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## Ensuring High Quality Early Childhood Services and Educator Development

**Witness one: Elizabeth Groginsky, Secretary,  
Early Childhood Education and Care Department**

**Witness two: Kate Noble, President, and Chief Executive Officer,  
Growing Up New Mexico**

**Witness three: Candice Martinez, School Readiness & Language Immersion Manager**

**Witness four: Gwendolyn Wagner, Navajo Language & Culture Specialist**

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### Key Points

- Significant investments in expanding early childhood services, such as childcare assistance, prekindergarten, and home visiting, must be accompanied by policies that prioritize the delivery of high-quality programs through a well-prepared workforce.
- The Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) has established educational and training requirements for early childhood programs, along with supplemental wage and higher education scholarships to support the workforce.
- ECECD has incorporated direct service worker wage assumptions in childcare assistance and prekindergarten rates to increase compensation for the early childhood workforce.
- ECECD is actively developing an early childhood workforce registry, professional development information system (PDIS) scheduled to launch in early 2024, which will track wages, training, and credentials of its contractor and grantee workforce.
- Nationally, many states have implemented, or are in the process of establishing, early childhood workforce registries, providing workers with a means to track professional development and plan future training.
- The implementation of a workforce registry in New Mexico would provide accurate and up-to-date information for informing policies and funding dedicated to workforce support, as well as future implementation of workforce lattices.
- Workforce lattices enable early childhood professionals to plan their education and credentials in conjunction with wage increases based on additional professional development and credentials.

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- Several states have successfully integrated registries with their state's lattice systems, facilitating the implementation of comprehensive and mandatory certification requirements and supporting high-quality training in areas such as child development, curriculum planning, and teaching methodologies.

## **New Mexico Early Childhood Workforce**

### **Home Visiting**

- In FY22, approximately 76 percent of home visitors had an associate degree or higher, while nearly 62 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ECECD has implemented requirements for higher degrees for home visitors providing specialized services, and all programs are mandated to have access to a master's-level, licensed mental health professional for consultation.
- Moreover, ECECD offers additional training for home visitors through free online courses available on its Quorum training platform. These courses are specifically designed to support home visitors pursuing field-specific credentialing and degrees.
- In Fall 2021, ECECD awarded 31 scholarships to home visitors for additional education and credentials, followed by 28 in Spring 2022 and 10 in Summer 2022.
- Home visitors receive regular and ongoing professional development in line with New Mexico Home Visiting Standards. ECECD also provides training in evidence-based methods, including the Facilitated Attuned Interactions (FAN) program, aimed at strengthening the provider-parent relationship.

### **Childcare Assistance**

- Without the workforce registry, information on the workforce credentials of childcare workers is incomplete.
- In FY22, ECECD piloted a temporary wage increase for childcare providers who opted-in to participate which provided some workforce education and credential information. Of the participating workers, 43 percent of teachers and teaching assistants had a high school diploma or GED, 49 percent with certificates or associate degrees, and slightly over 8 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher.

### **Prekindergarten**

- In New Mexico, lead teachers in public schools are required to hold bachelor's degrees and teaching licenses. However, in prekindergarten programs delivered by private community providers, lead teachers are expected to possess a high school diploma and demonstrate annual progress towards obtaining a bachelor's degree. Educational assistants, who support lead teachers in the classroom, are not mandated to hold degrees.

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- As of FY22, all lead teachers in schools held bachelor's degrees, and 27 percent had achieved a master's degree or higher. Among lead teachers in community provider programs, 33 percent held bachelor's degrees or higher.

### **Additional High-Quality Early Childhood Workforce**

- New Mexico has established standards for early childhood education programs, encouraging continued professional development and credentials. However, more support for completion of bachelor's degree in early childhood education is needed.
- Going forward, continued focus on the following system supports is necessary:
  - Adoption of state early childhood workforce lattice.
  - Collaboration between higher education institutions and early childhood education centers to facilitate research, knowledge-sharing, and mentorship programs, ensuring that the latest research and evidence-based practices are incorporated into early childhood education curricula.
  - Promote diversity and cultural in early childhood education by developing curricula that reflect the experiences and backgrounds of a diverse student population and providing training for teachers on inclusive practices.
  - Support ongoing research and evaluation of early childhood education policies and programs to inform evidence-based decision-making, identify effective strategies, and drive continuous improvement in the field.