center-based programs benefitted from 60% of the 2,376 available slots. The most common number of slots per site was 30, which accounted for 23.4% of these programs. The significant proportion of center-based programs are located in the cities of Brawley, Calexico and El Centro (69.4%) though additionally accounted for

TABLE B1

Center-based Program/Slots by City		
City	Sites	Slots
Brawley	6	320
Calexico	10	566
Calipatria	2	48
El Centro	18	983
Heber	2	60
Holtville	1	30
Imperial	5	235
Niland	1	21
Seeley	1	27
Salton City	1	28
Westmorland	2	58
Total	49	2,376

a greater share of the overall childcare capacity with 1,869 slots allocated to these areas (78.7%).

Children Served by Center-Based Programs

Information collected for the 49 center-based programs that participated in the workforce study identified a total enrollment of 1,590 children for early care and education services, though, as noted above, had as many as 2,376 licensed slots available. This indicates that center-based programs were operating at 66.9% of their capacity and had an availability to serve 786 additional children. The slot to child index is significantly lower than that of the 2005 workforce study, though a major factor that clearly affected center-based programs and their ability to serve children is contingent to the COVID-19 pandemic. The expectation is that as local communities move through the obstacles created by COVID-19 and develop new strategies for providing preschool services to children, then enrollment will increase significantly.

The maximum number of children served by a center-based program was 100, whereas the minimum at the time of the survey was 5. Though, like family childcare homes, center-based programs can serve children 6 years of age and older, a significant number of these programs only served children under 6 years of age, where only 4 center-based programs had indicated that they were providing some type of service to children 6 years of age or older, and caring for 24 children in that age group. Data collected for child age groups is similar throughout, and therefore also consisted of the following age groups:

- Ages 0 to 2 (infants)
- Ages 2 to 3 (toddlers)
- Ages 3 to 4 (preschoolers)
- Ages 4 to 5 (preschoolers/TK)
- Ages 5 to 6 (Kindergarten)
- Ages 6 and up (Other K-12)

All center-based programs included information relevant to the number of children enrolled for some type of early care and education service. Table B2 provides a breakdown of children in care by the city where the care is offered. Again, the analysis shows that a significant proportion of children are being cared for in the three major cities (Brawley, Calexico, and El Centro), which accounts for 70.8% of the 1,590 children, consistent with the location of all sites, and slightly less than the distribution of slots per city.

According to the data provided the most frequent age-group encountered was the “ages 4 to 5” group; this age group was identified as accounting for 765 children, which reflects 48% of the total number of children. There were two age groups when taken together served the least (52), which were the “ages 5 to 6” and the “ages 6 and up” age groups; these two groups account for only 3% of all children served. Children 0-5 years of age, falling within the first four age groups, made up 97% of all children receiving some type of early care and education service through a center-based program; the four combined age groups totaled 1,538 children served. Characteristics relevant to age-groups for all children under six years of age included:

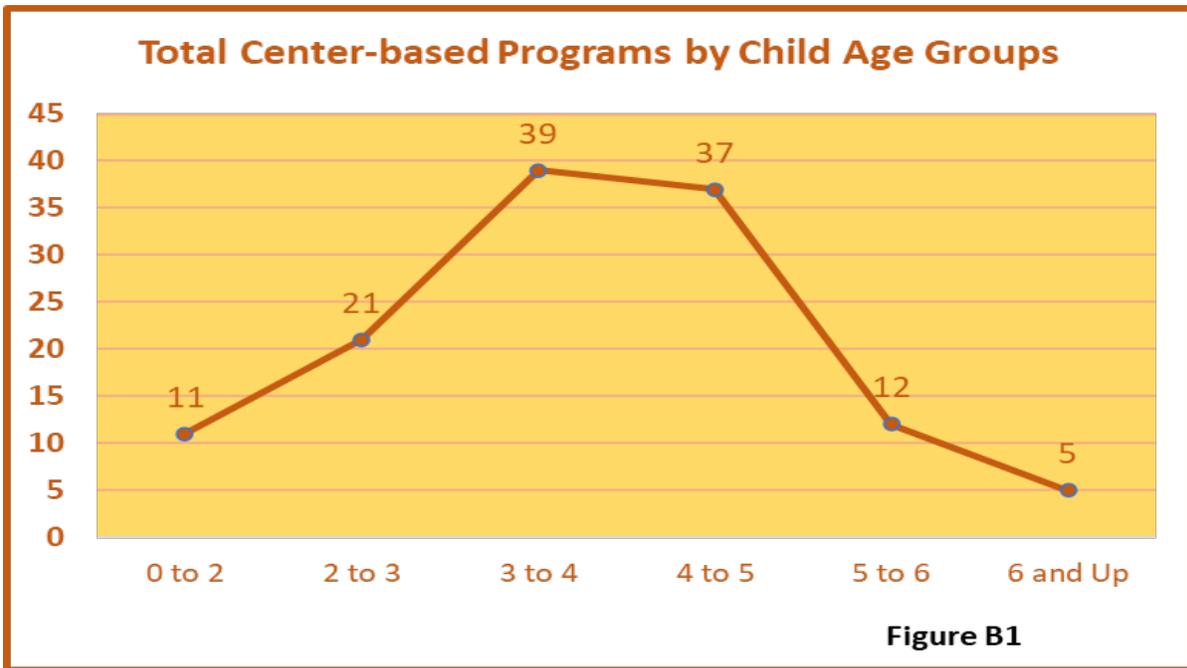
- 11 center-based programs served 71 children 0-2 years of age.
- 21 center-based programs served 200 children 2-3 years of age.
- 39 center-based programs served 502 children 3-4 years of age.
- 37 center-based programs served 765 children 4-5 years of age.
- 12 center-based programs served 24 children 5 years of age.

