

2021

WORKFORCE PATHWAYS LA

**Learning from Today,
Preparing for Tomorrow:**

An Early Care and Education Professional
Development Landscape Analysis for
Los Angeles County



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INTRODUCTION

The Quality Counts California (QCC) Workforce Pathways Grant released in May 2020 was designed to “support increased learning and healthy development of California’s young children by increasing the number of qualified ECE professionals and increasing the educational credentials, knowledge, and competencies of existing ECE professionals across the state.” The grant is intended to align with QCC’s professional development system and is focused on meeting the needs of the ECE workforce that serve as the backbone of California’s mixed-delivery system.

In July 2020, the Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE) was awarded a QCC Workforce Pathways Grant (Workforce Pathways LA) by the California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division. Workforce Pathways LA features three components: 1) Licensing, Health and Safety – assisting prospective providers become licensed for family child care and that includes access to health and safety and child development training; 2) Permits, Degrees, and Professional Development – offering supports in the form of stipends and advisement to early educators with achieving their educational goals and earning child development permits; and 3) Workforce Systems Improvement – assessing the early childhood professional development system in Los Angeles County using existing data to document professional development supports currently in place, to identify gaps and barriers, to assess strengths in professional development offerings, and to develop recommendations for how to fortify and align Los Angeles County’s early childhood professional development system. As a part of the systems’ improvement strategy, this report provides a landscape analysis of professional development offerings available to ECE professionals in Los Angeles County.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ECE WORKFORCE

Professional development (PD) within the field of Early Care and Education (ECE) is critical to ensuring early learning professionals have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to support a child’s optimal development in their earliest years. Professional development can take a number of forms, and varies in availability, accessibility, and quality.

What is professional development?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines professional development as “...a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early childhood professionals.” While professional development does not have a single, uniformly agreed-upon definition, it often applies to a broad range of activities that seek to improve knowledge and skills utilized by ECE professionals. Professional learning among educators is critical to ensuring that ECE professionals are equipped to support children’s individual needs. Additionally, effective professional development keeps early educators abreast of progress in the scientific landscape to support every child’s well-being. Professional development varies in quality and utility, but according to a report by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), effective professional development has seven critical elements: content focus, incorporation of active learning utilizing adult learning theory, support of collaboration, use of models and modeling, provision of coaching and expert support, opportunities for feedback and reflection, and sustained duration.ⁱⁱ

Why is professional development important?

ECE professionals are entrusted with the immense responsibility of ensuring children's health, safety, and well-being. Effective professional development is a critical component to support their ability to do their job well. Just as other professions have continuing education requirements to continue working in the field, ECE professionals are often expected to continue to enhance their knowledge of child development and teaching practices to support the children entrusted to their care. The science is clear that children, and society more broadly, gain immensely from the provision of high-quality early learning and care. According to Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, and Knoche,ⁱⁱⁱ

"Early childhood educators are being asked to have deeper understandings of child development and early education issues; provide richer educational experiences for all children, including those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; engage children of varying abilities and backgrounds; connect with a diverse array of families; and do so with greater demands for accountability and in some cases, fewer resources, than ever before."

The ECE workforce's engagement in quality professional development activities (including coaching, training, and higher education) are critical to maintaining a workforce that can support the diverse needs of our youngest learners. Beyond the maintenance of and growth in skills needed to do their jobs well, many professional development opportunities provide the ECE workforce the ability to network professionally, share resources and experiences, and cultivate relationships. These elements are crucial in a workforce that too often finds themselves isolated due to geography, hours worked, or both.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S EARLY LEARNING AND CARE WORKFORCE

The ECE workforce is key to promoting the optimal development of young children in partnership with their families. California's ECE workforce is composed of approximately 116,800 individuals who are dedicated to nurturing the development of young children. Los Angeles County, the largest county by population in California, has an ECE workforce of 34,090 individuals. The size of the ECE workforce in Los Angeles is decreasing (12.8 percent decrease) due largely to the closure of family child care homes. A recent study examined the ECE workforce in Los Angeles County using American Community Survey Public Microdata samples and categorized the workforce according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). The occupations included were in the Child Day Care Services sector (NAICS Code 6244), which includes Head Start programs, infant/child day care centers, nursery schools, pre-kindergarten centers, and home child day care services.^{vii} The majority of the ECE workforce in Los Angeles are categorized as child care workers in child day care services (20,680), fewer are categorized as preschool teachers (9,974), followed by education and child care administrators (2,150), and lastly as teacher assistants (1,286).^{viii}

Similar to the United States ECE workforce, the Los Angeles County ECE workforce are predominantly women (95 percent).^{ix} They are culturally and linguistically diverse and serve the children and families that resemble their culture and language.^{x,xi} Immigrants make up a significant and important part of the ECE workforce in Los Angeles County with over 50 percent born outside of the United States. This percentage is higher than the rest of the Los Angeles county workforce and California ECE workforce.^{xii} In Los Angeles County, about 58 percent are Latinx, 33 percent white, 9 percent Black, and 11 percent identify as another race.^{xiii} Many speak a language other than English, with the majority speaking Spanish.^{xiv,xv}

