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# MONTANA CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTORS REPORT

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Summary of Survey Results  
and  
Recommendations for Professional Development

January 2006

# Montana Child Care Center Directors Report

Compiled

by

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This report is available by request at 800-235-4122 or online at

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forward resulted in a viable proposal from Child Care plus+ to implement the survey process and ultimately, this report.

Formal recognition and appreciation also goes to the 26 Center Directors who participated in the telephone focus groups, the 127 Center Directors who responded to the written survey, and the 35 Center Directors who attended the Symposium. It is acknowledged that a number of individuals were involved in all three activities. In addition, twelve Center Directors have volunteered to participate as members of the steering committee to help drive future activities for Center Directors in Montana.

This report is the result of a contracted service agreement between the Early Childhood Project and Child Care plus+. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Early Childhood Services Bureau or The Montana Early Childhood Project.

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## PROCESS AND PREFERENCES SUMMARY

### ■ Data Gathering Process

In June 2005, licensed Child Care Center Directors in Montana (248 centers) were invited to complete the *Montana Child Care Center Directors' Survey*. The survey, funded by the Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP), was developed by Child Care plus+ in anticipation of an additional 15 hours of required training for Center Directors over and above the basic 8-hour requirement. The process included **telephone focus groups** with Center Directors to identify key professional development issues; a **written survey** addressing five categories of training: administrative, business and financial, professionalism, specific skills, and taking care of yourself; and a 1½

day **Center Directors' Symposium** to a) review survey results; b) create a common vision; c) make recommendations based on the survey data; and d) participate in professional development. Center Directors from 127 programs (51%) took advantage of the opportunity to express their priorities and preferences by completing the survey. Their responses provide information about themselves, their centers, their professional development preferences, and the level of importance to them of individual training topics. A detailed summary and analysis of these issues is included in the full report.

### ■ Professional Development Preferences

**Who:** Early childhood trainers and consultants listed on the Montana Early Care and Education Trainer Directory came up first preference for 66% of the survey participants. Conference presenters and local experts (fire marshal, public health nurse, etc.) were given next preference at 59% and 58% respectively.

**Where:** Survey participants' chose local mini-conferences (51%), local CCR&R programs (44%), and the annual, statewide early childhood conference (44%) as their top preferences for training locations.

**When:** Week days in the evening (54%) were slightly

preferred over week days during the day (45%) and both were preferred over Saturdays. Responses indicate distinct preference for training during the fall months (64%) and limited preference for training during the summer months (20%).

**How:** Workshops seem to be preferred by survey participants: 2 hours (59%); 4 hours (57%); and 6 hours (49%). Informal networking meetings are not far behind at 40%. Ongoing, sequential classes and semester-long course work received 27% and 18% respectively.

### ■ Professional Development Topics

The eleven **topics** (of 38 possible topics) with a weighted average rank of importance at 80 or above for survey participants across all five training categories are listed below. Interestingly, the topics in this priority grouping reflect issues generally considered as key dimensions of being an effective Child Care Center Director: working with staff, working with families, staying current in the field of

early childhood, developing leadership skills, and avoiding burnout. When maintaining a quality program is included, the top five topics relate to various staff issues. This list provides a road map for planning professional development for Center Directors in Montana, both in terms of content and priority.

1. Training and motivating staff	7. Stress management - avoiding burnout!
2. Retaining quality staff	8. Leadership skills for Center Directors
3. Building positive staff morale	9. Advanced training for experienced Directors
4. Maintaining a quality program on a day-to-day basis	10. Current research and topics in early childhood
5. Managing/supervising staff	11. Recruiting and hiring staff, including developing job descriptions
6. Working effectively with parents/families	

**Center Directors' Vision:** *We envision building an effective network of dedicated professionals who are committed to working as early care and education leaders in our communities and state, supported by ample resources, relevant training, public awareness, and professional recognition.*

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

In June 2005, Center Directors in every licensed Child Care Center in Montana (248 centers) were given the opportunity to complete the *Montana Child Care Center Directors' Survey*. The survey, funded by the Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP), was developed by Child Care plus+ in anticipation of an additional 15 hours of required training for Center Directors over and above the basic 8-hour requirement in place at the time. The results of the survey will allow trainers and other educators as well as policymakers to make informed decisions about the provision of professional development to address the unique training needs of Center Directors. The guiding principles for the information-gathering process were:

- ▶ Use Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) programs to coordinate logistics, support participation, and provide input on project methods. Keep them informed of every step along the way.
- ▶ Make no assumptions about this group and go directly to Center Directors to ask the important questions.
- ▶ Involve as many Center Directors as possible from as many CCR&R regions as possible. In other words, make every effort to get input from every Center Director in the state.

### **Pre-survey Telephone Focus Groups**

In March 2005, Directors of every licensed Child Care Center in Montana (248 Centers) received an invitation to participate in one of five regional telephone focus groups. Thirty-seven Directors responded to the invitation

and described their optimal times of day for participating. Every effort was made to offer the telephone focus groups at the times of day when the most Directors from each of five regions could call in. The 26 Center Directors who ultimately were able to participate during the month of April 2005, representing every type of licensed center, directed centers in the following Montana communities: Ashland, Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Glendive, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Laurel, Lewistown, Miles City, Missoula, Plentywood, and Sydney.

ABOUT MONTANA (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)	
SIZE . . . . .	147,138 square miles
POPULATION . . . . .	902,195
CHILDREN AGES 0-4 . . . . .	54,869
CHILDREN AGES 5-14 . . . . .	131,261
ABOUT LICENSED CENTERS (MT Quality Assurance Division, 2005)	
CHILD CARE CENTERS . . . . .	248
PROGRAM CAPACITY . . . . .	10,897 children

Telephone focus groups were chosen to address the dilemma of facilitating on-

site focus groups in a large, rural state. Each focus group ranged in size from three to eight participants. Focus groups were facilitated using standard protocol for conducting focus groups and guidelines for telephone conferencing.

In about an hour of facilitated discussion using open-ended questions as a guide, the focus group members identified training and professional development issues specific to Child Care Center Directors in Montana. A notetaker, in addition to the facilitator, recorded the key themes of the discussion using a record and checkoff system to assess the number of times any one theme was addressed. These notes were consolidated and used to develop the written survey.

An unanticipated outcome of the focus groups was the participants' sense of being "listened to." This sentiment was expressed at the end of the call by participants from separate groups. One participant said: *I feel like there's hope now.* Another said: *Talking with other directors today has lifted a load off my shoulders.* And a third said: *I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you and to know that some-*

*body's listening.*

### **Written Survey**

Using the detailed information gathered from the telephone focus groups, the survey was designed to assess the specific professional development priorities and preferences of Center Directors both in terms of the topics and content of training and the methods of preferred delivery. The level of importance of professional development in multiple topics in the following five categories of training were assessed: administrative, business and financial, professionalism, specific skills, and taking care of yourself. Two open-ended questions on the survey asked participants to briefly describe 1) their most important contribution and 2) their greatest challenge as a Child Care Center Director in Montana. Their candid responses are reported in Section VI of this report.

