

CHILD CARE PLUS+ RESEARCH REPORT #2 INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE IN MONTANA

Profile of Child Care Programs Who Provide Care for Young Children with Disabilities



Background

When Child Care plus+ asked 1744 child care program owners and directors in Montana for their perspectives on caring for young children with disabilities, individuals from 609 programs responded. Almost half of those programs (271/45%) had a young child with disabilities currently enrolled, that is, a child who was currently receiving early intervention or special education services or who had been identified as having a delay or disability by their parent or other professional. Many (401/67%) had provided care for a child with disabilities in the program's history.

Young children with disabilities are enrolled in every type of program.

Providers responding to this survey represented family child care homes, group child care homes, and centers. Centers were the most actively involved in serving young children with disabilities. This pattern was consistent when examining involvement of children with disabilities both in the present and in the past. Family child care programs were the least likely to be currently serving a young child with a disability, although over half of these programs indicated involvement at some point in time. Given the differences in the number of children in these various types of programs, the patterns are not surprising. Yet the high level of involvement, across time, of center-based programs is notable.

Type of Program	Montana Licensing or Registration Standards	Number of programs participating in the survey	Number of participating programs that currently enroll a child(ren) with disabilities
Family Child Care Home	3-6 children/1 adult	305 programs	85 programs (28%)
Group Child Care Home	7-12 children/2 adults	181 programs	101 programs (56%)
Center	13 or more children	110 programs	85 programs (77%)

About Participants' Programs

Over half (51%) of the providers who completed the survey were from family child care programs (up to 6 children). Group home providers (up to 12 children with two caregivers) accounted for 30%, and center providers accounted for 18%. These percentages correlated directly with the percentage of each type of program in the state as a whole. Remarkably, most participants (60%) had more than four years experience in early childhood programs. Further, most participants (89%) had been licensed or registered by the state for more than one year and 49% for more than five years.

ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE IN MONTANA: EXPLORING PARENT AND PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSION

For information about this research, other topics related to inclusive child care, or copies of this report, contact:

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About Participants' Education

Keeping in mind that the survey was completed by child care owners/operators and directors, many participants indicated more advanced levels of training in fields both related and unrelated to early childhood education. Almost all (97%) participants had completed high school, 8% had a CDA, 13% had completed an Associate Degree, 29% reported having a Bachelor's degree, and 23% reported education beyond a Bachelor's degree.

Participants who described having a child(ren) with disabilities currently enrolled were primarily white female (97%). Many had more than six years experience in child care programs (49%), while 11% had less than one year of experience. Participants who expressed having experience with children with disabilities were better educated all around than participants without experience.

Educational Background	Number and percentage of participants with experience		Number and percentage of participants without experience	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
High School/GED	404	97%	176	97%
CDA Credential	43	10%	4	2%
Associate Degree	62	15%	18	10%
Bachelor's Degree	124	30%	47	26%
Beyond Bachelor's Degree	101	24%	34	19%

Programs have a number of concerns about including children with disabilities.

When participants with direct experience with children with disabilities rated their level of concern about the impact of various aspects of including children with disabilities in child care settings, the safety and well-being of children with medical needs emerged at the top of the list. The next highest cluster of concerns was about the ability of staff members to meet the needs of the children in the program from the perspective of both time and expertise. While the rating of these items suggests some level of concern, most ratings would be considered to reflect a "moderate" and perhaps healthy concern about dealing with children with specialized needs. Issues relating to the program itself, such as loss of enrollment and risk to the provider, generated the least amount of concern among participants. **Participants without experience with children with disabilities in all cases had a slightly higher level of concern for these situations than did participants with experience.** The chart below lists the possible concerns and the aggregate rating of the level of concern expressed by participants as a group.

Nature of Concern (1 = major concern; 3 = moderate; 5 = not a concern)	Rating
Accidental injury or death of children who are medically fragile	1.9
Ability of staff to meet the individual needs of a child with a disability	2.1
Time/attention that a child with a disability might require	2.2
Additional cost of care for children with disabilities	2.2
Additional stress for staff	2.3
Staff not adequately trained to include children with disabilities	2.4
Liability issues	2.4
Potential injury or health risks for other children	2.5
Other issues of concern	2.7
Reactions of current families/potential loss of enrollment	2.9
Potential injury or health risk for staff	3.0

I have a very small home daycare and having a child with a disability would be difficult. I have never been in that position. Montana Family Child Care Provider

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