The ECE workforce is a critical determinant of the quality of care received by young children. Despite the importance of their work in nurturing children's optimal development, the ECE workforce is among the lowest paid occupations nationwide. Throughout the United States, members of the ECE workforce are paid less than a living wage, with many working second jobs to supplement their income and accessing public benefits.^{xvi} Turnover is significant in part due to low wages and the desire for higher paying employment.^{xvi,xviii} In California, 17 percent of the ECE workforce lives in poverty.^{xix} In Los Angeles County, over 50 percent of the ECE workforce earned 80 percent of the state median income in 2018 and 13 percent received food stamps. Affording a home is beyond reach for many of the ECE workforce with 44 percent (lower than the average Californian) owning a home.^{xx} The average income of an early educator working in Los Angeles County is \$14.62 per hour, leaving 49 percent of the ECE workforce living in poverty and 57 percent rent burdened.^{xxi} Evidently, the ECE workforce is not compensated for their work despite the critical role they play in the lives of young children and families.

In California, members of the ECE workforce who work with children of families eligible for subsidized early care and education services funded with public dollars are required to undergo specialized training. Yet, California is among the few states that has made little progress on qualifications and education support.^{xxii} In Los Angeles County, about 39 percent of the ECE workforce do not have a high school degree, 39 percent have some college education, and 22 percent have a college or advanced degree. On average the Los Angeles County ECE workforce are less likely to have a degree in comparison to the overall CA ECE workforce.

THE EARLY LEARNING AND CARE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County, like many places, does not have a centralized ECE professional development system, but rather a wide array of entities that provide professional development in a variety of formats to the County's ECE early learning and care professionals. While a single system accessed by all ECE professionals does not exist, California's Early Care and Education Workforce Registry (ECE Workforce Registry) seeks to increase access to professional development opportunities available statewide and ensure basic standards of quality of professional development are available to the field.^{xxiii}



Who Provides Professional Development in Los Angeles County?

The California Department of Education provides funding for a variety of resources to train ECE professionals, including but not limited to: California Early Childhood Online (CECO), the California Early Childhood Mentor Program (CECMP), the California Preschool Instructional Networks (CPIN), and the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC), among many more. In addition, professional development is also provided through local community-based organizations, County Offices of Education, colleges, and universities, First 5s, and for-profit agencies. For trainings listed on the ECE Workforce Registry (described in more detail in the following section), the ECE Workforce Registry is responsible for approving all sponsor organizations offering training. Training or professional development offerings funded by First 5 California (F5CA) and the California Department of Education Early Learning and Care Division (CDE-ELCD) must be listed in the ECE Workforce Registry. Other organizations who are interested in having their trainings listed in the ECE Workforce Registry can submit a request.

ECE Workforce Registry

The ECE Workforce Registry is a secure, web-based platform that tracks the professional experience, education, and professional development obtained by California's ECE workforce. While California's ECE Workforce Registry has existed for many years, its use dramatically expanded when both F5CA and the CDE-ELCD required the use of the ECE Workforce Registry among state-funded programs. Between April 2019 and March 2020, the ECE Workforce Registry collected information on over 5,000 different professional development activities from over 120 training organizations, about two-thirds of which were state funded. As of June 2020, the ECE Workforce Registry contained personal profiles for over 74,000 active users, and of those, approximately 41 percent of the profiles were for ECE professionals living and/or working in Los Angeles County. The ECE Workforce Registry provides ECE professionals with a web-based record of their education, training, and employment history. When an ECE professional registers for a training through the ECE Workforce Registry, the training is automatically included in their profile, creating a detailed history of their professional development activities.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected in two ways: (1) through a data request from the ECE Workforce Registry and (2) through a survey of organizations not in the ECE Workforce Registry. Beginning with the list of 149 organizations offering trainings across the state in the ECE Workforce Registry, the project advisory committee – a joint committee of the Child Care Planning Committee Workforce Work Group and QSLA Workforce Committee – identified 40 out of the 149 organizations that provide trainings either in person or online to early educators in Los Angeles County. Next, the committee identified an additional 28 organizations that provide trainings in Los Angeles County but were not in the ECE Workforce Registry.

ECE Workforce Registry staff provided data on the 40 listed organizations and an online survey was developed to collect data from the additional 28 organizations. Committee members sent emails with a link to the survey to the 28 training organizations. These training organizations were given the choice of completing the survey or sending data in another format. Organizations were given approximately four weeks to respond to the request and at least one follow up email was sent.

Study Findings

A total of 45 training organizations are represented in this study – data from 40 of the organizations came from the ECE Workforce Registry and data from five organizations came through the survey outreach. Data on trainings offered in calendar years 2019 and 2020 were requested, although data was not available from all organizations for both years. Data from both 2019 and 2020 was available for just over half ($n=25$) of the organizations, whereas data from 2020 only was collected from just under one-third ($n=14$) of the organizations. Data from the remaining organizations ($N=6$) was for 2019 only.