Center Directors from 127 programs (51%) took advantage of the opportunity to express their priorities and preferences by responding to the survey. Their responses provide information about themselves, their centers, their professional development preferences, and the level of importance to them of individual training topics. This report compiles the data collected in the survey and includes the recommendations for using this information that were proposed by a representative group of Center Directors who attended the Child Care Center Directors' Symposium.

### **Post-survey Symposium**

On September 15 and 16, 2005, thirty-five Child Care Center Directors from across Montana met in Missoula at the University of Montana to a) review the results of the *Montana Child Care Center Directors' Survey*; b) create a common vision for Center Directors in Montana; c) make recommendations based on the survey data; and d) participate in a day of professional development designed specifically for Center Directors. The day-long professional development session, facilitated by Jill Bella from the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership (Illinois), was entitled *Leading the Way to Quality* with emphasis on the Director as the "gate-keeper" to quality. This report includes a summary of the outcomes of this statewide symposium of Center Directors and describes their vision and recommendations for using survey results.

### **Center Directors' Vision**

The vision they collectively created at the Symposium is:

*We envision building an effective network of dedicated professionals who are committed to working as early care and education leaders in our communities and state, supported by ample resources, relevant training, public awareness, and professional recognition.*

## SECTION I

### SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The survey was mailed to the person listed on the Child Care Center license. Two hundred forty-eight surveys were mailed with a reminder postcard followup; 127 Center Directors (51%) responded. This section provides a brief description of survey participants' gender, race, level of education, years as Director of the program, membership in the Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC) and the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry, and whether or not they are currently listed on the Montana Early Care and Education Trainer Directory.

#### **Gender and Race**

It is not surprising to discover that, of the 127 survey participants, four were male (3%) and the rest (123) were female. When asked the best description of their race, 122 survey participants answered white, four answered American Indian (3%), and one answered "other" with the description of *Heinz 57*.

#### **Level of Education**

Responses to the question about the level of education completed indicates that almost half of the survey participants (46%) have a four-year Bachelor Degree, 17% have a Child Development Associate (CDA), and 21% have a Two-year Associate Degree. Nine Directors listed their level of education in the other category. Five had advanced degrees: Masters in Counseling, Master of Science in Child Development, Masters in Education, Master of Arts in Educational Supervision, and Masters in Elementary Education and Counseling. Four had other combinations of credentials and training: four years of college and 33 years of experience; Montessori Teaching Certificate; owner/director, CDA, 3 years college in addition to high school and ongoing training; ECE/have lots of credits (90+) but no paper. Table 1 further illustrates survey participants' levels of education.

**Table 1.** Level of Education

Level of Education	Number of Directors	Percent* of Directors
High School or GED	22	17%
CDA	17	13%
Associate Degree	21	17%
Bachelor Degree	58	46%
Other	9	7%
TOTAL	127	100%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

**Longevity**

The question about longevity asked specifically how many years they have been the Director of this licensed Center. Table 2

summarizes their responses and indicates that 66% have been the Director of the same licensed Center for four years or more.

**Table 2.** Years as Director of the Center

Years	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
< 1 year	10	8%
1 - 3 years	34	27%
4 - 6 years	24	47%
> 6 years	59	19%
TOTAL	127	101%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

**Montana Association for the Education of the Young Child (MtAEYC)**

When asked about whether they were currently a member of the MtAEYC, 65 survey

participants (51%) answered yes and 57 participants (45%) answered no.

**Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry**

When asked whether they were currently members of the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry, 75 survey participants (59%) answered yes, 28 survey participants (22%) answered no, and 19 survey participants (15%) answered unsure with 5 skipping the question altogether. When

the 75 participants who answered yes were asked to further check the level they have achieved on the career path, most of them were between Level III and Level VI with none at the highest level, Level VIII. Table 3 provides additional details about the survey participants level on the Career Path.

**Table 3.** Level on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Career Path

Level on Career Path	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
Pre-professional	4	3%
Level I	3	2%
Level II	7	6%
Level III	18	14%
Level IV	10	8%
Level V	7	6%
Level VI	23	19%
Level VII	3	2%

Level on Career Path	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
Level VIII	0	0%
Total Responses	75	59%
Total of No Responses	52	41%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

**Montana Early Care and Education Trainer Directory**

The Montana Early Care and Education Trainer Directory identifies individuals who provide training and education to early childhood practitioners in the Montana Knowledge Base content areas. When asked whether they

were listed on the Trainer Directory, 49 survey participants (39%) were unsure, 41 survey participants (32%) answered yes, 34 answered no (27%), and 3 survey participants did not respond to this item.



## SECTION II

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

This section focuses on the location (by child care resource and referral region), the licensed capacity (number of children), and a description of the characteristics of Centers represented by survey participants.

#### ***Location***

Montana's CCR&R programs are located in 12 regions across the state. To insure representation from Centers in every region, survey

participants were asked to identify the CCR&R region where their licensed programs were located. Table 4 lists the twelve regional programs, their central location, and the number of Centers from that region represented by survey participants. The number of Centers represented in each region is roughly proportional across regions to the total number of licensed Centers in the region. That is, regions with fewer Centers had smaller numbers of Centers represented in the survey.

**Table 4.** Number of Child Care Center Directors Participating by Region

<b>Child Care Resource &amp; Referral Program</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of Centers</b>
Hi-Line Home Programs	Glasgow	2
District VI HRDC	Lewistown	2
DEAP Child Care R&R	Miles City	3
DEAP Child Care R&R	Glendive	4
Child Care Link	Havre	4
Butte 4C's	Butte	11
Child Care Partnerships	Helena	11
Nurturing Center	Kalispell	12
Family Connections	Great Falls	15
Child Care Connections	Bozeman	18
Child Care Resources	Missoula	21
District VII HRDC	Billings	24
<b>Total Number of Participating Center Directors</b>		<b>127</b>

#### ***Licensed Capacity***

Most of the Centers (58%) represented by survey participants are licensed for 25-49 children. Thirteen percent are licensed for

more than 75 children. Additional details about licensed capacity are described in Table 5 on the following page.

**Table 5.** Licensed Capacity of Participating Centers

Licensed Capacity	Response by Percent*
Less than 25 children	10%
25 - 49 children	58%
50 - 74 children	19%
More than 75 children	13%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

### **Description**

Survey participants were asked to describe their programs by checking all that apply on the list of characteristics in Table 6. There is an almost even split between non-profit organizations (54%) and private, independent businesses (47%). Three participating Centers (2%) are on American Indian reserva-

tions, 17 are either Head Start programs or Head Start partnership programs (14%), and 37 are either NAEYC-accredited or in the accreditation process (30%). Twenty-three programs (18%) are faith-based programs as well. Table 6 illustrates this data from least to most.

**Table 6.** Center Description

Description	Number of Centers	Percent* of Centers
Located on American Indian reservation	3	2%
Head Start program	7	6%
Head Start partnership	10	8%
NAEYC-accredited	15	12%
In the NAEYC accreditation process	22	18%
Faith-based program	23	18%
Private, independent business	59	47%
Non-profit organization (503C status)	67	54%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

## SECTION III

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCES: WHO, WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

This section describes Center Directors’ preferences about who facilitates their professional development, where and when to offer it, and how it is offered. When given a choice between state-approved training hours and academic credit and asked to check the training recognition most important to them, 89 survey participants (70%) checked state-approved training hours, 29 participants (23%) checked academic credit, and 9 participants (7%) checked neither one.

