

# Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment Findings

Presentation to the Council for Thriving Children

October 2, 2024

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization or agency that provided support for the project.

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# This project benefited from the expertise and insight of many:



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- Tyrus Parker



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- Michael Bennett (Couch Family Foundation)
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- PDG Leadership Team, including:
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  - Christine Brennan (NHED)
  - Christine Santaniello (NH DHHS)
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## Sponsors

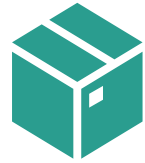
- **Preschool Development Grant**
- Couch Family Foundation (complementary project support)



Special thanks to Kim Nesbitt,  
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**Recap of project plan**



**Project deliverables**



**Project findings**



**Next steps**



# Recap of project plan

# Taking Stock

## Challenges

- We have a **lot** of data.
  - *3 PDG needs assessments*
  - *Standalone research, consultant, advocacy products*
  - *National surveys with NH data*
  - *Metrics from strategic plan*
  - *State administrative data*
- It's not all in one place.
- It's not well synthesized into takeaways across sources.

## How to Address?

- A definitive synthesis of existing resources, housed in one spot.
- Short, well-indexed, well-publicized overviews that respond to open questions.
- Series of one-pagers?

# What are some of the open questions?

## Supply

- What does NH supply look like across settings?
- Which settings are under-enrolled?
- Where is supply-demand mismatched?

## Demand

- How many children need care?
- Who needs but doesn't have care?
- How many children need non-traditional hour care?

## Family Preference

- What care settings do families prefer?

Meanwhile...

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# UNH to Establish Hub for Early Childhood Education Research

Thursday, February 22, 2024



LATEST NEWS





# Project deliverables

## 2024 PDG Needs Assessment Products

- **1 research brief** with original data collection
  - Data collection around preschool offerings in NH public schools
- **3 research synthesis papers**
  - Initiated a new research-synthesizing series of “primers” on key topical areas: demand, supply, and workforce

# Preschool paper

Original data collection among 266 public schools by Eileen Murphy (Project Coordinator, NH PDG)



NH EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM



Issue Brief #182

Summer 2024

## Preschool Availability in New Hampshire Public Schools

Eileen Murphy, Tyrus Parker, Carrie Portrie, and Jess Carson

In spring 2024, researchers at the University of New Hampshire undertook data collection to better understand the landscape of preschool offerings in New Hampshire's public schools. School districts provide preschool using a variety of models based on local needs. All public school districts must provide access to a free appropriate public education for preschool-aged children with an identified disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B.<sup>1</sup> Children identified under IDEA Part B have an Individualized Education Program, or IEP, to support their learning. Some districts receive Title I funding to include preschool opportunities for children who are identified as "at-risk" for learning disadvantages. Still other districts offer limited access to local children via tuition-based slots or wider community access through creative use of local taxes or grant funds.<sup>2</sup>

This brief includes data collected from all New Hampshire public schools with state-recorded preschool or kindergarten enrollment (see Data & Methods section for details). The goal was to determine the number of preschool slots offered within New Hampshire public schools and whether the school districts serve preschool-aged children with and without IEPs. The data show that programs extending beyond IDEA Part B exist. However, our data collection did not include details on how such programming was funded, nor on the number of children with and without IEPs in specific classrooms or programs.<sup>3</sup> Thus, from this round of data collection we cannot fully identify or fully describe the reach of preschool access in New Hampshire public schools for children without an IEP specifically.

### Key Findings



New Hampshire has 144 preschool programs in its public schools, serving 3- and/or 4-year-olds through a variety of funding mechanisms.



While such programs are primarily aimed at serving young children with IEPs, 129 of the 144 programs reported also serving children without IEPs.



Preschool enrollment in New Hampshire public schools reached 5,067 children in the 2023–2024 school year—about 20 percent of the state's 3- and 4-year-olds.



Only 15 percent of programs offer full-day options for at least some children, while 38 percent offer 5-day/week programming for at least some. Just 14 percent offer both.