TABLE B2

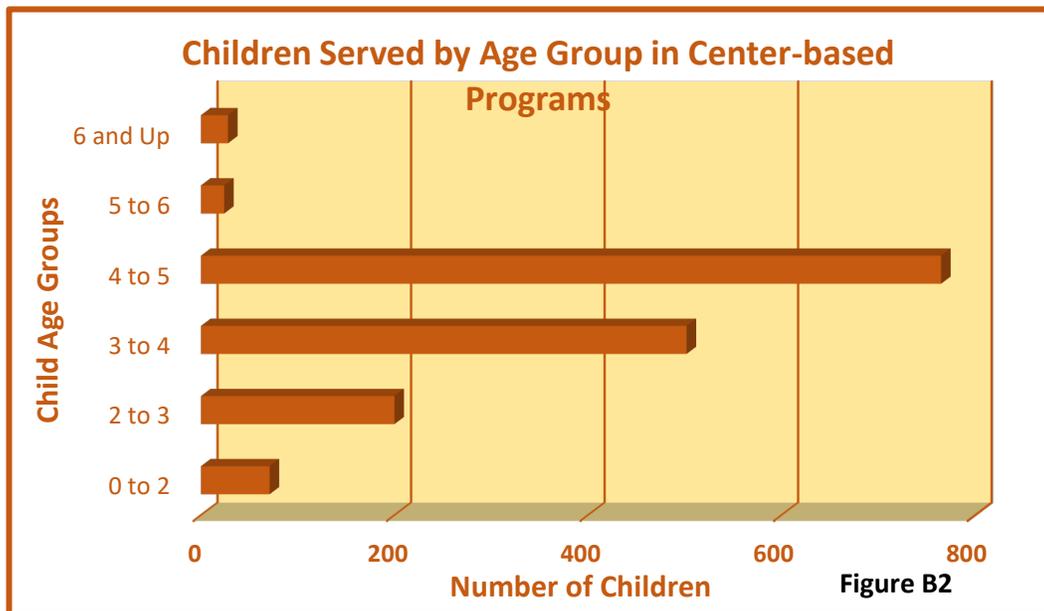
Center-based Program Children Served By City	
City	Children
Brawley	170
Calexico	403
Calipatria	58
El Centro	553
Heber	43
Holtville	22
Imperial	222
Niland	12
Seeley	25
Salton City	38
Westmorland	44
Total	1,590