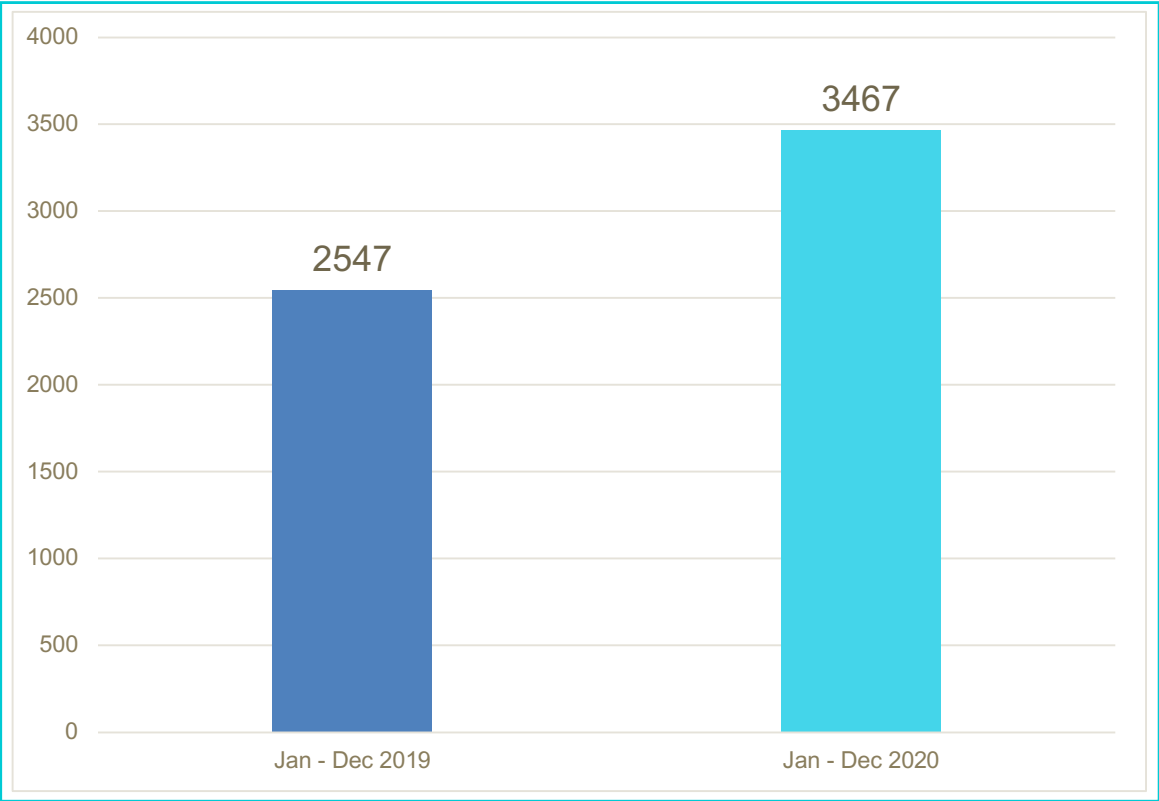
Availability of Trainings

To understand the availability of trainings, the total number of trainings was examined as well as the range of topics covered. The topic content was primarily measured by the California Early Childhood Educator Competency (ECE Competency) addressed by the training. As shown in Figure 1, the organizations included in this study provided 2,547 trainings between January – December 2019 and 3,461 trainings between January – December 2020. The increase in trainings between 2019 and 2020 is, in part, due to the increase in the number of organizations with data in 2020 but may also represent an actual increase in availability of trainings in Los Angeles County.

The availability of trainings offered by content area was examined by comparing the primary competency addressed by each training in 2019 and 2020 to understand which topics are offered more than other topics. The ECE Workforce Registry requires professional development organizations to identify the primary competency area addressed by the training using the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies (ECE Competencies).^{xxiv} The ECE Competencies describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions early educators need in order to provide high quality care and education to young children and families. They are organized into twelve areas: (1) Child Development and Learning; (2) Culture, Diversity and Equity; (3) Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance; (4) Family and Community Engagement; (5) Dual- Language Development; (6) Observation, Screening, Assessment, and Documentation; (7) Special Needs and Inclusion; (8) Learning Environments and Curriculum; (9) Health, Safety, and Nutrition; (10) Leadership in Early Childhood Education; (11) Professionalism; and (12) Administration and Supervision. All trainings in this study were assigned to one of these twelve areas. While not a distinct ECE Competency area, trainings that included the term “trauma” in their description were coded as addressing a thirteenth content area “Trauma Informed Care,” since this is a particularly important content area given the trauma and challenges experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the wave of civil unrest that began in 2020.