### New Hampshire has 144 preschool programs in public schools, serving 3- and/or 4- year-olds to varying degrees

New Hampshire is home to 144 preschool programs in public schools. The programs provide access to a free appropriate public education in public school settings for children with IEPs. However, 129 of the 144 programs reported serving children without IEPs too, leaving 15 that

# “Demand Primer”

## What Do New Hampshire Families Want for Child Care?

Rebecca Glauber and Jess Carson

The Carsey School of Public Policy's [Granite Guide to Early Childhood](#) series highlights issues surrounding early care and education in New Hampshire by synthesizing evidence on a set of interconnected topics. This primer focuses on New Hampshire families' "demand" for child care. [For more detail about the series, including its other featured topics, visit this link.](#)

### Center-Based Care Is Most Common, but Less So Among Families with Infants or Lower Incomes

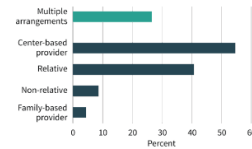
About 70 percent of New Hampshire households with a child under age five use some nonparental child care.<sup>1</sup> At least 55 percent of households using care use a center-based arrangement—the most common arrangement (Figure 1). At least 41 percent use relatives some or all the time, while fewer than one-in-ten use non-relatives or family-based child care providers. Over one-quarter use multiple arrangements, suggesting that a single provider may not meet all family needs.

Statewide data are sparse on child care differences by family characteristics. However, data representing New England reveal that arrangements vary by child age; families with younger children use nonparental care less often, and when they do, it is more often provided by relatives and less often center-based.<sup>2</sup> Data collected among working parents in New Hampshire and Vermont's Upper Valley showed a similar pattern: half of respondents with infants used only licensed care, compared to two-thirds of those with preschoolers.

### Key Findings

- Most New Hampshire families with children under age five use child care; center-based arrangements are most common, followed by care from relatives.
- Both in New Hampshire and beyond, families sometimes use less-than-ideal care arrangements, making tradeoffs to find available care that fits their schedules and budgets.
- Families consider multiple factors when choosing child care. While families widely agree on the importance of reliability and scheduling, priorities around child care setting and features differ.

Figure 1. Percent of New Hampshire Households That Used Any of the Following Arrangements



Source: Author analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Phases 2.6-2.8 (Weeks 49-57). Notes:<sup>1</sup> Percentages reflect the lower bound of the 95 percent confidence interval (a conservative floor). Estimates are calculated among households with children under age 5 who used any care.

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# “Supply Primer”

## Fewer Providers, Longer Distances: New Hampshire's Child Care Landscape

Jess Carson and Harshita Sarup

The Carsey School of Public Policy's [Granite Guide to Early Childhood](#) series highlights issues surrounding early care and education in New Hampshire by synthesizing evidence on a set of interconnected topics. This primer focuses on New Hampshire's "supply" of child care. [For more detail about the series, including its other featured topics, visit this link.](#)

### Child Care Centers: Predominant Portion of New Hampshire's ECE Supply

New Hampshire's early care and education (ECE) landscape spans a variety of settings (see Figure 1). Most of the state's child care for children under age 5 is supplied by 646 licensed child care providers, largely (83 percent) licensed child care centers.<sup>1</sup> New Hampshire's ECE offerings are regulated to different degrees. Along with licensed child care centers, the state also oversees a smaller set of licensed home-based providers. Some local school districts offer preschool programming, primarily serving children with disabilities with IDEA Part B funds and locally raised supplemental funds, serving about 5,000 children statewide. About 1,500 Head Start and Early Head Start slots round out the state's regulated offerings.<sup>2</sup> In addition, two types of unregulated home-based care meet family needs, including providers who are unlicensed and unpaid (e.g., relatives) and providers who are unlicensed but paid (e.g., license-exempt providers, babysitters).

### Key Findings

- Licensed child care centers make up the majority of New Hampshire's early care and education landscape, although family needs are also met through licensed home-based providers, unlicensed providers like relatives, and federal programs like Head Start.
- Between 2017 and 2024, New Hampshire gained about 2,100 slots among providers serving children under age 5, despite losing 13 percent of licensed providers serving that age group.
- These closures consolidated available supply into fewer, larger child care centers.
- This consolidation further exacerbates the state's uneven capacity to meet working parents' needs; more slots in a more robust mix of settings is necessary to align the two.