#### **Who**

Given the list of individuals who offer professional development in Table 11, survey participants were asked to check all preferences. Remarkably, early childhood trainers and consultants listed on the Montana Trainer Directory came up in first place as preference for 66% of the survey participants. Conference presenters and local experts (fire marshal, public health nurse, etc.) were given next preference at 59% and 58% respectively. State agency staff (Department of Health and Human Services - DPHHS staff, Quality Assurance Division - QAD staff, etc.) and higher education faculty followed with 51% each.

CCR&R staff, who provide much of the professional development for early childhood providers/teachers in Montana, were preferred by 45% of Directors and other Center Directors

were preferred by 39%. Out of state specialists were preferred by 39% and 22% had no preference for who provides the training.

The “other” category, which allowed survey participants to list additional preferences elicited the following responses:

- ▶ local Head Start
- ▶ training through our program
- ▶ people who really know what the business is like
- ▶ all have much to offer—parents are also a great resource
- ▶ all are acceptable
- ▶ child psychologists, social workers
- ▶ I feel any information about infant and toddler care, special needs, for 1-6 yrs, from any one is helpful even parents input
- ▶ I am delighted that attention has been brought to this vital area. 35 years has taught me that I still have so much to learn. I wish we could schedule regular meetings to network center problems, hiring, support staff, self-care, etc. Our BCCCC focused on very little of these issues in favor of fundraising and conferences. It would be cost free to meet and share regularly, even over a lunch hour.

**Table 7.** Types of Individuals Who Offer Professional Development

Type of Individual	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
Early childhood trainers/consultants listed on the Montana Trainer Directory	81	66%
Conference presenters	72	59%
Local experts (fire marshal, public health nurse, etc.)	71	58%

Type of Individual	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
State agency staff (DPHHS staff, QAD staff, etc.)	62	51%
Higher education faculty	62	51%
CCR&R staff	55	45%
Other center directors	48	39%
Out-of-state specialists	39	32%
No particular preference	22	18%
Other	8	7%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

**Where**

When asked to check all of the training locations they preferred for professional development for Directors to be offered, survey participants' chose local mini-conferences (51%), local CCR&R programs (44%), and the annual, statewide early childhood conference (44%) as their top preferences for location. Their choices and percent of preference for other locations are described in Table 8.

A few Directors also described additional preferences and concerns:

- ▶ National Indian Child Care Conference
- ▶ Salvation Army trains their staff
- ▶ MetNet

- ▶ Phone
- ▶ Affordable newsletter
- ▶ Our center is very isolated and distant from any city.
- ▶ Specific nation-wide conferences
- ▶ Being with and learning from other directors is always helpful.

This data reflects that Directors prefer the training locations and methods currently most available to them. These preferences should be closely monitored as professional development opportunities increase.

**Table 8.** Training Location/Method

Training Location/Method	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
at a local mini-conference	63	51%
at the local R&R program	55	44%
at an annual, statewide early childhood conference	54	44%
online (Internet)	49	40%
on-site at your center	43	35%
at local Directors' meetings	43	35%
at an annual, statewide Directors-only conference	41	33%

Training Location/Method	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
through self-study correspondence	40	32%
at a university or community college	37	30%
at regional Directors' meetings	36	29%
on interactive TV	13	11%
other	9	7%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

**When**

Survey participants identified when they prefer training to occur by checking all their preferences from the lists in Table 9 and Table 10 below. Their preferences are divided into responses by time of the week and time of year. Week days in the evening (54%) were slightly preferred over week days during the day (45%) and both were preferred over Saturdays. Responses indicate a distinct preference for training during the fall months (64%) and limited preference for training during the summer months (20%).

- ▶ Winter poses extreme travel difficulties
- ▶ If daytime, afternoon is preferred
- ▶ online
- ▶ early spring- late fall
- ▶ any month
- ▶ Ideally fall and winter
- ▶ on-site at Center during nap (1:00 - 3:00)
- ▶ Weekdays in early morning not afternoon.

The “other” option elicited the following illuminating additions:

- ▶ Trained through work
- ▶ No September, no December, no May

Since there is no overwhelming consensus about the time of the week preferred, it appears that offering a continuum of options would be an important accessibility issue.

**Table 9.** Time of the Week

Time of the Week	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
Week days in the evening	68	54%
Week days during the day	56	45%
Saturdays	50	40%
Other	5	4%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

**Table 10.** Time of Year

Time of Year	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
Fall (Sept-Nov)	80	64%

Time of Year	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
Spring (Mar-May)	56	45%
Winter (Dec-Feb)	54	43%
Summer (Jun-Aug)	25	20%
Other	5	4%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

### **How**

Of the number of ways to offer professional development, survey participants identified their preferences by checking all the ways they would prefer to receive training from the types of offerings listed in Table 11. Workshops no matter what the length seem to be preferred by survey participants: 2 hours (59%); 4 hours (57%); and 6 hours, with a somewhat lower response rate at 49%. Informal

networking meetings are not far behind at 40%. Ongoing, sequential classes and semester-long course work received 27% and 18% of the responses respectively. Since none of these options received an overwhelming percent of responses, it could be considered an indication that a continuum of training options is most likely to meet Center Directors' individual needs.

**Table 11.** Type of Training

Type of Training	Number of Responses	Percent* of Directors
2-hour workshop	74	59%
4-hour workshop	71	57%
6-hour workshop	61	49%
Informal networking meetings (more discussion, less direct instruction)	50	40%
Ongoing, sequential class	34	27%
Semester-long course work	22	18%

\*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

## SECTION IV

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCES: WHAT TOPICS

Center Directors' preferences regarding topics for professional development are of critical interest to Montana's trainers and other educators. This section describes their preferences by topic.

Survey participants were asked to circle the level of importance (high, average, or low) for 38 different professional development topics in five distinct categories of training: administrative, business and financial, professionalism, specific skills, and taking care of yourself. The individual topics were identified by participants during the five telephone focus groups and grouped into five categories for convenience. Tables 12 through 16 describe the topics that were identified and the level of importance ascribed by survey participants. Topics are rank ordered using a weighted average of high importance = 3, average importance = 2, and low importance = 1.

#### ***Administrative Topics***

The administrative category includes nine issues related to managing center staff. Retaining quality staff ranked first in this category. Three of the top eleven rank-or-

Weighted averages are very useful in survey research. Aggregating data across all three levels of importance rather than just one level gives an average that is more meaningful and useful in accurately ranking each topic. A topic of "average" importance to a Center Director still has a level of importance and this is illustrated by using the weighted average method of analysis.

Survey participants were also instructed to add more topics to each list as they wished. These additions have been included in the data summary in Tables 12 - 16. In each category, there were a few individuals who did not mark any preferences. The eleven topics with a weighted average rank of importance at 80 or above for survey participants across all five training categories are listed in Table 17.

dered topics (rank order above 80) fall into the administrative category as illustrated in Table 12 below.

