

**VERMONT CREDENTIAL/ACCREDITATION BONUS PROGRAM
SURVEY**



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VERMONT CREDENTIAL/ACCREDITATION BONUS PROGRAM SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The nature of the interaction between caregiver and child is paramount in determining the level of quality of care that children receive. Specialized training for caregivers in early childhood education, higher wages and low staff turnover rates have all been found to be effective indicators of high quality child care.

Low wages for child care workers contribute to a high rate of turnover in the field of child care. High turnover rates in both child care programs and among family child care providers contribute to unstable care arrangements for children and families, decreasing the quality of caregiver interactions, and negatively impacting the development of children.

Vermont's \$1000 Credential/Accreditation Bonus is one way the state expects to improve the quality and retention of the child care workforce. Providers who obtain a CDA or degree related to child care, and nationally accredited child care programs are eligible to receive the Credential/Accreditation Bonus. Vermont Child Care Services Division commissioned a survey of individual providers and of program directors to identify the impact of the program. These individual providers and child care programs reported caring for a total of 2710 children.

Does the Bonus Increase the Educational Level of Vermont's Child Care Workforce?

More than one-third (38 percent) of the individual providers agreed that the bonus provided a financial incentive to obtain their CDA or qualifying educational degree. Providers were also motivated by the chance to increase their knowledge base, with 39 percent reporting educational reasons for obtaining further education. Employment reasons were the most common reason stated for obtaining further education, with 42 percent of individual providers reporting they were motivated by the chance to obtain better positions or by current job requirements.

81 percent of the individual providers agreed that receiving the bonus had encouraged them to continue to develop professionally

Receiving the bonus was reported to be an important encouragement to obtain additional training, with 81 percent of the individual providers agreeing that the bonus had encouraged them to continue to develop professionally. One-fifth (21 percent) of the providers responding spent at least part of the bonus on classes and further professional development opportunities.

Almost half of the individual providers and almost two-thirds of program directors stated that increasing staff salaries is the most important change needed for child care in Vermont

Does the Bonus Lead to Improved Quality of Care?

Ninety-nine percent of individual providers felt that achieving their CDA or degree had a positive impact on the quality of care they provided. Accredited program directors also overwhelmingly agreed that undergoing the accreditation process improved the quality of their programs (93 percent).

What Do Providers and Program Directors Say Needs to be Changed?

When asked “if you could change one thing in child care in Vermont, what would it be”, almost half (46 percent) of the individual providers reported increasing salary of providers, and almost two-thirds (62 percent) of directors of programs wanted to be able to increase staff wages. Increasing the respect and recognition of the work done in the child care field was mentioned as a need by twenty-two percent of the individual providers surveyed.

Does the Bonus Influence the Retention of the Child Care Workforce?

While seventy-three percent of the program directors reported that staff who obtained a CDA or degree were more likely to remain employed at the program, fewer felt that the \$1000 bonus led to higher retention of staff. When asked if staff who received the bonus were more likely to remain employed at the program 42 percent of the program directors agreed that it did. Individual providers were even less likely to agree that receiving the bonus influenced their remaining in the field of child care, with 34 percent reporting that the bonus influences their decision.

The Retention of The Workforce is Still a Concern, Even With a Bonus System in Place

Individual providers surveyed represent a highly committed pool of child care provider, with 28 percent projecting they would stay in the field for more than 5 years, and 46 percent reporting they would stay in the field “indefinitely”. However, seven providers who were contacted stated they were no longer in business. Eighteen individual providers which data collectors attempted to contact may have left the field as well, as there were a number of disconnected phones and providers no longer working at the programs where they had been employed when they had received the bonus. Of the 70 programs who have received the bonus, five programs were no longer in business.

78 percent of the individual providers reported that if the \$1000 bonus was awarded yearly it would impact their decision to stay in the field of child care

Future Directions: Making the Bonus Yearly

While the one-time bonus does not appear to be having a clear effect on the stability of the workforce, the survey indicated that a yearly bonus might. While only one-third (34 percent) of the providers surveyed agreed that the bonus influenced their decision to stay in the field, 78 percent reported that if the bonus was awarded yearly it would impact their decision to stay in child care.

The Credential/Accreditation Bonus program is having some of the desired effects of providing motivation and a source of funding for providers to increase their education and training. However, it is clear that turnover of the child care workforce continues to be a serious issue, as turnover impacts not only the supply and availability of child care, but the quality of care the children of Vermont receive.