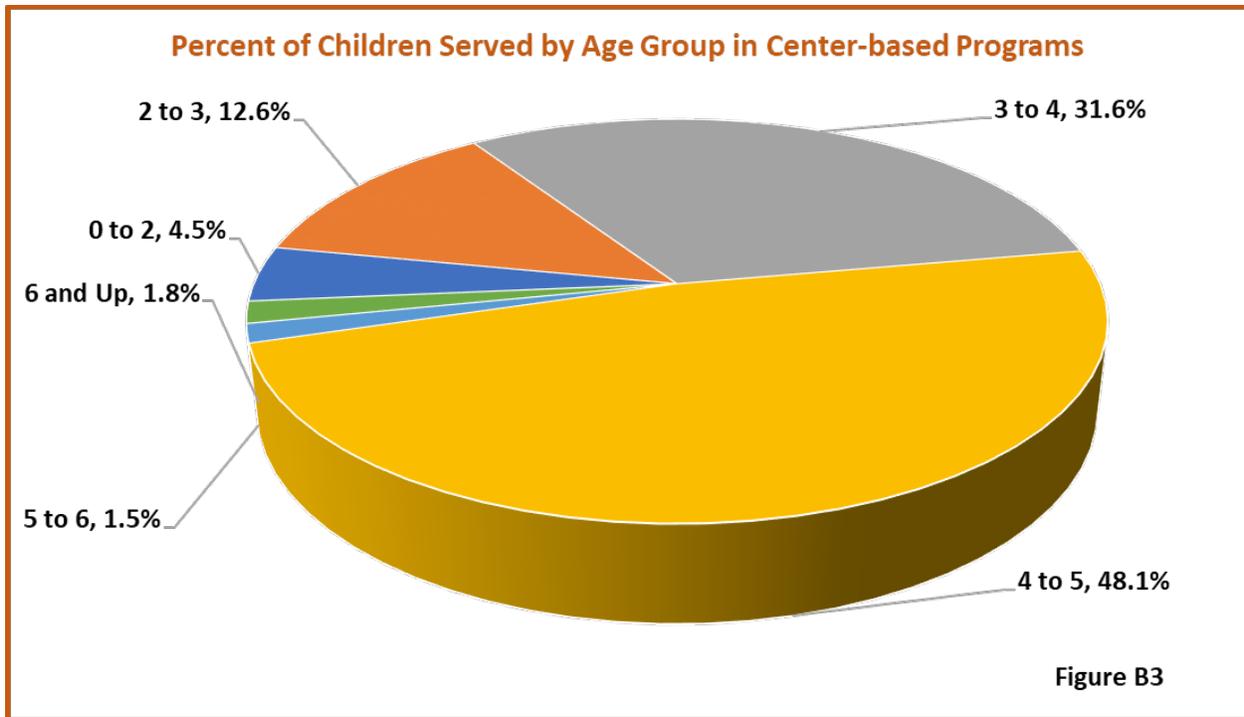
Consistent with children served by center-based programs, results of this study makes the case that a significant number of children 0-5 years of age were recipients of early care and education services at these sites, that there is a potential to significantly increase the total number in care in that over 750 childcare slots are available, and that children in the “3 to 4” and “4 to 5” age groups, traditionally identified as preschool-age children, represented 80% of all children in care. In addition, center-based programs were much likelier to care for children in these two age groups, where 79.6% of the 49 sites cared for 502 children 3 to 4 years of age, and 75.5% cared for 765 children 4 to 5 years of age. Figure B2 illustrates the relationship between the center-based programs and the ages of children served by those programs. The chart shows that a majority of sites were providing care to children in the “3 to 4” and “4 to 5” age groups. Therefore, the number of center-based programs that were identified as providing care by age group are: 11 sites served 0 to 2 years of age; 21

sites served children 2 to 3 years of age; 39 sites served children 3 to 4 years of age; 37 sites served children 4 to 5 years of age; 12 sites served



children 5 to 6 years of age; and 5 sites served children 6 years of age and older. The information for children served for each age-group is illustrated in the subsequent charts.





Other Characteristics of Center-Based Programs

Additional information provided through survey responses by center-based programs that are relevant to children served was the site's capability to accommodate the children of families that may be eligible for subsidized payments or types of contracts for children services offered by the center. From this information it has been identified that of the 49 center-based programs:

- As many as 27 center-based programs integrated the Teachstone® Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) into their practice (55.1%). CLASS is a tool used to assess teacher-child interactions.
- The number of center-based programs using the Desired Results Developmental Profile to assess the cognitive development and growth of the child was 37 (75.5%).
- The number of center-based programs incorporating an Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) into their practice is 41 (83.6%).
- Only 27 center-based programs included the use of a developmental assessment using the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* into their practice (55.1%).
- A total of 18 sites are offering services to the families of 80 children receiving subsidized payments for childcare (AP Programs/Cal Works).

- A total of 12 center-based programs indicated that they were Head Start Centers or Migrant Head Start Centers and are identified as “Federal” Preschools.
- A total of 26 sites are contracted with the California Department of Education Services and are identified as “State” Preschools.

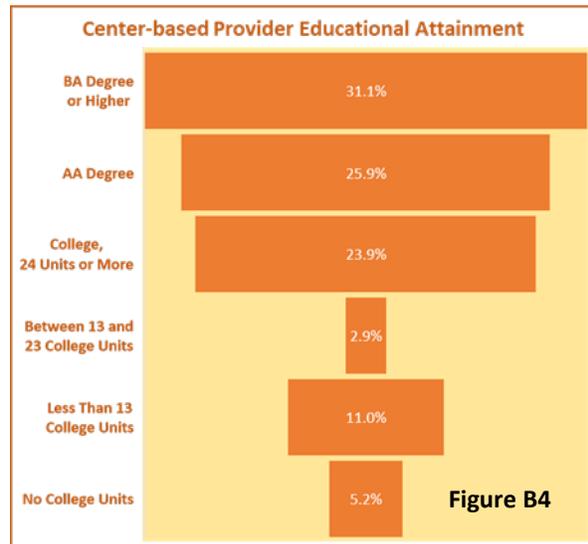
Educational Characteristics of the Center-Based Program