**Table 12.** Administrative Topics

<b>Administrative Topics</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
1. Retaining quality staff	90.3
2. Managing/supervising staff	85
3. Recruiting and hiring staff, including developing job descriptions	80
4. Managing time and effort as Director	78.7
5. Understanding legal/liability issues	78.3
6. Conducting staff/program evaluations	78.3
7. Finding quality substitutes	76.3

<b>Administrative Topics</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
8. Planning and adhering to a budget	69.3
9. Working effectively with advisory boards	64
Other (1 response): Rights and responsibilities regarding state agencies such as licensing/ CACFP/ Best Beginnings Scholarship Program	1

### ***Business and Financial Topics***

The business and financial category includes eight topics related to program management. Improving profitability and writing grants ranked highest in this category. None of the

top eleven rank-ordered topics (rank order above 80) fall into the business and financial category as illustrated in Table 13 below.

**Table 13.** Business and Financial Topics

<b>Business and Financial Topics</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
1. Improving profitability	78
2. Writing grants	77
3. Developing budgets	71.7
4. Marketing and public relations	68.3
5. Understanding general business practices	68
6. Fundraising	64.7
7. Developing contracts	64
8. Using computers	64
Other (no responses)	0

### ***Professionalism Topics***

The professionalism category includes nine issues related to training and leadership. Training/motivating staff and building positive staff morale ranked highest in this category

with several other topics close behind. Five of the top eleven rank-ordered topics (rank order above 80) fall into the professionalism category as illustrated in Table 14 below.

**Table 14.** Professionalism Topics

<b>Professionalism Topics</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
1. Training and motivating staff	90.7
2. Building positive staff morale	88
3. Maintaining a quality program on a day-to-day basis	86.3
4. Leadership skills for Center Directors	82.3

Professionalism Topics	Rank Order
5. Advanced training for experienced Directors	81.7
6. Defining a vision for your center	75
7. Developing relationships with other professionals	74.3
8. Developing Director self-evaluations	72
9. Orientation and training for new Directors	60.7
Other (3 responses): how to dress for success, yet clean toilets; puke when needed-daily; ethical behavior- code of ethics, for staff and employees; confidentiality	3

### ***Specific Skills***

The specific skills category includes nine issues related to specific early childhood skills. Working effectively with parents/families ranked highest in this category. Two of the

top eleven rank-ordered topics (rank order above 80) fall into the specific skills category as illustrated in Table 15 below.

**Table 15.** Specific Skills

Specific Skills	Rank Order
1. Working effectively with parents/families	85
2. Current research and topics in early childhood	81.7
3. Information on Montana state resources/programs	79.3
4. Overseeing an organized curriculum	77
5. Designing appropriate child assessment	75.7
6. Inclusion strategies and skills	75
7. Training for Directors of infant/toddler programs	70.7
8. Training for Directors of school-age programs	69.7
9. Training for Directors of teen parent programs	45
Other (2 responses): strategies for influencing state policies re: child care; child guidance, curriculum ideas/ effective teaching ideas	2

### ***Taking Care of Yourself***

The taking care of yourself category includes three issues related to self-care for Directors. Stress management/avoiding burnout ranked highest in this category. One of the top eleven

rank-ordered topics (rank order above 80) falls into the taking care of yourself category as illustrated in Table 16 on the following page.

**Table 16.** Taking Care of Yourself

<b>Taking Care of Yourself</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
1. Stress management - avoiding burnout!	82.7
2. Addressing isolation - networking opportunities	74.3
3. Managing the transition from teacher to Director	66
Other (1 response): balancing paperwork and everything else	1

**Top Eleven Topics**

The eleven topics (of 38 possible topics) with a weighted average rank of importance at 80 or above for survey participants across all five training categories are listed in Table 17 below. Interestingly, the topics in this priority grouping reflect issues generally considered as key dimensions of being an effective Child Care Center Director: working with staff, working with families, staying current in the field of early childhood, developing leadership skills, and avoiding burnout. When maintaining a quality program is included, the top five topics relate to various staff issues.

This list provides a road map for planning

professional development for Center Directors in Montana, both in terms of content and priority. In addition, the data can be used to either formally or informally conduct a gap analysis between the professional development topics currently being offered and those having been identified as high priorities. This analysis would be useful within individual CCR&R regions as well as statewide. Collaborative efforts may need to be made to eliminate inconsistencies in accessibility to specific topics in various areas of the state.

**Table 17.** Top Topics by Importance

<b>Top Topics by Importance</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
1. Training and motivating staff	90.7
2. Retaining quality staff	90.3
3. Building positive staff morale	88
4. Maintaining a quality program on a day-to-day basis	86.3
5. Managing/supervising staff	85
6. Working effectively with parents/families	85
7. Stress management - avoiding burnout!	82.7
8. Leadership skills for Center Directors	82.3
9. Advanced training for experienced Directors	81.7
10. Current research and topics in early childhood	81.7
11. Recruiting and hiring staff, including developing job descriptions	80

## SECTION V

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ***Process***

At the Center Directors' Symposium, highlights of the survey results were presented, and each participant received a written draft summarizing the data. After this summary presentation, five groups of Symposium participants discussed their priorities and submitted their responses to the following questions:

- ▶ Who needs this report about Child Care Center Directors' professional development preferences?
- ▶ How do you want them to use the results?
- ▶ What suggestions, counsel, or advice

do you have for the agencies and individuals receiving this report?

The groups' recommendations are insightful, comprehensive, and worthy of consideration. Of particular interest are the comments in the segment describing suggestions, counsel, and advice for individuals and agencies using these results

The bulk of this section provides their lists of recommendations in alphabetical order. Additional recommendations have been embedded in previous sections of the report along with the tables summarizing the data.

#### ***Who Needs This Report***

- ▶ Advocacy Groups
- ▶ All Center Directors
- ▶ Board members/non-profit centers
- ▶ Businesses in Community
- ▶ Career Advisory Board (Early Childhood Project)
- ▶ Caregivers at your center
- ▶ Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Community Trainers, Doctors, Nurses, Safety Trainers
- ▶ Health Department (state and local)
- ▶ DPHHS
- ▶ Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB)
- ▶ Elementary Schools
- ▶ Food Program
- ▶ General public
- ▶ Head Start/Even Start Admin
- ▶ Health/Mental/Medical Specialists
- ▶ Higher Education; Community colleges and other training entities (CDA)
- ▶ Hospitals
- ▶ Job Service
- ▶ Labor Department
- ▶ Legal and Human resources people
- ▶ Library
- ▶ Licensing Agencies
- ▶ Lobbyists and Legislators
- ▶ Local government
- ▶ MECAC (Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council)
- ▶ Montana Child Care Association (MTCCA)
- ▶ Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC)
- ▶ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- ▶ National Child Care Information Center

- ▶ Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
- ▶ Office of Public Assistance (OPA)
- ▶ Parents and families
- ▶ Practitioner Registry
- ▶ Pre-K NOW National
- ▶ Resource and Referral Agencies
- ▶ School Age Programs
- ▶ Summer Programs
- ▶ Trainers' Directory