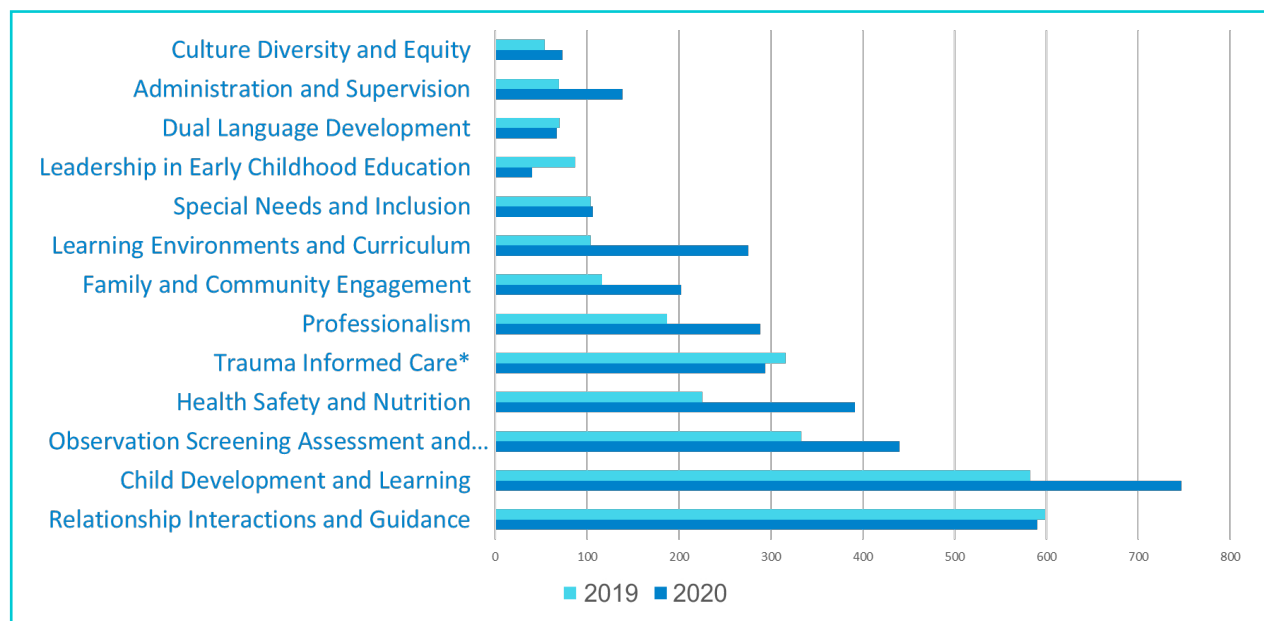
Figure 1: Total Number of Trainings, 2019 & 2020



As shown in Figure 2, the top four most commonly available trainings were the same in 2019 as in 2020:

- Child Development and Learning
- Relationships Interactions and Guidance
- Assessment and Documentation
- Health, Safety and Nutrition

Figure 2: Number of Trainings by ECE Competency, 2019 & 2020



The training content areas that were least available differed slightly between 2019 and 2020. As shown in Table 1, in 2019 Administration and Supervision was one of the least available trainings, but in 2020 there was an increase in trainings of Administration and Supervision. In 2020, Special Needs and Inclusion replaced Administration and Supervision as one of the least available training topics.

Table 1: Least Available Training Topics, 2019 & 2020

| 2019 | 2020 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Culture, Diversity and Equity | Leadership in Early Childhood Education |
| Administration and Supervision | Dual Language Development |
| Dual Language Development | Culture, Diversity and Equity |
| Leadership in Early Childhood Education | Special Needs and Inclusion |

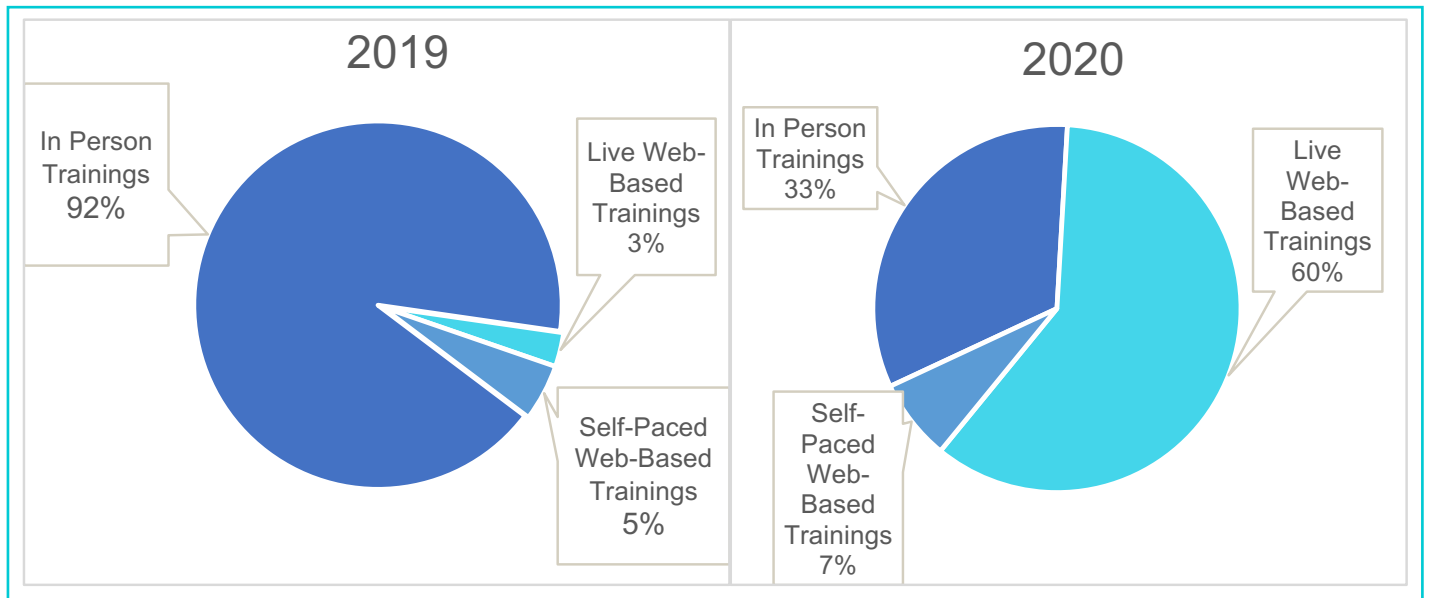
While not an ECE core competency, Trauma Informed Care is an important training topic that was also examined in this study. As shown in Figure 2, Trauma Informed Care was the fourth most available training topic in 2019 and dropped to the fifth most available topic in 2020.