Staff from center-based programs correspondingly benefit from professional development or capacity building efforts, and like family childcare providers, individuals need support to sustain a collective effort for continuous quality improvement. Educational and professional investments designed to increase human capital in the early care and education field wholeheartedly further a community’s ability to augment or improve opportunities that directly affect the growth and development of children in center-based programs, as with other early care and education settings. Consistent with the family childcare home section, the workforce study is developed to partly examine the provider’s (the individual working in the center-based program) education and professional development as it relates to educational attainment either through high school or postsecondary institutions of higher education, and other professional development activities that these providers participate in, such as workshops, conferences, specialized training, or other levels of education.

As noted, specific elements of the workforce study were designed to capture information related to center-based program staff’s educational attainment and any professional development opportunities fulfilled. Questions varied from staff’s highest level of education obtained, the number with foreign degrees, out-of-state teaching credential, specialized trainings, etc.

Forty-one center-based programs completed the “education characteristics” section of the questionnaire and provided information relevant to educational attainment for 309 staff members, being categorized by center directors (52), preschool teachers (133), and early care and education aides (124). A summary of this information suggests that:

- The number of teaching staff and directors with both a degree and child development permit from all participating centers totaled 161.
- As many as 96 center-based staff had obtained a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree from an accredited institution of higher education (31.1%).
- A total of 80 center-based staff had graduated with an Associate of Arts (AA) degree from a community college (25.9%).
- Fifty-nine teaching staff and directors have a child development permit but have not obtained a degree, and 74 had completed 24 or more unit-based courses at an accredited institution of higher education.
- Sixty-eight staff were identified as having obtained both a degree and California Teaching Credential.
- Of all Centers, there are only four individuals that have a degree and an out-of-state Teaching Credential.
- Over 57% of the center-based workforce had at least an AA degree, and a significant proportion of the remainder of the workforce have participated in some college level coursework (37.9%).
- Only 5.2% did not have a degree (AA or BA degree) and no ECE/CD units.



For the 293 center-based program staff that had attended at least one institution of higher education; 49 were identified as center directors, 126 were teachers and another 118 are classified as assistants. Of these individuals, the majority attended Imperial Valley College (65.5%), where the Union Institute (8.5%) and California State University, Northridge (4.4%) were the next most prevalent institutions of higher education attended by center-based directors, teachers and/or assistants.

Table B3 presents a summary of information on institutions of higher education attended for center-based staff that attend at least one institute of higher education.

TABLE B3

Institution of Higher Ed. Attended by Center-based Provider				
College/University	Directors	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Ashford University	3	2	1	6
Cal State University, Northridge	0	13	0	13
Imperial Valley College	71	23	98	192
San Diego State University	1	4	4	9
University of CA, Riverside	10	0	2	12
Union Institute & University	13	3	9	25
Brandman University	13	0	2	15
Northern Arizona University	4	2	2	8
Other University	13	7	6	26
Foreign University	11	5	2	18
Total	139	59	126	324
Attended Multiple Inst.	13	10	8	31
Unduplicated Staff	126	49	118	293

Though not all center-based programs answered questions attributed to the highest level of education obtained by teaching staff and directors, the breakdown of the analysis obtained during the data collection phase further demonstrates that other information reported establishes that:

- 116 have a degree in a related field of study.
- 12 have obtained a foreign degree; and 24 have indicated studying early care and education in another country.
- 135 have received training directly related to working with children that have special needs.
- As many as 207 center-based staff have participated in trainings that focus on working with English language learners.

Center-Based Program Demographics

The summary profile for center-based staff would not be complete without demographic information. This information can be used to

reasonably construct a summary of the make-up of the early care and education workforce, both in part as a subgroup and as an aggregate of the two separate groups that make up the early care and education workforce as identified in this study. The demographic information provided by center-based programs also covers age, ethnicity, and language(s) spoken. Furthermore, an assessment of demographic characteristics can assist in development or optimization of strategies for stakeholders offering services to center-based program staff. The Center-Based Demographics section of the survey was divided into 3 subsections: a) Director, b) Teachers and c) Assistants. Each one of these subsections had questions on the total number of staff per subsection, their age, ethnicity, language and educational institution attended. All center-based programs provided information under this section, though it is important to note that many center directors had limited access to all the information requested.

Center-Based Staff Breakdown and Age

The age of the current workforce is an important indicator for agencies. It provides an idea of the potential for growth, but also the number of individuals that may be expected to exit the field in the coming years, in addition to planning for recruitment of new prospects that may be interested in careers in early care and education.