However, total regulated capacity does not necessarily represent the number of children using that kind of care, nor its true availability. For instance, in 2023, New Hampshire Head Start served fewer children than the number of funded slots. Additionally, many licensed providers face workforce constraints that prevent them from filling all available slots. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, causing temporary closures and lasting impacts on child care availability. Data from 2021 suggests that one-in-three of New Hampshire's licensed slots was unfilled.

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# “Workforce Primer”

## New Hampshire's Well Educated, Underpaid Child Care Workforce

Rebecca Glauber and Jess Carson

The Carsey School of Public Policy's [Granite Guide to Early Childhood](#) series highlights issues surrounding early care and education in New Hampshire by synthesizing evidence on a set of interconnected topics. This primer focuses on New Hampshire's child care workforce. [For more detail about the series, including its other featured topics, visit this link.](#)

New Hampshire's early care and education (ECE) workforce operates within an intricate system of standards, credentialing requirements, and quality rating systems, as is true nationwide.<sup>1</sup> Yet, even with these stringent requirements, the workforce remains substantially underpaid, and when adjusted for the cost of living, New Hampshire child care workers have the second-lowest wages in the country. Despite high job satisfaction and finding their work rewarding, many also feel burnt out and don't expect to stay in their jobs. These challenges lead to high turnover and workforce shortages in the ECE sector, jeopardizing the state's ability to meet family needs.

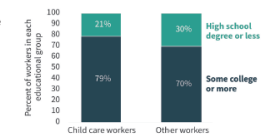
### Granite State Child Care Workforce Is Well Educated but Undercompensated

Child care workers in the Granite State are well educated. Seventy-nine percent have at least some college education, compared to just 70 percent of the general workforce (Figure 1). Child care workers are more likely than those in other occupations to graduate from high school and go on

### Key Findings

- New Hampshire child care workers are more likely than other workers to have at least some college experience, but they earn far less.
- Annual earnings among full-time child care workers are just \$32,310, about half those of other workers in the state.
- Although child care and early educators express high job satisfaction, the field is subject to turnover and short staffing as workers seek opportunities that better match their education and the cost of living in New Hampshire.

Figure 1. Educational Composition of New Hampshire's Workforce, With Child Care Workers Compared to Those in Other Occupations



Source: Author analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Notes:<sup>1</sup> to college, though they are somewhat less likely to hold a bachelor's degree. Despite their high educational attainment, New Hampshire's child care workers have low earnings.

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Part of *The Granite Guide to Early Childhood*

# Granite Guide to Early Childhood

A new series of primers summarizing evidence across key areas of New Hampshire's (NH) early childhood care and education (ECE) sector



Title

What Do NH Families Want for Child Care?



Families sometimes make less-than-ideal tradeoffs for ECE that fit schedules and budgets, but they widely agree on the importance of reliability.

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Fewer Providers, Longer Distances: NH's Child Care Landscape



Both the volume and variety of ECE options available in NH are insufficient, as offerings continue to consolidate and shrink over time.

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NH's Well Educated, Underpaid Child Care Workforce



Compensation for early educators is low, especially relative to their education, making it hard to recruit or retain workers that could expand supply.

[LEARN MORE](#)

High Child Care Costs Strain NH Family Budgets



The cost of tuition can be a family's largest expense, which underscores the importance of the ability to make individualized ECE decisions.

[COMING SOON](#)

Attempting to Offset Costs Through NH Child Care Scholarships



While changes to NH's Child Care Scholarship Program mean more help for more families, reaching all who could benefit is a challenge.

[COMING SOON](#)

Operating on Thin Margins: The Cost of Providing Child Care



Although wages are low, the volume of ECE staff necessary to align with state standards and minimal safety practices means operating costs add up quickly.

[COMING SOON](#)

Creating an Equitable Child Care System in NH



With no federal policy relief on the horizon, states must find their own solutions, and lessons learned in NH and other states may guide the way.

