



## **Child Care Aware® of Missouri 2022 Advocacy Goals**

High-quality child care is an essential component to Missouri's economy. If families do not have a quality child care program to take their children to each day, they cannot help contributing to the economy or financially providing for their family. However, quality child care programs cannot exist unless there are dedicated early childhood educators to staff these programs. Early childhood educators play an essential role in the economy and in the foundational years of a child's life.

Despite their critical role, child care educators are not adequately compensated for their work, resulting in high turnover in the field. This results in many child care programs operating at a reduced capacity due to lack of staff or running the risk of burning out or overworking the current staff. When a child care program retains quality staff, they can best serve the families in their community. When families have a positive environment to take their children to each day, they can perform their best at work.

Child Care Aware® of Missouri has a unique responsibility to educate and build awareness across the early childhood landscape that includes families, educators, community stakeholders, and the business community. We have identified four goals and four advocacy areas for the 2022 legislative session.

## **Child Care Aware® of Missouri 2022 Advocacy Goals**

1. To assist families and educators to advocate on their own behalf.
2. To engage and mobilize key legislators who will champion affordable child care for families and a significant wage increase for educators.
3. To reduce stigma associated with the early childhood profession
4. To support early social and emotional development of young children.



## **1. Workforce and Wage Compensation**

Early childhood educators are essential to a child's future well-being and play a significant role in a child's learning and development. As professionals, early childhood educators spend considerable time planning curriculum, supporting brain and socio-emotional development, and supporting the needs of families outside of the classroom.

- Early childhood educators are essential to the economy and allow for families to go to work each day.
- Despite their critical role, the average rate of pay in Missouri for an early childhood educator is \$10.45 an hour. When compared to the average pay for a Kindergarten teacher at \$27.68, early childhood educators pay a penalty by choosing to work with younger children (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2020).
- In addition to facing low compensation rates, early childhood educators are surrounded by high turnover in the field and no policies that outline minimum education requirements.
- Public K-12 teachers in Missouri receive employee benefits such as paid vacation and/or sick time, retirement plans, professional development days, health insurance, parental leave, etc. However along with low wages, early childhood educators do not typically have access to employee benefits.

### ***What does success look like?***

- Create and sustain access for early childhood educators to higher education through the T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI Scholarship Program and the CDA Scholarship Project.
- Maintain the involvement of decision makers by elevating the public profile of child care workforce and wage compensation by disseminating information on achievements within the early childhood workforce.
- Educate, create awareness, provide toolkits, and create a communication plan to involve staff, board members, and legislators/policy makers in advocacy work to increase workforce and wage compensation.
- Provide resources to early childhood educators to advocate on their own behalf.



## 2. Affordability

Child care is a significant investment for most families. For some, child care costs are higher than their annual income.

- High prices put a strain on family budgets and can lead to an extensive amount of debt for families.
- In Missouri, the average cost for an infant and a 4 year old to attend child care is around \$16,000 a year in child a care center and \$10,000 a year for family child care. A single parent could expect to pay about 40% of their income for infant care at a center based facility. A two parent household, living at the poverty level could expect to pay nearly 70% of their income for infant care at a center based facility (Child Care Aware® of America, 2019).
- Families may qualify to receive child care subsidy through the state, but subsidy payments to programs do not reflect full cost of care. This leads to high copays for families to help cover the cost of child care.

“I live in rural Missouri, and I make about \$270 a week at my job. I have 3 children, two year old twins and an eight year old, it costs me \$250 a week to send my children to child care. This is my co-payment to my child care program despite being eligible for the child care subsidy program. I take pride in my work and having a job is very important to me. However, it seems like it would just be more beneficial for me to just be a stay-at-home mom”

**Family In Camden County**

### ***What does success look like?***

- Advise families and educators how to advocate on their own behalf utilizing our data, research, and information.
- Educate, create awareness, provide toolkits, and create a communication plan to involve working families, staff, board members, and child care educators/programs in advocating for policies and processes to ease the financial burden on families.
- Advocate to cap child care expenses at 7% of household income.



### **3. Investment**

Without child care, Missouri does not work. However, child care choices for families are constrained by cost of care, low supply, and high demand in significant portions of the state.

“There are 11 child care programs in my community and all of them are full with a waitlist. I need child care immediately so I can go back to work. I just do not know what to do.” **Family in Randolph County**

#### ***What does success look like?***

- Advocate to increase the access of early care and education for parents and children.
- Educate, create awareness, provide toolkits, and create a communication plan to involve staff, board members, child care educators, and contracted Capacity Building Partners in progressively expanding advocacy work to cover all regions of the state to increase the capacity of child care.

### **4. Child Wellbeing**

Child care educators create safe physical environments to shape social emotional development of young children ages 0-12. They play a crucial role in developing healthy habits that will follow these young children into their adult life.

- Early childhood is a time of rapid growth and development. It is very important for children to develop healthy habits, positive mental health, and coping skills that will influence their social and emotional development throughout life.
- Quality early childhood educators with knowledge of appropriate classroom practices lay the ground work in the development of a child’s physical, social, and emotional needs.

#### ***What does success look like?***

- Advocate for ongoing fiscal support of access to higher education as well as trainings with an emphasis in curriculum that supports child safety, health, and wellbeing.
- Increase awareness of the need of social support networks for children, families, and child care educators to address trauma and crisis.



Two-Thousand Days to Make a Difference

- Advocate for the physical, social, and emotional wellbeing of children while under the supervision of child care educators.

### References

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. (2021, February 20). *Missouri - early childhood workforce index 2020*. CSCCE. Retrieved December 10, 2021, from <https://csce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/missouri/>.

Child Care Aware® of America. (2019). *The US and the High Price of Child Care: An Examination of a Broken System*. <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/the-us-and-the-high-price-of-child-care-2019/>.