Demographic data collection for the 49 center-based programs reveals that for all 309 early care and education staff members (directors, teachers and

assistants), the average age was slightly over 46, and the median age cut off was 47 years of age. Even though more than 50% of the workforce is over 47 years of age, further examination suggests that over 60% is less than 50 years of age or younger, and a significant number of staff are between 20 to 30 years of age, a rate of almost 5 times that of family childcare homes. In addition, 69% of all staff are over 40 years of age, though only 10% accounted for individuals in the “61 and Older” category. A breakdown of staff by position and the information relevant to the age of those individuals is provided in the following section by a) Director, b) Teachers and c) Assistants.

TABLE B4

Center-based Program Staff Breakdown by Age Groups	
Range	Providers
22 to 30	44
31 to 40	51
41 to 50	92
51 to 60	90
61 and Older	32
Total	309

A total of 49 center-based programs provided information on directors:

- The total number of staff working as directors is 52.
- The average number of directors per site is from 1 to 2.
- The maximum number of directors per site is 2.
- The average age of a director is 53; the median age is 56, where the youngest director is 32 and the oldest is 71.

A total of 49 center-based programs provided information on teachers:

- The total number of staff working as teachers is 133.
- The average number of teachers per site is between 2 and 3.
- The maximum number of teachers per site is 13.
- The average age of a teacher is 47; the median age is 48, where the youngest teacher is 20 and the oldest is 68 years of age.

A total of 49 center-based programs provided information on assistants:

- The total number of staff working as assistants for all sites is 124.
- The average number of assistants is between 2 to 3 per site.
- The maximum number of assistants per site is 7.
- The average age of an assistant is 43; the median age is 42, where the youngest assistant is 20 years of age, and the oldest is 73 years of age.

Center-Based Program Staff Ethnic Breakdown

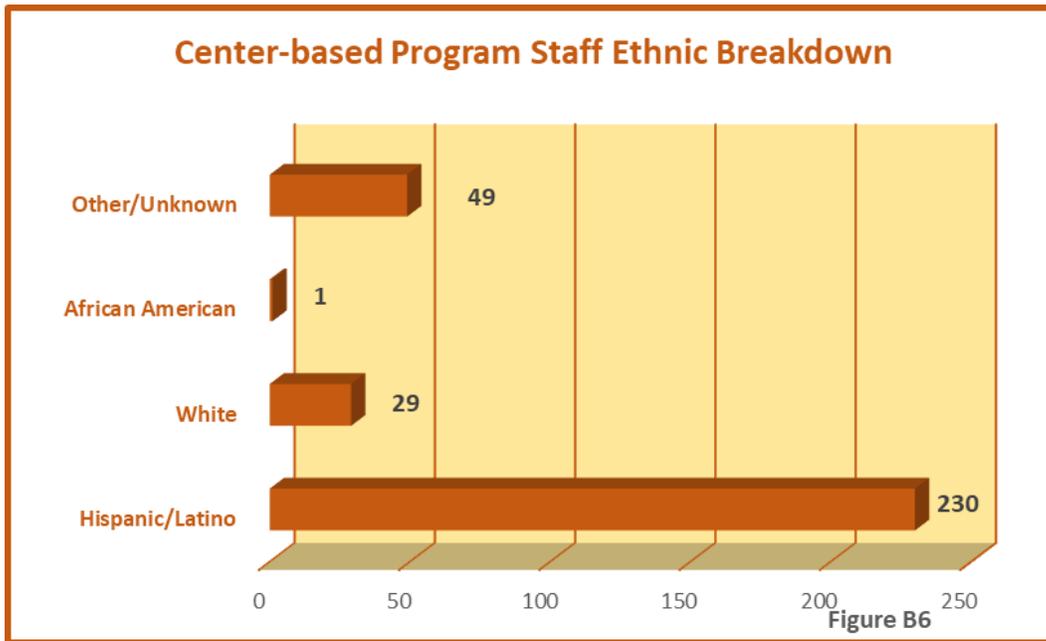
Another significant factor for assessing provider demographics is the ethnicity of the staff members working in center-based programs. Table B5 contains a breakdown for the ethnicity of center-based staff by position (director, teacher or assistant) and the total overall. Demographic information was provided for all of the 309 individuals accounted for in the center-based program subgroup of the workforce study. Though as many as 49 were identified as “Other”, and therefore a specific ethnicity was not disclosed for these staff

members. For sites where center directors provided the breakdown for staff from the 49 sites, an overwhelming majority of all staff were identified as being Hispanic/ Latino and