[COMING SOON](#)

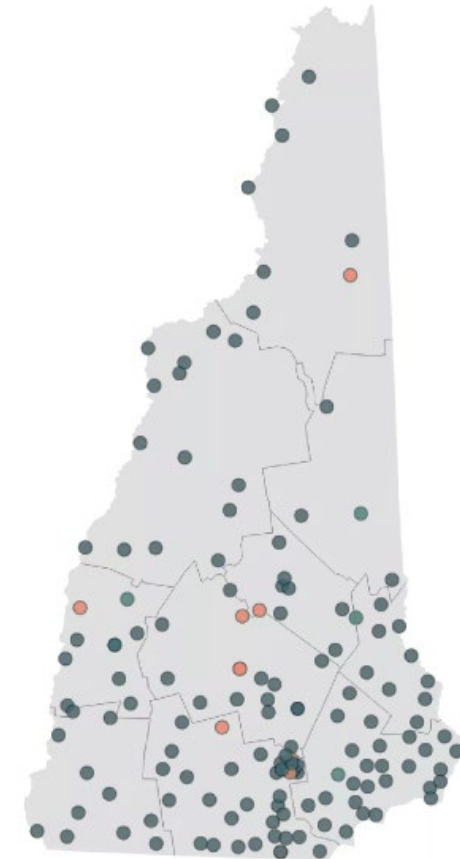
Some take-aways

# Project findings

# “Preschool paper”

- »» There are 144 preschool programs statewide, serving about 5,000 children.
- »» Only 10 exclusively serve children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- »» Implementation approaches are varied, but not fully documented.

Distribution of Preschool Programs in Public New Hampshire Schools, by Whether Program Enrolls Children Without an IEP

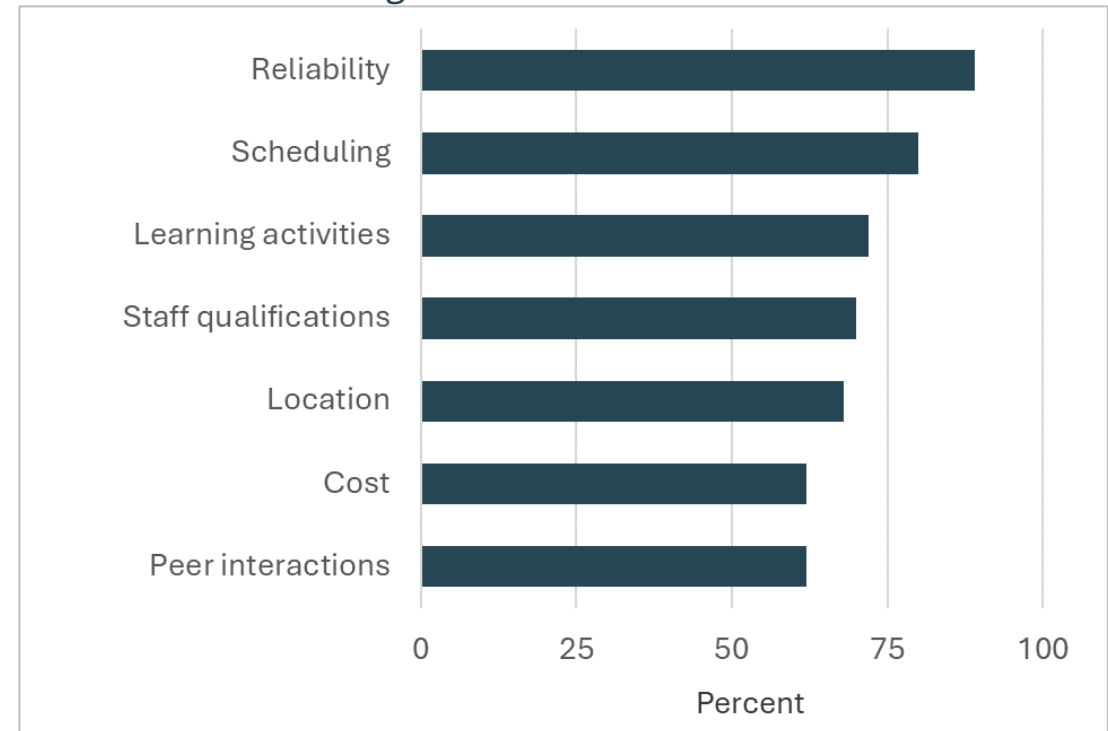


**Source:** Preschool Development Grant staff data collection; 144 programs. Note: Orange dots mark the 10 programs that only enroll children who have an IEP. Turquoise dots mark the 5 programs that serve one age group with and without IEPs and another age group with IEPs only.