Accessibility of Trainings

Accessibility was assessed using data on the training modality (in person, online live, online recorded), the geographic location of in person trainings, as well as the language(s) in which the trainings were offered.

As shown in Figure 3, the modalities in which trainings were offered differed significantly between 2019 and 2020, presumably in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home orders. Nearly all trainings offered in 2019 were in person (92%), whereas fewer than one-quarter of the trainings in 2020 were in person (23%). Most of the online trainings in 2020 were live, rather than recorded.

Figure 3: Training Modality by Year, 2019 & 2020

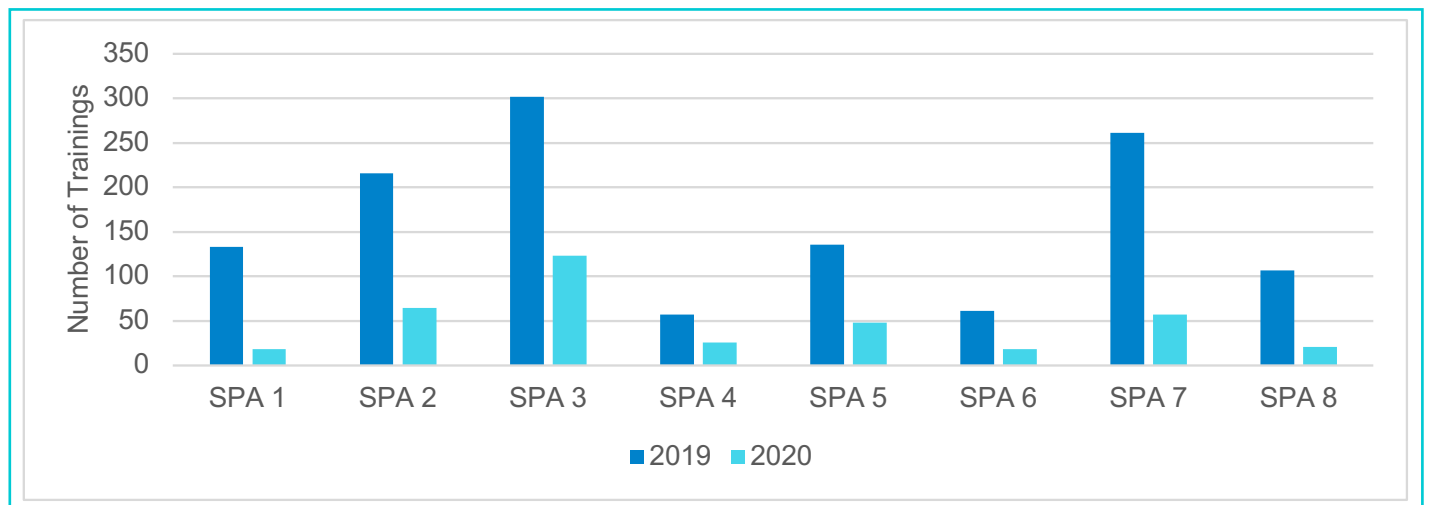


Geographic Location of In Person Trainings

The geographic distribution of in person trainings throughout the county was examined by mapping the training locations to Service Planning Areas (SPA) (see Appendix A for SPA map boundaries) and then looking at the proportion of trainings offered in each SPA by year.