TABLE B5

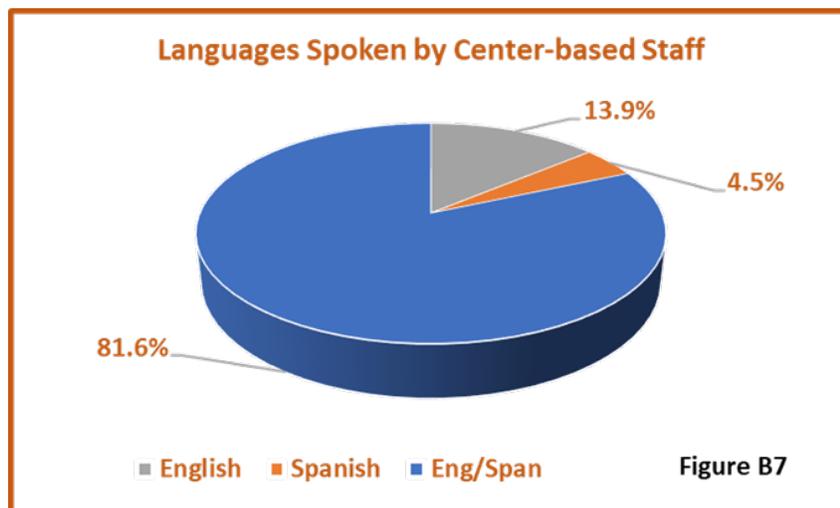
Ethnicity of Center-Based Staff				
Ethnicity	Directors	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Hispanic/Latino	35	115	80	230
White	17	7	5	29
African American	0	1	0	1
Other	0	10	39	49
Total	52	133	124	309

reflected 230 or 74.4% of the total staff. The second largest ethnicity is White (non-Hispanic) with a total of 29 or 9.4% of staff members. One staff member was identified as being African American, and 49 individuals were identified as “Other”.



Languages Spoken in the Center-Based Programs

Particularly due to the unique nature of Imperial County, primary language of center-based program staff, in addition to fluency in other languages continues to be an important measure. Because of these factors, as noted



in and consistent with the family childcare home profile, the framework for providing services is highly dependent on the bi-cultural nature of the area and the use of English and Spanish within educational settings. Data collected for this workforce study continues to imply an

undeviating relationship between ethnicity of center-based program staff and languages spoken by these individuals, and the overall demographic of the county; the primary language for staff working in center-based setting is either English or Spanish, where the clear majority have indicated that they are fluent in both languages. Information on languages spoken was collected for 309 staff members working within the 49 center-based programs surveyed. Information provided on these individuals suggests that as many as 252 were bilingual or were fluent in both English and Spanish, which accounts for 81.6% of all center-based staff. In addition, 43 were identified as speaking only English, and 14 were identified as speaking only in Spanish.

Other Center-Based Program Information

Other data collected that would support strategies that would work to expand capacity, boost efforts to make progress in areas related to continuous quality improvement and develop services to increase the growth and development of children is included in this study. These data elements would include information relevant to staff retention, staff wages, or support through professional development stipends.

Staff retention efforts in a center-based program setting is an important indicator of quality, namely due to the argument that it is exceptionally important for an adult to continuously be involved in the formation of young children, which is particularly true of the early care and education profession. Information related to staff retention rates for the 49 center-based programs suggests that:

- 167 staff members have worked for their center-based program for more than 5 years.
- 104 staff members have worked for their current center-based program for a period between 1 to 5 years.
- 24 staff members have worked for their center-based program for less than a year.
- 89 staff members have stopped working for their center-based program within the last year.

Because of the important nature of the early care and education workforce, it is important to identify compensation or other financial incentives available for staff working in center-based programs at a local level. Therefore, information relative to staff wages/earning was also collected for center-based programs. Staff wage information collected

suggests that the range for teachers with a BA or above was from \$11.00 to \$30.00 per hour with the average minimum being \$16.32 per hour, and the maximum average being \$25.92 per hour for center-based programs. Staff wage information for center-based program assistants suggest that the hourly range of pay for these staff members was from \$11.00 to \$29.68 per hour, and the average minimum is \$14.11 per hour and the average maximum is \$21.54 per hour.

Furthermore, center-based program staff are eligible for other financial incentives for their participation in professional development trainings and/or enrollment in coursework through an institution of higher education. A total of 26 individuals from 8 center-based programs received a PACES professional development stipend within the last year.

General Observations and Comparisons

The systemic investigation into the early care and education workforce in Imperial County will help to identify trends in the workforce, support organizational planning for capacity building opportunities, assist in the development of strategies for continuous quality improvement, promote educational attainment and provide incentives for higher education, in addition to shape approaches for personnel recruitment and retention that are critical to address the needs of the early care and education workforce. Through the focus on components of this study and continually working to address barriers relevant to the early care and education profession the multitude of children served in these environments will be better off and reap the benefits of targeted investments, which is the essential goal.