### ***How Symposium Participants Want The Results To Be Used***

- ▶ 15 hours of effective training
- ▶ Acknowledge growth in professionalism
- ▶ Better understanding of challenges facing early childhood with retention and staffing issues
- ▶ Built in reward system
- ▶ Comprehensive
- ▶ Create funding
- ▶ Create support system for legal and human resource and regulatory questions
- ▶ Create incentives for people to go into early childhood
- ▶ Curriculum
- ▶ Delivery (time/place/how) needs to meet our (Directors) needs
- ▶ Design training to fit our needs
- ▶ Develop training opportunities
- ▶ Developing a plan . . . tied to what we said
- ▶ Developing research topics
- ▶ Development of college course work to meet the need we are expressing
- ▶ Director networking
- ▶ Educating general public
- ▶ Effective if organized
- ▶ Employee-employer training
- ▶ Find ways to support early childhood
- ▶ Focus on collaboration instead of competition
- ▶ Form a training plan
- ▶ Forming a formal state-wide Directors' Association
- ▶ Funding for Professional Development based on Directors' needs
- ▶ Help understand the challenges of living in rural state like Montana
- ▶ Increase professionalism
- ▶ Inform the public (PR) of our professionalism/quality
- ▶ Licensing requirements
- ▶ Make Licensing modifications based on our needs and training
- ▶ Mentoring and networking programs for directors
- ▶ Offer funding/incentives and loan forgiveness programs, affordable training, and services
- ▶ Planning and scheduling training opportunities
- ▶ Program development
- ▶ Providing awareness and promoting quality
- ▶ Using the web

***Suggestions, Counsel, and Advice for Agencies/Individuals Receiving This Report***

- ▶ Act on information received.
- ▶ Ask our (all directors) input when developing new policies.
- ▶ Consider the inequalities of money, location, population, economic factors, cultural background in regards to achieving "quality."
- ▶ Directors being involved in the planning.
- ▶ From birth-5 years of age, a person learns more then they will in any other 5 years of their lifetime!
- ▶ Fund professional growth; Center Director salaries rank low compared to other professional educators.
- ▶ Have the "who needs it" people give Center Directors feedback.
- ▶ Help develop benefits possibilities for directors and staff (health insurance and retirement).
- ▶ Incentives.
- ▶ Panel of Center Directors to "tell it like it is" to those on "who needs it" list.
- ▶ Prioritize needs.
- ▶ Provide system support for new directors to get info and know what is available.
- ▶ Recognize the variety of types of facilities and always remember the "little guys" (gals).
- ▶ Recruit qualified subs (also ties into licensing regulations).
- ▶ Share info among directors.
- ▶ Sometimes reality doesn't match regulations - the black and white print.
- ▶ System for giving directors a voice in policy-making with state agencies and licensing department that directly effects the Centers.
- ▶ Share information with others.
- ▶ We need help getting more PR on the importance of early childhood and the need for compensation equal to that of public school teachers.

***Next Steps: Directors' Symposium 2006***

At the end of the Symposium, twelve Center Directors volunteered to work with Child Care plus+ to plan one more state-wide Center Directors' Symposium to be held in September 2006. This Symposium will again be funded by the Early Childhood Project with the intention to assist Center Directors in garnering leadership and funding to support the Sym-

posium and other activities in the future. It remains to be seen from where this leadership will emerge, but early childhood professional organizations in Montana (Montana Association for the Education of Young Children - MtAEYC and the Montana Child Care Association - MTCCA) have expressed a great deal of interest.



## SECTION VI

### CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Many of the 127 licensed Child Care Center Directors who participated in the *Montana Child Care Center Directors' Survey* took the opportunity to briefly describe a) their most important contribution and b) their greatest challenge as a Child Care Center Director in Montana. Following are their responses in their own words. As might be expected from practitioners in the early childhood profession, a number of survey participants described challenges related to time and/or money.

However, the largest number of challenges related to multiple staff issues, such as attitude, motivation, finding, hiring, paying, firing, training, keeping, and trusting. These responses parallel the results of the survey prioritizing staff issues as key topics preferred for professional development. For readability, responses have been loosely organized into categories using the primary theme of the response.

<b>CATEGORIES FOR DIRECTORS' RESPONSES TO CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES</b>	
<p><b>MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</li> <li>CHILDREN</li> <li>FAMILIES</li> <li>INCLUSION</li> <li>LONGEVITY</li> <li>NURTURING ENVIRONMENT</li> <li>PERSONAL COMMITMENT</li> <li>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</li> <li>QUALITY</li> <li>RURAL</li> </ul>	<p><b>GREATEST CHALLENGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EDUCATION/TRAINING</li> <li>FAMILY/PUBLIC EDUCATION</li> <li>MULTIPLE STAFF ISSUES: ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION, FINDING, HIRING, PAYING, FIRING, TRAINING, KEEPING, TRUSTING</li> <li>RURAL/PERSONAL</li> <li>STATE/LICENSING REGULATIONS</li> <li>TIME AND/OR MONEY</li> </ul>

### **Most Important Contributions**

#### ***Advocacy and Community Involvement***

- ▶ Currently involved with MAC, MtAEYC state board (state policy chair and representative from BAEYC), serve on CCR&R board as the Treasurer. On the local state and national level, I think it is critical to be involved, being informed and taking action when and where necessary.
- ▶ I was very active in my prior community as a child activist. I helped local providers understand their roles as professionals in the field of

early childhood education. I was a good role model to other directors, showing how to run a high quality center.

- ▶ Served on the Montana child care advisory board in Helena.
- ▶ Starting a child care association; becoming president of the MTCCA as of August 2005.
- ▶ Our center is very much a community program. Our children take numerous field trips, have

many prevention programs, have a performing choir, teach a foreign language, build leadership qualities, emphasize manners, provide technology programs, has homework assistance, and builds mentorship relationships among the children, staff, and community. The children begin to feel like they matter to the community when dealing with their ideas and contributions.

- ▶ Advocating for quality care for young children and their families.
- ▶ Being involved in just about every Best Beginnings program, Practitioner Registry and Trainer Directory as well as CDA and child care apprenticeship (first in state); steering committee for state conference 1999 and 2005. Strong advocacy in state legislative sessions since 1998. NAEYC accreditation board of

### **Children**

- ▶ Helping children develop and grow to make a better future. Helping parents with their child/children's growth.
- ▶ Trying to have a program which will accommodate all ages.
- ▶ Graduating children who succeed in the next step of their lives.
- ▶ The children I take care of know that they are loved. Our center is their second home where they are stimulated, loved, and cared for on a consistent basis.
- ▶ Touching the lives of children each and every day. Supporting and training staff who do the same. Active in local Directors' meetings
- ▶ The care that is given to young children is very important to me.
- ▶ My vision of making a child's preschool experi-

### **Families**

- ▶ Staying with one program for 10 years and seeing the many changes in child behaviors and parental responsibilities. And helping families deal with those changes so that their child will succeed in life.
- ▶ Making sure that middle income and low income families have a chance at quality care at affordable price.
- ▶ Serving and strengthening low income families.

directors of our local R&R. Red Cross trainer for workplace safety, CPR and first aid. Grant Recipient.