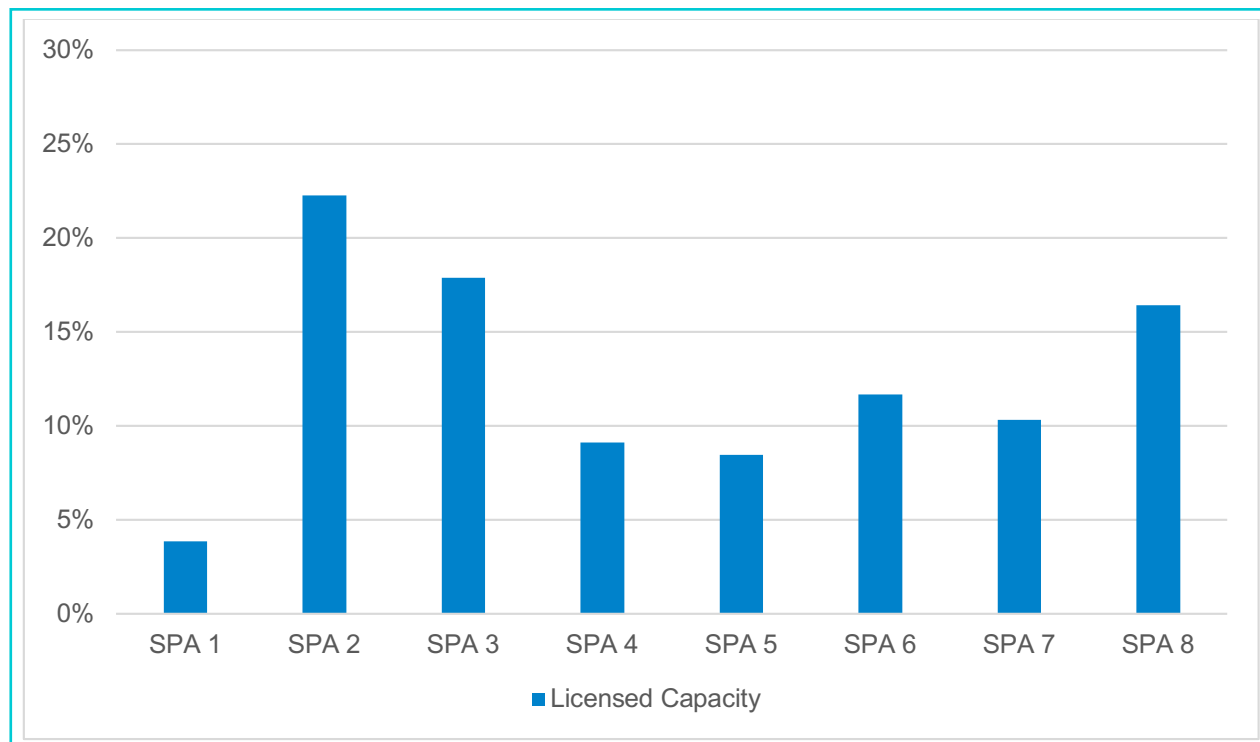
As shown in Figure 4, the distribution of in person trainings across the SPAs did not differ significantly between 2019 and 2020, although the total number of in person trainings decreased.

Figure 4: In Person Trainings by Service Planning Area (SPA), 2019 & 2020



The distribution of trainings by SPA does not directly match the distribution of licensed child care capacity by SPA as shown in Figure 5. For example, SPA 2 has the greatest number of licensed spaces and has the third highest percentage of in person trainings as shown in Figure 4 (behind SPA 3 and SPA 7). That said, providers in SPA 2 can access trainings in neighboring SPAs 1 and 3. Similarly, providers in SPA 8 can access trainings offered in SPA 7.

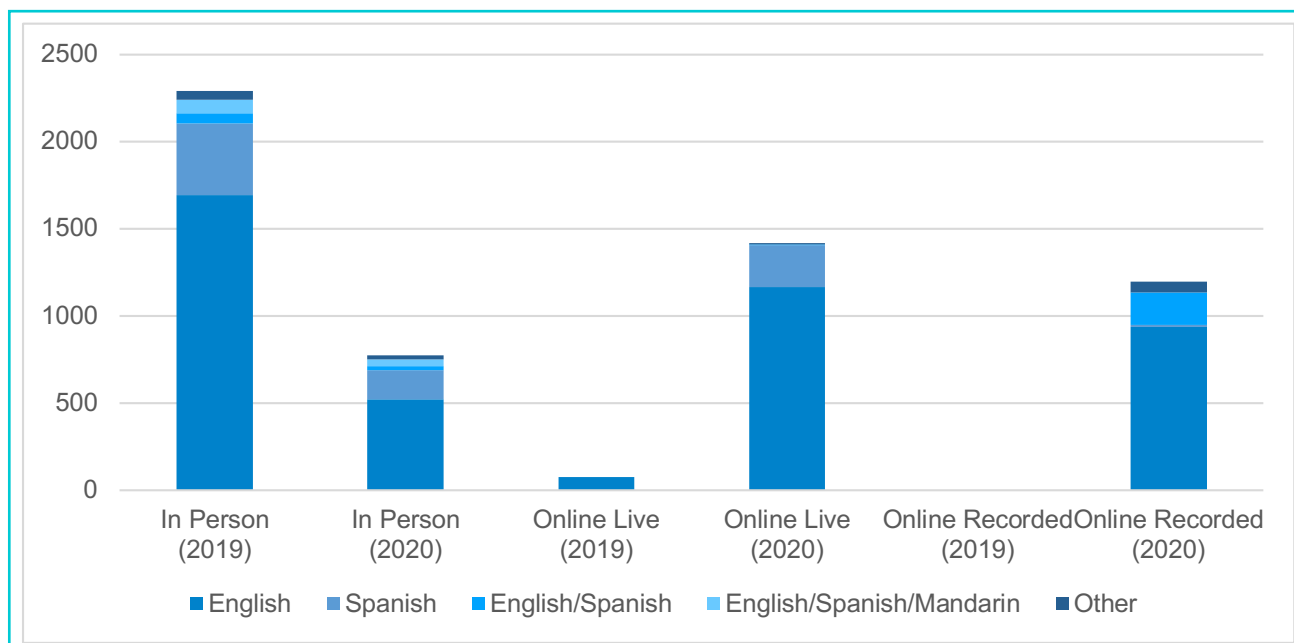
Figure 5: Percent of total licensed capacity by Service Planning Area (SPA), 2018



Language of Trainings

Most trainings offered in 2019 and 2020 were in English, regardless of training modality (see Figure 6). Across all training modalities, 75 percent of trainings in 2019 and 77 percent of trainings in 2020 were offered in English only, 17 percent of trainings in 2019 and 12 percent of trainings in 2020 were offered in Spanish, and 6 percent of trainings in 2019 and 7 percent of trainings in 2020 were offered in English/Spanish or English/Spanish/Mandarin.