This examination of the early care and education workforce is subject to the two subgroups profiled above: the family childcare home and center-based program workforce. Information relevant to these two subgroups was used to develop “best” picture available in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions within these two subgroups collectively and/or individually. Some of the fundamental points of comparison between these two subgroups are listed in Table C1: *Comparison of Workforce Site Characteristics*, Table C2: *Comparison of Workforce Educational Characteristics*, and Table C3: *Comparison of Workforce Demographic and Other Information*.

TABLE C1

Comparison of Workforce Site Characteristics			
Workforce Element	Family Childcare Home	Center-based Program	Combined Workforce
Total Workforce	171	309	480
Licensed Capacity	2,034	2,376	4,410
Children Enrolled	1,407	1,590	2,997
Percent of Capacity	73.4%	66.9%	67.9%
Percent of Children 0-5	64.5%	97.0%	81.7%
Slots Unused	627	750	1,377
Offers Subsidized Care	81.8%	89.7%	83.6%
Sites/Slots Per 3 Major Cities	137/1,630	34/1,869	171/3,499
	Brawley	6/320	34/658
	Calexico	10/566	77/1,378
	El Centro	18/983	60/1,423
Assessment Tools Used			
	CLASS®	55.1%	25.9%
	DRDP	75.5%	26.8%
	ERS	83.6%	31.8%
	ASQ	55.1%	20.0%

TABLE C2

Comparison of Workforce Educational Characteristics			
Workforce Element	Family Childcare Home	Center-Based Program	Combined Workforce
Child Development Permit	57.8%	71.1%	66.5%
BA Degree	17.3%	31.1%	26.2%
AA Degree	8.9%	25.9%	19.9%
Some College	37.5	37.9%	37.7%
Foreign Degree	10.7%	3.9%	6.3%
Top 3 Institutions of Higher Education Attended	UC, Riverside Imperial Valley College Union Institute	Imperial Valley College Union Institute Brandman University	Imperial Valley College UC Riverside Union Institute
Specialized Training			
Special Needs Children	41.5%	43.6%	42.9%
ELL Children	10.5%	66.9%	46.9%

TABLE C3

Comparison of ECE Workforce Demographic Characteristics			
Workforce Element	Family Childcare	Center-Based Program	Combined Workforce
Age Information			
Average Age	51	46	48
Median Age	52	47	49
Youngest	25	20	20
Oldest	83	73	83
Ethnicity			
Hispanic/Latino	97.7%	74.4%	82.7%
White (non-Hisp.)	1.8%	9.4%	6.7%
African American	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%
Native American	0.6%	0.0%	0.2%
Other/Unknown	0.0%	15.9%	10.2%
Languages Spoken			
English	0.6%	13.9%	9.2%
Spanish	25.7%	4.5%	12.1%
Bilingual (Eng/Sp)	73.7%	81.6%	78.8%
Other/Unknown	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Observations from the information contained in the family childcare home and center-based program surveys reveals that:

- A significant number of childcare slots were open for enrollment (slots unused) during the time that data was collected, which totaled 1,377, and a high proportion of these slots were in programs that offered some type of subsidized care.
- Both family childcare homes and center-based program staff worked at sites that primarily served children 0-5 years of age; family childcare homes accounting for a higher percentage of children 0 to 2 years of age, and center-based programs for children 3-5 years of age.
- Majority of services are offered in Brawley, El Centro and Calexico (FCCs Calexico, and Center-based Programs in El Centro), where there are 220 sites available for care in these three cities with as many as 4,410 slots.

- Services may have been severely limited due to COVID-19 pandemic, such as closure of sites, availability of care, open slots.
- Both family childcare homes and center-based programs were limited in their use of the developmental screening (20%) and CLASS (25.9%); centers were generally much more versed in the use of ERS (83.6%) and DRDPs (75.5%), and family childcare homes were significantly less likely to use these early care and education tools.
- There are an estimated 43% of all early care and education sites surveyed in this study that have received specialized training to serve children with special needs.
- In recent years there have been significant increases in the educational attainment of the workforce, where data collection suggests that as many as 46.1% of the workforce has an AA degree or higher, where 26.2% had obtained a BA degree, and 19.9% had obtained an AA degree.
- As many as 37.7% of the workforce had “some college” level experience, with a significant number completing more than 24 college units.
- The overall ECE workforce is relatively mature, where the average age for the workforce is 48 years of age, and the median age is 49. There is a potential for the workforce to recede in size as individuals age out of the profession and/or sites face the dilemma with staff retention. The average age has increased since 2005.
- The overall make-up of the workforce is predominately Hispanic/Latino (82.7%), which is consistent with the overall Hispanic/Latino proportion of the County (85.0%).
- As many as 78.8% of the workforce speaks both English and Spanish, where a significant percent of these have indicated Spanish as being their primary language.