# “Demand Primer”

Families sometimes make less-than-ideal tradeoffs for ECE that fit schedules and budgets, but they widely agree on the importance of reliability.

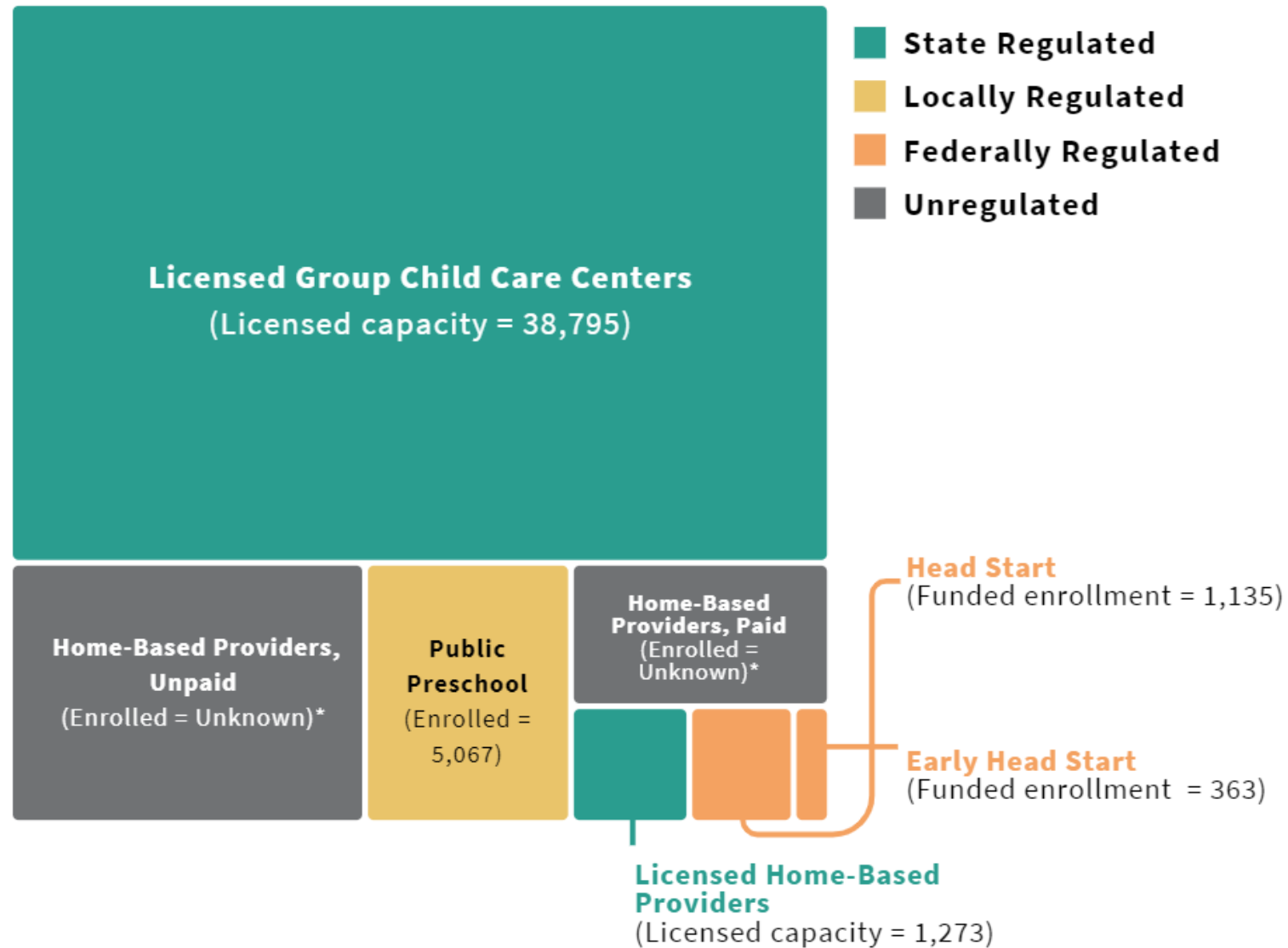
*Percent of Parents Rating Each Factor As “Very Important” to Their Child Care Decision, Among Parents in the Northeast with Children Under Age Five*