Figure 6: Number of Trainings Offered by Modality and Language, 2019 & 2020



Quality

Trainer Qualifications

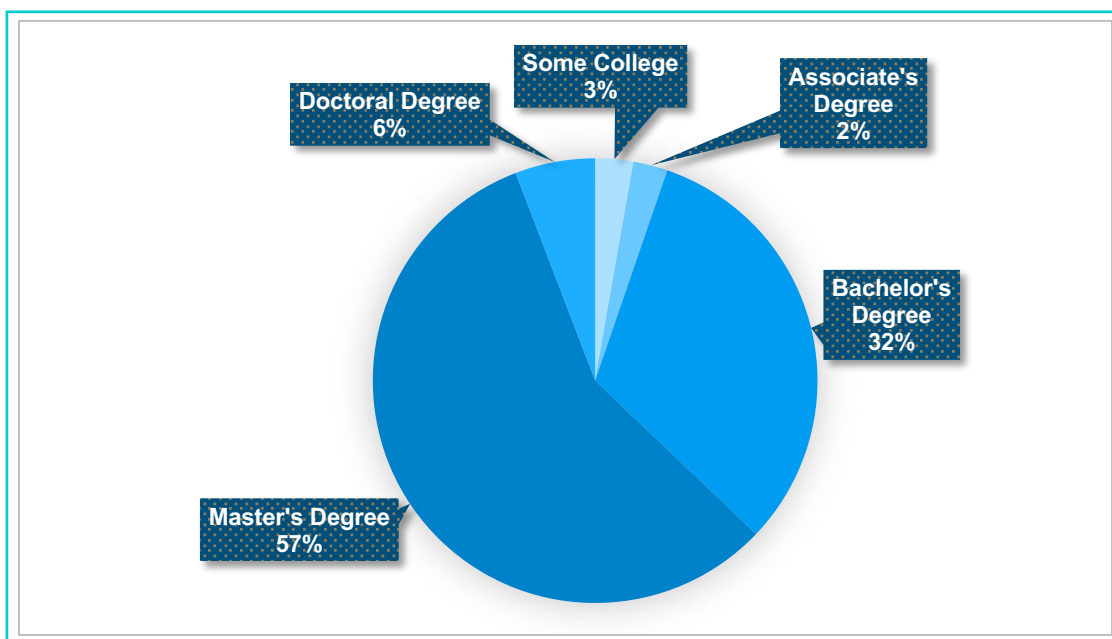
The only data available related to the quality of trainings was the qualifications of the trainers. While trainer qualification data was not available from all training organizations in this study, data from 364 trainers was included. In terms of years of experience in the field, more than half of the trainers had over 20 years of experience in the field (59 percent), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Trainers' Years of Experience in Early Childhood Education

| Years of Experience | Percent of Trainers |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Fewer than 5 Years | 5% |
| 6-10 Years | 7% |
| 11-15 Years | 14% |
| 16-20 Years | 12% |
| 21-25 Years | 20% |
| 26-30 Years | 13% |
| 31-35 Years | 12% |
| 36-40 Years | 7% |
| 41-45 Years | 5% |
| 46-50 Years | 2% |