- ▶ Being a steadfast supporter and leader of a large staff so they can do what they do best—care for children.
- ▶ To show people that child care providers are professionals who are the first step in the educational process along with the parents.
- ▶ Bringing the profession to a level of respect and recognition—state and local.
- ▶ My focus has always been on advocacy for children. I have enjoyed all the children and parents that I've met through the years. I've tried to run a center that offers a positive atmosphere of music, academics, morals and values, physical challenges and caring staff.

ence a "positive" one.

- ▶ Interacting in a child's life.
- ▶ Helping to make our center the best it can be. Touching lives of children and their families and also my staff, daily!
- ▶ Children are learning a lot about respecting people and equipment and their education. Parents don't seem to teach their children to care for each other and respect each others property and feelings any more. I have to work on this a lot.
- ▶ Caring for each child and making sure they figure out their strengths and are confident learners. The depth of each child is critical for each teacher to figure out. But difficult for teachers to maintain the patience needed to do that. My gift is being a teacher. My lot is being the owner/ director also.

- ▶ Providing convenient, caring child care. This facility has been a ministry to the families in our community and a non-profit service due to circumstances beyond my control. My services have nearly been a donation. We have been able to offer part-time jobs for moms with preschool children in our community with their schedules allowing them to attend their school-age children's activities.
- ▶ The day care almost closed a few years ago. It is required by the church that the director be a member of the church. When our director moved no one wanted the "job". I was the only caregiver who belonged to the church so I took

it on, not knowing what I was doing. Knowing of the difficulties of keeping it going and serving children and families in need is my reward and what I have to give to others.

- ▶ My most important contribution is to my families and what we offer.
- ▶ Offer a "community" centered safe environment for children and their parents.
- ▶ The wonderful feeling you get when parents trust you with their child and compliment on what positive changes the program has made for their child.

### ***Inclusion***

- ▶ Autism and special need inclusion program. We have working at the center: 2 Occupational Therapists (OT), 1 Physical Therapist (PT), and 1 Speech Therapist, plus the caregivers and 1 certified teacher. We also have a small farm for therapy: horses, goats, ducks, chickens, pigs, cats, rabbits, etc.
- ▶ To be able to reach out to kids that need love and attention. So many are single parent families that just don't have time for special times at home. We now have an autistic boy

that has found his way into everybody's heart. He is special in his own way. We also have a boy that has a walker and so this has taught our other kids special understandings.

- ▶ We provide special education services to 3-5 year olds and their peers. Early Intervention is important and these children and families are more prepared for kindergarten and the years beyond.

### ***Longevity***

- ▶ I have been in child care for 23 years and twenty one of those have been as director in the same center. Our program has been and continues to be very successful, our employee turnover is very low and we have an excellent reputation . . . .
- ▶ 25 years of pre-school and kindergarten classes which parents and children in the education of their children and easy entry into the public school because of my program.
- ▶ Providing a program that is inclusive of age range newborn through age 5, entire range of socio- economic - ethnic - local community, and doing so consistently for many years.
- ▶ My husband and I began our Montessori school as a full day program to accommodate every level of income. We were the 1st in our state with both Montessori education. And day care benefits. That was 36 years ago this

September! I have conducted classes at Rocky Montessori Overview. I have trained home providers, generally in organization and appropriateness of material, how to set up, etc; trained on dept. family systems and how to respond to children of such; and burn- out. I am active in my community, in general, and regularly attended BCCC meetings, BAEYC and am a member of AIE.

- ▶ Mentoring other programs in NAEYC accreditation; educating other programs on the multiple intelligences; taking part in the KEEP grant with Child Care plus+; successfully working with children who have challenging behaviors; directing a high quality program for over 10 yrs and consistently maintaining an accredited status with NAEYC; an extended license with DPHHS and a Star II Status, too.

### ***Nurturing Environment***

- ▶ Taking care of 30+ children a day whose parents depend on us for care and nurturing of their children.
- ▶ Ability to provide a safe, fun, and nurturing Learning Environment for the children of Helena.
- ▶ Maintaining a good line of communication with parents in order to work hand in hand with their children through nurturing education, direction, and character building.
- ▶ Providing a safe/loving/nurturing environment for the development of the children— giving them a stable foundation.
- ▶ Providing safe, enriching, and fun experiences to children of all ages everyday in our care.
- ▶ To provide a safe, healthy and organized facility. To have a great parent-provider relationship with all. To have a staff that communicates with all.
- ▶ I create lots of job in Montana (7-10 employees), and I believe we give children a positive learning situation for their first 5-6 years of life!
- ▶ I feel we provide a safe and loving place for children. As director I try to communicate well with all the parents and the children. I have improved the communication between staff, children, and parents.
- ▶ Our most important contribution as a church day care is a moral and clean environment. My goal is to have a happy staff and to keep the children happy as possible. I also hope to show them God's love through our day care.
- ▶ To give to each child, knowledge of themselves and life: 1) spiritually, 2) physically, 3) emotionally, and 4) academically.
- ▶ Creating safe, positive environments for all children!
- ▶ We provide a safe and healthy environment for the children to learn and grow under our caring supervision.
- ▶ Providing a loving environment for the children, parents, and staff.

### ***Personal Commitment***

- ▶ I bring my whole self, giving guidance, love, support and comfort to staff, children and their families. I am very committed to offering a warm, safe environment for all to learn well away from home.
- ▶ Offering a loving/ caring center where both the parents/ children loved enjoy coming.
- ▶ My dedication to my job and the understanding of the importance myself and staff have on a daily basis.
- ▶ [My most important contribution is] my life's blood.
- ▶ I have provided fully inclusive, child care for ages birth through 11 yrs of age, for an entire community at an affordable price for any family, providing nutrition to children who would otherwise not have had a hot meal daily, and provided structure, the only stable environment many have ever had, including a full preschool curriculum—all with funding from tuition, minimal amounts of child care assistance from the state, and zero grants! I have proven it can be done, inexpensively, with quality and love and without doctorate!
- ▶ Willing to work hard, attack issues, share ideas.
- ▶ I am dedicated, hard working, and have a love for all of these kids as if they were my own, and they know.
- ▶ I care! Also, I am a director of a center owned by a Catholic school organization, so I feel I am challenged differently than other privately owned centers. I would be able to offer a different outlook on some topics!
- ▶ I have established a Montessori Teacher Education Program for 3-6 yr olds.
- ▶ Founded and built early childhood program with a very good reputation in Missoula. Work every day to "shake up" the myths about working in early childhood.
- ▶ The most important contribution I make as a director is the ability to meet large goals successfully.

### ***Professional Development***

- ▶ None yet. I've only been a director for 2 years. Maybe a training for beginners I could teach.
- ▶ Helping my staff and others in child care programs understand the importance and value in

seeking higher education and trainings. Have assisted my staff in finding ways to pay for trainings and educational opportunities.