**Source.** Author analysis of 2019 National Household Education Survey of Early Childhood Program Participation.



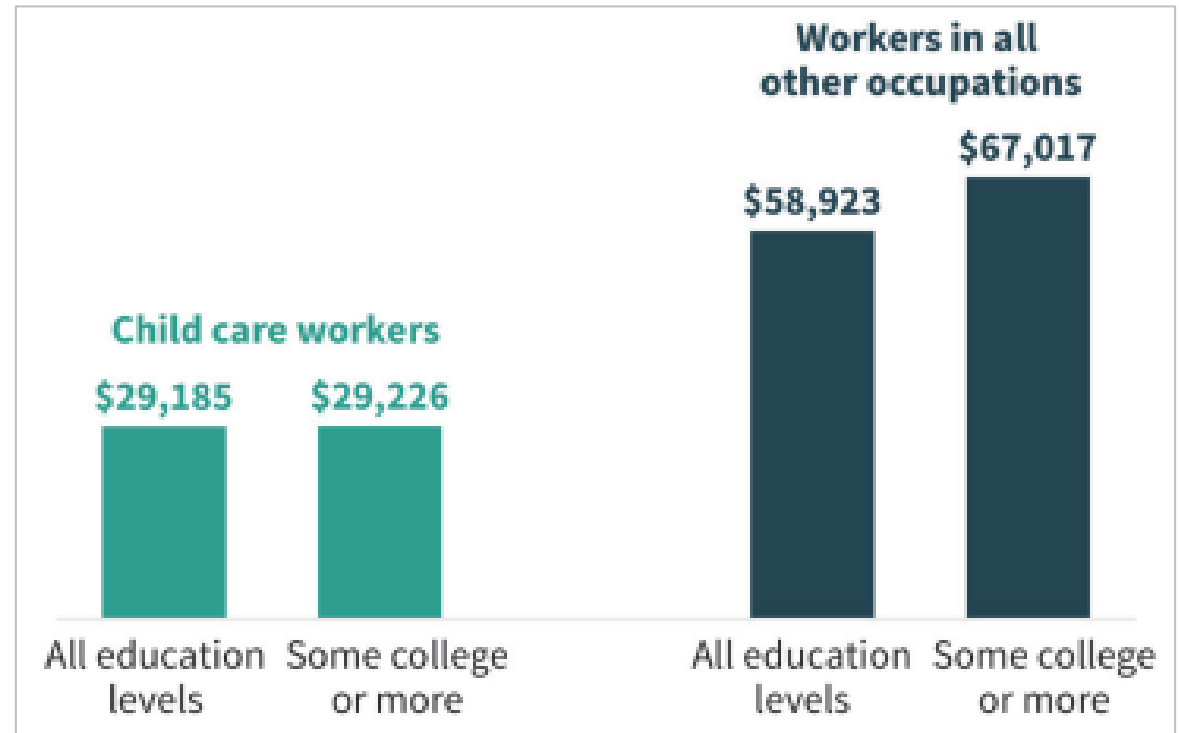
# “Supply Primer”



# “Workforce Primer”

Compensation for early educators is low, especially **relative to their education**, making it hard to recruit or retain workers that could expand supply.

*Median Annual Earnings for New Hampshire’s Full-Time Child Care Workers and Those in Other Occupations, By Educational Attainment*



*Source: Author analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018–2022. Median earnings are reported in 2022 dollars. Notes*

An icon consisting of two orange location pins connected by a dashed orange line, representing a path or route.

# Next steps

(For Carsey)

(For Carsey)

- Continuing to aggregate and synthesize ECE scholarship
- Convening research partners & identifying research gaps
- Finding ways to offer complementary analytic support to state

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# Thank you!

For more info, visit [www.nhece.org](http://www.nhece.org)

Reach out! [Jess.Carson@unh.edu](mailto:Jess.Carson@unh.edu)