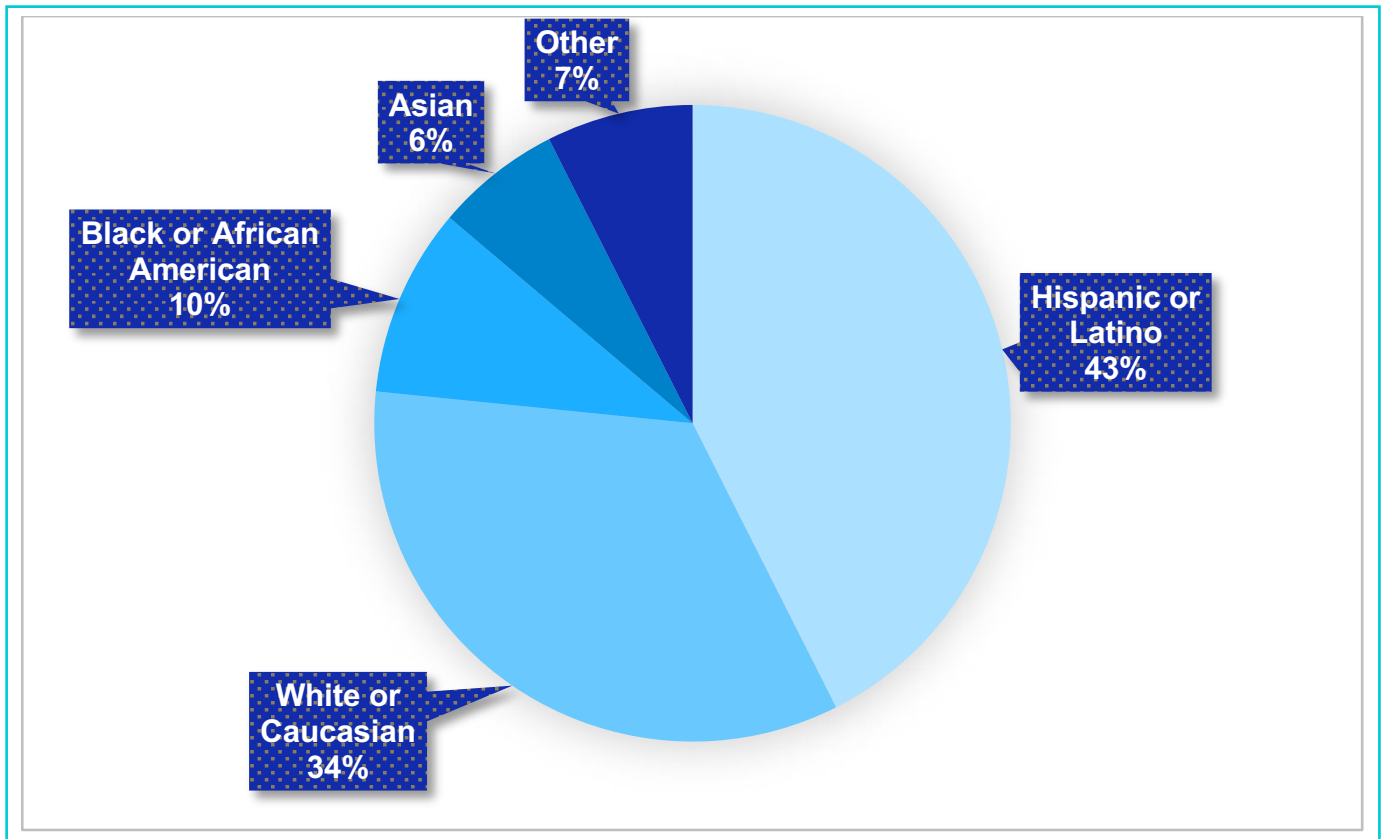
In addition to having a significant number of years of experience, over half of the trainers (63 percent) had either a Master's Degree or a Doctorate (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Trainers' Highest Level of Education



Other demographic information about the trainers that was captured in this study was the gender and race/ethnicity of the trainers. As with the ECE workforce overall, the vast majority (93 percent) of the trainers identified as female. Figure 7 shows the race/ethnicity of trainers in this study.

Figure 8: Race/Ethnicity of Trainers



Study Limitations

While this study provides the first countywide assessment of trainings offered in Los Angeles County for the ECE workforce, there were several limitations to the data used that should be acknowledged, including the following:

- The sample was a convenience sample and was not necessarily representative of all the trainings available in Los Angeles County.
- The study only included trainings and did not include other types of professional development (e.g., coaching, mentoring) to provide a more complete picture of the professional development offerings.
- The study did not include training provided by higher education nor did it include “in house” trainings offered to providers within an organization or a larger system (e.g., LACOE Head Start trainings).
- The study did not include robust measures of training quality and instead relied on the trainers’ self-reported years of experience and education, which is not the best proxy for quality of trainings.
- While the study did include some data on the languages in which trainings were provided, it did not include the way in which multiple languages were provided in the online format (e.g., live or audio translation).
- Without a needs assessment, it is difficult to know how well the trainings being offered meet the training needs of ECE professionals.
- The study did not capture data on the training organization’s target audience (e.g., infant/toddler teachers, family child care providers, etc.), nor did it collect data on the recipients of the training to determine if it reached its intended audience.
- Lastly, the study only examined the primary competency area addressed by the training rather than a more comprehensive measure of the content provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the limitations, this study provides an important first step in understanding the trainings that are offered to ECE professionals in Los Angeles County and points to the following recommendations:

1. Address gaps in the content and accessibility of trainings being offered.

- a. Advocate for funding to develop and deliver trainings on: Dual Language Development; Culture, Diversity and Equity; Special Needs and Inclusion; Leadership in ECE; and Administration and Supervision.
- b. Increase the availability of trainings in languages other than English given the linguistic diversity of Los Angeles County.
- c. Maximize training access through on-line professional development opportunities to reach more providers.
- d. Conduct assessment of LA County ECE professionals' training needs to better understand how those needs differ depending on the characteristics of the individual provider and the community they serve.

2. Improve coordination and collaboration across the professional development system in Los Angeles County.

- a. Establish a community of practice for ECE professional development organizations to coordinate and collaborate across the county to strengthen the system.
- b. Reduce costs and maximize resources through collaborative, on-line training opportunities that are not limited by geographic boundaries and available in multiple languages.

3. Improve the data on professional development in Los Angeles County.

- a. Centralize all trainings into the ECE Workforce Registry as a one-stop professional development point of entry.
- b. Implement an annual evaluation of the ECE workforce accessing training through the ECE Workforce Registry that captures information on the demographics of who is participating, their levels of satisfaction, and the impact of the training on their practice.



APPENDIX A: Los Angeles County Service Planning Area (SPA) Map



Endnotes

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