

## 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 location.

**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 total) with a weighted average rank of importance at 80 or above for survey participants across all five training categories are listed in 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.*