Recommendations

Findings relevant to the analysis for the early care and education workforce of the 171 family childcare homes and 49 center-based programs participating in this study will help to pinpoint strategies and support planning to target continuous quality improvement in early care and education setting, and reinforce services aimed at the workforce. These efforts uniquely or collectively may focus workforce elements that help to establish the rationale for the allocation of resources that would serve to

target explicit short or long-term objectives, such as: staff retention or expansion of the early care and education workforce, to offer support for education and capacity building opportunities directed to childcare professionals, and ultimately initiate strategies for increasing services offered to families through optimization of reserved slots to investing in continuous quality improvement. Specific recommendations that may be prioritized, and supported through the study's findings are:

- Support to recruit eligible families (65% of families may qualify for subsidized care in the county); as many as 3 to 10 of childcare slots were open and available, which is consistent with the 2005 analysis of the workforce.
- Optimize services areas where need is concentrated and identifying where there is higher need for early care and education services for the purpose of working toward maximizing childcare as a result of the available resources. For example, the majority of services are concentrated in Brawley, El Centro and Calexico, and these three cities represent an estimated 72% of all children 0-5 cared for in the county though accounted for a higher percent of slots in use (79.3%).
- There is clearly a potential to serve more children throughout the county, and agencies can work collaboratively to support and sustain early care and education recruitment/referral policies or procedures.
- Create strategies that would also help to support increased availability of care for children 0-2 years of age. Children traditionally viewed as preschool-age (3 to 5 years of age) accounted for the majority of children enrolled for early care and education services, particularly in center-based programs. There is a need to increase infant care across the board, and this can be maximized in family childcare home settings as the infrastructure is there and a greater proportion of children in that age group are cared for in those settings.
- Provide relief efforts that would allow providers to address quality of care during COVID-19 pandemic, which would permit these providers to offer safe and effective care in addition to increasing their ability to serve children.
- Increase the use of ASQ and CLASS across all sectors, and emphasize a higher use of DRDPs and ERS in FCCs, and groups of center-based programs that do not use to increase to over 60%. In addition to developing strategies to target center-based programs that

are not taking advantage of the potential to use these early care and education instruments.

- Increase the capacity to provide specialized trainings for working with children that have special needs and/or English language learners.
- There is a great potential to work toward recruiting childcare assistants in pursuing a degree or career in early care and education, particularly those from center-based programs. Many of these individuals may already have unit-based coursework completed, and/or may have an interest in pursuing a career in early care and education.
- Focus on opportunities that would increase educational attainment for providers with an AA degree or lower, with an emphasis on those that have some college (37.7% of total workforce) or targeting assistants working in early care and education settings.
- For individuals working in the profession that have a foreign degree, provide resources for services to have coursework evaluated by a professional association in order to translate a foreign degree for equivalency.
- Develop strategies that would enhance the workforce, such as identifying a career path for early care and education assistants through the local community college or other institutions of higher education. This would further support the fact that, in general, the workforce is relatively mature, and could work to recruit college-age individuals into the early care and education profession.
- Pursue additional resources that would help early care and education professionals pay for costs associated with higher education. This may include financial aid packages, identifying loan-forgiveness programs, or addressing the need through scholarships or stipends.
- Develop strategies that would address specific areas of growth and development in professional development, which could include trainings in areas related to continuous quality improvement, such as ASQs, CLASS, ERS, or general training in small business development or grant writing.
- Both family childcare providers and center-based program staff have demonstrated a willingness and interest in participating in professional development activities. This topic could be further evaluated through follow-up surveys, particularly for an agency that may be targeting a specific sector of the workforce.

- Potential for offering unique services and developing strategies based on understanding the profile of the individual that is working in both segments of the workforce (Age, Ethnicity, Language). For example, support in education settings can be offered in English and Spanish for the purpose of maximizing the ability to reach professionals in the field with higher education and other learning opportunities.

These suggestions are not by any means conclusive, as the data captured through the examination of the early care and education workforce in Imperial County should provide other insights or lead to a further evaluation of support for the profession, including how agencies assess the need for continuous quality improvement, in addition to addressing other segments of the early care and education setting. For instance, further work may include “family, friends, and neighbors” exempt care providers which are providing care for a significant number of children in the county, or alternative early care and education settings, such as home visitation programs, literacy groups, etc. Regardless of the strategy, the overriding objective is to offer these services with the purpose to benefit the health, safety and well-being of the child.