### ***Quality***

- ▶ Offering high quality child care to help children grow up to be well rounded individuals.
- ▶ As the new director of our Learning Center, I have improved our preschool program and staff moral.
- ▶ High Quality Care and Educational School
- ▶ Providing safe quality care for the children of students.
- ▶ Maintaining a high quality, safe, loving Christian environment for children.
- ▶ Director of a year-round educational program for children 2-9 years old. I have created a facility and program that is second to none in this state.
- ▶ I have developed and improved over the years a wonderful curriculum. I have also enjoyed watching my teachers grow to become more professional and confident. I hire the most qualified certified teachers! Our program as a whole has been a success for children, staff, parents, and me.
- ▶ Certified Infant/Toddler Trainer, training staff, featured in international magazine, always striving to improve the quality of child care in Montana.
- ▶ We offer quality child care at an affordable rate.
- ▶ To provide a safe, loving environment for children to grow and develop successfully.
- ▶ I am able to retain highly qualified primary staff which in turn ensures a consistent, high quality program for young children and families.
- ▶ Providing a high quality, learning and fun environment for children 2- 6 years of age. Ensuring staff is needs are met. Communication between parents and center needs are met often and clearly understood.
- ▶ Successfully managing the largest child care program in the city while moving forward with

the times and changes. Financial cuts and district changes have to be overcome while providing a quality service for the parents and children.

- ▶ My most important contribution is to provide quality child care for Montana's children. This is to include safety, love, play time, organized activities, etc.
- ▶ Getting my head start center licensed, being licensed brings an additional level of quality.
- ▶ I believe it would be the trainings I do as a director. We have monthly trainings for staff which I think is beneficial for them. I am really trying to develop a high quality program for both parents and their children and their staff.
- ▶ I believe that this program is one of the highest quality programs in the state. The educational level of the staff is incredible and our staff turn-over is low for this field. Our families are very involved in the program on a daily basis. Our facility is warm and aesthetically pleasing. We work closely with many professionals in our area including MSU, Child Care Connections, Family Outreach, and the public schools. All of us are truly life-long learners, excited about working with young children.
- ▶ Currently I run the largest facility in the Missoula area. I feel that we offer a quality program in an area where there is such a large number of children who need care, yet so few facilities. I strive to train my staff in order to offer this quality care.
- ▶ [My most important contribution is] program improvements.
- ▶ Having an awesome center that receives great evaluations. Having people wanting to work for me.

**Rural**

- ▶ Bringing quality care to rural Montana. Giving families within our community the ability to be at ease when choosing their child care.
- ▶ I have brought a great service to a rural community.
- ▶ We provide after school care to three rural elementary schools. After kindergarten care to Cayuse Prairie, Creston, and Fairmont Egan schools. After 1st-6th grade care to Cayuse Prairie and Creston. When I look at our 8 years of children's files I feel "Yes! We've touched a lot of lives!"
- ▶ We are in a rural small town, 19 yrs in business serving our community. I love my job, enjoy the children and the business. We provide quality care to our kids and families.

**Greatest Challenges****Education/Training**

- ▶ Finding informative, quality, and accessible, college-caliber training.
- ▶ I find that by running such a large facility, I cannot find the time to attend our side training. I also find a lack of training for Directors in our area.
- ▶ Receiving high quality, worthwhile training locally; re-licensing paperwork, too much duplication.
- ▶ Starting up and not knowing who to call or how to get started. To overlook the pay!
- ▶ The challenge has been to promote continuing education with staff and parents; and to keep up with the computerized methods of communication.

**Family/Public Education**

- ▶ Educating families on the importance of quality early child care.
- ▶ Keeping the general public informed and up-to-date on the very high importance of quality early care and education. Budgets \$\$\$; don't get me started . . . .
- ▶ Parents respecting your business and rules. People seem to be in too much of a hurry to notice rules, etc.
- ▶ Parents that need to understand that their children or child does not run the program.
- ▶ Working with families that are not taking very good care of their children.
- ▶ Getting parents to participate in any functions.

**Multiple Staff Issues: Attitude, Motivation, Finding, Hiring, Paying, Firing, Training, Keeping, Trusting**

- ▶ Positive staff attitude and motivation. Finding staff that can teach, play with, maintain control, and love a group of kids.
- ▶ The hiring of staff both part-time and full-time! They look at the requirements and run the other way!
- ▶ Keeping up with all there is to do; delegating and finding qualified staff to delegate to.
- ▶ Finding and keeping qualified staff.
- ▶ Training and keeping trained staff, so they won't leave and go to Head Start after we train them.
- ▶ Most challenge is being able to pay the staff what they are worth.
- ▶ Our ratios make it very hard to pay all the bills, pay teachers a wage of \$7.00 to \$10.00 per

- hour (depending on experience and qualifications), purchase age-appropriate toys, and furniture, etc., that is needed for a 2-star facility. Oh and did I mention a little bit left over for the owner/director's family to live on.
- ▶ Retaining quality, qualified staff, and finding them! Working with a changing Board of Directors.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] managing staff.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] morale/ union issues.
  - ▶ Motivating and getting staff to understand and buy into the need for ongoing training. Then using that training to improve and build upon within the center.
  - ▶ Managing staff—dealing with stress—all of it! Help!
  - ▶ Finding qualified staff in a shrinking labor pool; profitability; distance involved to attend trainings.
  - ▶ Keeping good staff. Turnover rate is approximately at the national level of 30%.
  - ▶ Staff recruitment and training quality staff.
  - ▶ Scheduling—planning fall and summer enrollment and maintaining a good staff year round.
  - ▶ Staff, networking with other directors, time.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] managing growth.
  - ▶ To help teachers see the potential of their positions.
  - ▶ Keeping staff happy. I have so much diversity in a staff of 5! Some who really care and work and some here for a paycheck. Living and operating near an Indian reservation and having to hire Native Americans over better qualified is a challenge.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] staff management.
  - ▶ Majority of our employees are [university] students—large turnover every semester.
  - ▶ Working with changing and evolving boards, evaluation of staff and dealing with challenging employees, time management (too much to accomplish in the allotted 4 hours per day that I am a director), multi-tasking at the highest level of efficiency, filing and organization, computer skills (upgrading software and attending an advanced class), looking out for everyone else (parents, teachers, board members, and children), but who looks out for me?
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] hiring/firing staff and motivating staff.
  - ▶ Obtaining and keeping high quality staff.
  - ▶ Keeping staff enthused and happy!
  - ▶ My greatest challenge is getting and maintaining high quality staff with no insurance, benefits offered. It is hard to get staff and keep them long-term.
  - ▶ My biggest challenge is finding good dependable help especially if you need primary caregivers.
  - ▶ Keeping high quality staff. Keeping staff motivated.
  - ▶ Finding and keeping quality staff at a wage agreeable to both parties.
  - ▶ Dealing effectively with staff.
  - ▶ Losing state funding child care grants. Before and after school programs loss. Staffing, training during the fall months. Advertising dollars and understanding how a day care does not or is not included on the list turned over to the parents.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] retaining quality staff.
  - ▶ Qualifying a primary caregiver and being able to pay a wage that would compensate those qualifications; they would much rather take an aide job at the school or substitute teach because the school can pay them more. Collection on some accounts has been very frustrating and disappointing that people walk away from quality care without paying for it.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] employees and keeping good staff.
  - ▶ My greatest challenge is finding qualified, dedicated staff that will stay with the center for long periods of time.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] retaining good staff.
  - ▶ The politics involved with being on a University Campus; the consistent changing of employment.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] finding and maintaining a quality staff.
  - ▶ Retaining good staff. Finding ways to end employment for undesirable staff.
  - ▶ To maintain quality caregivers who genuinely love to take care and teach children.
  - ▶ Quality staff for the pay that they receive. (Having staff stay.)
  - ▶ Keeping good subs. Caring for kids with spe-

