

## Benefits of Quality Child-Care Environments

Children benefit significantly from high quality child care, according to recent research. Boys and girls in high quality child-care environments:

- develop more advanced language skills,
- display more advanced cognitive development,
- experience more success in school, and
- demonstrate more positive social skills, such as more sociability, less emotionality, less shyness, and less dependence.



*It's about kids.*

### What is Child Care?

Often people do not realize child care involves a *continuum of care* that children may receive daily, including early childhood education and preschool activities.

A few decades ago people equated child care with babysitting. Today we realize that child care can and should involve much more than physical care and monitoring of children.

Child care occurs during vital stages of children's growth and can have long-lasting impacts on the intellectual and social development of children.

*Children who experience poorer quality child care display less developmental growth than do children in higher quality child care.*

### Child Care in North Dakota

- More than 17,000 families rely on paid child care in North Dakota (Internal Revenue Service).
- Of children under six: 71% in two-parent homes have two employed parents; 78% in single-parent homes have an employed parent (U.S. Census Bureau).

*Characteristics of high quality child care* have been studied by numerous social scientists. Among the most significant traits of high quality child care are:

- ◆ **Lower child-staff ratios.** Lower child-staff ratios enable increased interactions between children and adults. Caregivers with small groups are more responsive to and socially stimulating for children. Infants and toddlers in programs with low child-staff ratios exhibit less distress.
- ◆ **Educated providers.** Educated caregivers engage in more positive and fewer harsh interactions with children and provide more encouragement to them. In the U.S., college-educated providers are more likely to continue in child-care employment, which contributes to lower staff turnover.
- ◆ **Specialized education.** Persons who are educated in early childhood development provide more developmentally appropriate responses to children's behaviors and hold less authoritarian attitudes.
- ◆ **On-going training.** Children experience fewer accidental injuries and exhibit more secure attachment to providers in programs where caregivers have on-going training. On-going training also is related to better quality learning activities for children and lower staff turnover.
- ◆ **Lower staff turnover.** Lower turnover is more likely to facilitate securely attached children. Securely attached children have more advanced play, less aggressive behaviors, are better at self-regulation, and are more socially competent than insecurely attached children.

## *North Dakota Requirements for Child-Care Providers*

### **Licensed child-care providers**

Licensed child care is designed to protect children’s safety and promote children’s well-being by enforcing minimum standards with respect to:

- Facility size and space
- Health and safety features and practices
- Cleanliness
- Staff-to-child ratios

Licensed child-care providers must agree to announced and unannounced on-site inspections, annual training requirements, first-aid and CPR training, child abuse and neglect background checks, and a sexual offenders list check.

### **Unlicensed “self-certified” child-care providers**

In North Dakota, legally recognized but unlicensed providers, called “self-certified,” are limited with respect to the number of children they may care for and must submit to a sexual offenders list check, a child abuse and neglect background check, and complete first-aid and CPR training. Self-certified as well as non-certified unlicensed providers are not monitored or reviewed.

*Additional child-care data  
and further references on  
child-care quality are  
available at  
[www.ndkidscount.org](http://www.ndkidscount.org)*

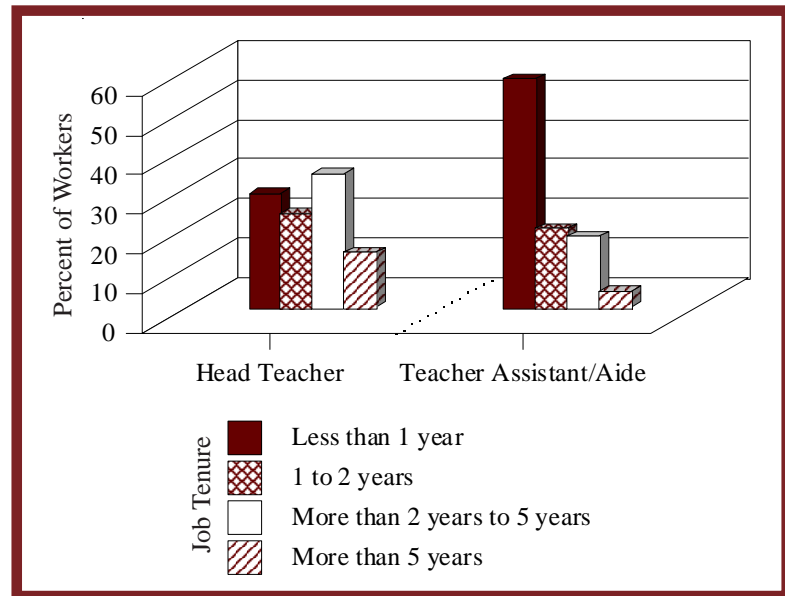
## *Building Better Quality Child Care in North Dakota*

Licensing is related to quality. A recent study found that states with more demanding standards had fewer poor quality centers. Requirements for training and education contribute directly to higher quality care. In North Dakota, non-certified unlicensed providers are unregulated and have no requirements for education or training. Self-certified unlicensed providers must complete only first-aid and CPR training.

A stable environment also is related to the development of more secure children. However, North Dakota child-care workers have high job turnover. More than half of all teacher assistants/aides have been in their current job less than one year (see Figure 1).

In addition, the wages of child-care workers are relatively low. The median wage of child-care workers in North Dakota is \$7.06, which is 63% of the median hourly wage for all workers in the state. Low wages are related to high job turnover.

**Figure 1. Job Tenure Among Child-Care Workers in North Dakota, 2002**



Source: North Dakota’s Child Care Resource and Referral

## **References**

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