- cial needs.
- ▶ Developing staff policy and procedures.
  - ▶ Staffing; hiring qualified staff and being able to pay them for what they are worth.
  - ▶ Staff management and not doing everything myself—delegation.
  - ▶ Managing staff and passing on what I know about early childhood teaching in an informative, constructive, accepting way that they will learn from and implement.
  - ▶ Finding responsible employees who arrive on the job with a good work ethic, a set of moral standards they live by and respect for children, materials and other staff members, and an open, willing attitude.
  - ▶ Being viewed as a professional, and making sure staff see themselves as professionals.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] maintaining good staff.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] keeping good staff.
- ▶ To maintain quality staff that works together as a team and avoiding burnout when you have several children enrolled that present challenging if not difficult behavior issues.
  - ▶ Maintaining a qualified staff and being able to offer them a decent wage and benefits. We hire a very qualified person and in a short while they move on to a higher paid position in a different but related field.
  - ▶ [My greatest challenge is] to have the quality staff I need.
  - ▶ Training staff to uphold the high standards my early childhood education has taught me. When they have no education and keeping my staff after they receive their education! Being able to pay them a salary to keep them.
  - ▶ The ever-negative employee training for staff and not paying over time.

### ***Rural/Personal***

- ▶ Working around my chemotherapy sessions with my doctors in Billings and my chemo weekly in Glendive. It's a challenge and then some!
- ▶ [My greatest challenge is] isolation.
- ▶ There are always challenges in this business. I would say my biggest is trying to "save" children and keeping them when I know we can no longer help them and that they need care from STEP or other programs.
- ▶ As a director in a small rural center I am challenged with getting everything done. I am the director, owner, preschool teacher, caregiver, part-time cook, janitor—you name it—our enrollment/ income is too low to hire separate employees to fill all the positions.
- ▶ Sustainability is our biggest challenge. We have great community support, but need financing to assist families whose need is the greatest, but are not equipped financially to help fund our program. Education is another challenge. Because we are a rural community, a lot of adults think we are immune to a lot of the problems big cities face, i.e., gangs, drugs, alcohol, kidnapping, and crime. The adults also believe it's okay for elementary age children to be on their own after school for a "few" hours. They believe it's acceptable for a 5th grader to be in charge of sibling(s). This is NOT okay and it's NOT safe.
- ▶ Staffing—very few individuals in rural areas with education or experience I would like staff to have.
- ▶ Trusting other caregivers to take care of things when I'm not there. I know they can handle it or they wouldn't be there, but I still have a hard time staying away.
- ▶ Finding qualified staff in a rural area willing and happy to work for \$6.50-\$7.00/hour to provide after school care. Staying afloat. Keeping fees low, program costs down and services high to serve a limited market.
- ▶ Keeping teachers on track with what their job is. We are here for the kids—this isn't part of our social life—it's your job. Trying to do everything—classroom environments, child redirection, teacher redirection, curriculum planning/implementing (I seem to hire teachers who can't carry out their work)—all classroom stuff plus administrative duties. I own the center and Big Sky has no ECE professionals in the area. It's a problem!
- ▶ It is very hard to please everyone involved and wanting the centers to be perfect!

- ▶ It is all in God's hands and in His time. Don't sweat the small stuff. Only God is perfect, we just give it our best shot.

### ***State/licensing Regulations***

- ▶ Making sure I meet all state regulations and keep up on any new changes. Keep parents happy.
- ▶ Access to higher education is greatly limited due to working 12-13 hrs/day in an extremely isolated location, with increasing demands by regulation changes looming in the future. I will have to sell my business in the future due to pressures for increased "formal" education. (We have only had internet access for 2 years.) Our town will be very hard pressed to find anyone willing to provide services at the above

level for the same price and put the hours required in to make it work!!! Commitment counts!

- ▶ Loving and taking care of the kids is the greatest thing, the greatest challenge. It's all the paper work that is required from so many different sources. Sometimes it gets overwhelming and takes so much time away from the real reason I started this.

### ***Time and/or Money***

- ▶ [My greatest challenge is] money.
- ▶ [My greatest challenge is] funding.
- ▶ Operating within a budget. Everything relates to numbers of children enrolled and one never knows if that number can be maintained.
- ▶ Finances—breaking even—I do not have to show a profit with benefits; it's very hard to break even.
- ▶ Building our elementary-age program.
- ▶ How to continue to build a good program; get accreditation with limited resources financially.
- ▶ Making money—I keep putting it back into the day care.
- ▶ [My greatest challenge is] lack of money/time.
- ▶ The greatest challenge I face is providing a high quality program with a limited budget. It is frustrating to lose staff because of wages or benefits, especially when I know I am paying more than most, providing paid prep and leave time and hiring degreed teachers. It is also frustrating when you know that an improvement that would improve the quality of the program is financially out of reach.
- ▶ Having enough time to effectively wear all the hats needed with my profession—Director, owner, primary caregiver, preschool teacher. It is too hard to make a decent wage when trying to run a quality child care center. Budget

is always tight.

- ▶ Time management. Delegating. Balancing effective leadership with relating to staff on a personal level. Making sure staff perform highly when I'm not watching.
- ▶ [My greatest challenge is] getting everything done!
- ▶ Not enough time in the day to complete my day in 8 hours. Funds on things to bring into my program.
- ▶ Being able to have time to visit with other local and regional directors. Having an advocate for center directors—someone to talk to about day-to-day questions and concerns without fear of competition, etc.
- ▶ To make time for training between working 40-50 hrs/wk and just having a baby and raising another child. I find it very difficult to make enough money to pay the right qualified people enough—what they're worth and make a living as well. I am "for profit" but do not make a profit because everything goes back to the business.
- ▶ Managing time; being able to complete paperwork in a timely manner is difficult. Working with our local R&R has become extremely difficult and frustrating. Meeting the needs of staff is hard, at times.



## CONCLUSION

Child Care Center Directors in Montana have distinct preferences about their professional development experiences. Committed to personal growth and development, they are willing to take the time to express their interests and needs when given the opportunity. Underscored in both their choice of professional development preferences and their description of their greatest challenges is the need for competent and committed staff

The summary of participating Center Directors' preferences and the recommendations

based on the data collected are of great benefit to the early childhood trainers and educators striving to provide meaningful learning experiences for Center Directors in the state. In addition, policy-makers and other state officials are now provided with sufficient evidence for confident decision-making in the areas addressed by this report. This report provides a road map for planning professional development for Center Directors in Montana, both in terms of content and priority.