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VERMONT CREDENTIAL/ACCREDITATION BONUS PROGRAM SURVEY



Provider Training and Turnover Rates Influence the Quality of Child Care

New and widely publicized discoveries about brain development have enhanced our understanding of the influence of the environment on early brain development. In addition, research has demonstrated the link between children's development and child care settings. High quality programs have been found to be effective in improving the developmental outcomes of children, producing long-term as well as short-term gains on measures of school achievement and success in young adulthood¹.

What component matters most in assessing the quality of a child care program? Ask most parents and chances are their response will center on the relationship their children have with their caregivers. What parents feel instinctively is the cornerstone of child care quality is substantiated by research. In the early childhood classroom, the quality of the interaction between caregiver and child is paramount. Specialized training for caregivers in early childhood education² higher wages³ and low staff turnover rates⁴ have all been found to be critical indicators of quality of care.

Despite the increased demand for child care, wages for workers are remarkably low. In the New England states, the average hourly wage for child care workers ranges from \$10.12 in Massachusetts to \$7.47 in Maine. For preschool teachers that figure ranges from \$11.37 in Vermont to \$8.93 in New Hampshire⁵. Low wages and the lack of benefits lead to high turnover rates which plague the child care profession. Staff retention is a critical problem for child care centers nationally. In 1998, the National Child Care Staffing Study reported a turnover rate of 31% for all teaching staff in the previous year. This turnover rate was almost twice the turnover rate for all jobs in the United States. The family child care field is also affected by a high rate of turnover, which is estimated to be between 40% and 60%.

Several studies have suggested that staff turnover is detrimental to the development of children. These studies have found that being in unreliable or unstable arrangements in the first two years of life may have a negative impact on children's attachment to their caregiver, adjustment to the child care setting, behavior, language, and social development. Turnover among family child care staff potentially affects children in a more extensive way than turnover among center providers. In a child care center, loss of staff does not necessarily result in a change of the child care setting itself. However, when a family child care provider leaves the field the child in that person's care will lose not only that specific caregiver but also that particular home setting as well.

¹ Barnett, n.d.; Currie, 2000; Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study, 1999; Schweinhart, Barnes, Weikart, and Barnett, 1993

²Honig and Hirallal, 1998

³ Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study, 1995; Kontos, Howes, Shinn and Galinsky, 1995; Scarr, Eisenberg and Deater-Deckard, 1994

⁴ Whitebrook, Howes and Phillips, 1998; Raikes, 1993

⁵ Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2002

Vermont's Credential/Accreditation Bonus Program

The Credential/Accreditation Bonus Program is one way the state hopes to improve the quality of care and increase the stability of care that Vermont's children receive. The program provides a financial incentive to increase the professional development of both individual providers and child care programs. A \$1000 Credential/Accreditation Bonus is available to individual providers who obtain a CDA or a degree related to child care and education. Nationally accredited child care programs are also eligible for the \$1000 bonus. Vermont Child Care Services Division commissioned a survey of individual providers and of program directors to discover the impact of the Accreditation/Credential Bonus.

Who Completed the Survey?

Between December 1999 and August 2002, 137 individual providers have received the bonus CDA/Degree bonus, and 70 programs received bonuses for accreditation. Providers and programs were contacted in September and October of 2002 and asked to complete a phone survey. Below is a breakdown of who was contacted.

Table 1: Survey Contact with Individuals and Programs who Received Bonuses

Total number of Individual Providers who received bonus	137	Total number of Programs who received bonus	70
Providers contacted who reported they are no longer in business	7	Programs contacted who reported programs were now closed	5
Providers no longer at location/phones disconnected	18	Programs no longer at location/phones disconnected	0
Providers who were not successfully contacted/interview not completed	40	Program directors who were not successfully contacted/interview not completed	20
Providers still in the field completing interview	72	Program directors with operating programs completing interview	45

The response rate of the 137 providers who received the bonus was 53 percent. The response rate for programs 64 percent. Providers and centers who were contacted but no longer providing services were deleted from the record set for analysis because those who were no longer in business were not able to be consistently contacted and interviewed. Therefore, the following report focuses on the 72 providers and 45 programs who are still in the Early Care and Education field and still providing child care services since receiving the \$1000 bonus.

How Many Children Were Cared for By Survey Participants?

Program directors reported employing a total of 460 teaching staff. Programs were reported to care for 2317 children. The forty-four family child care providers responding to the survey reported caring for 393 children.

INDIVIDUAL PROVIDER SURVEY

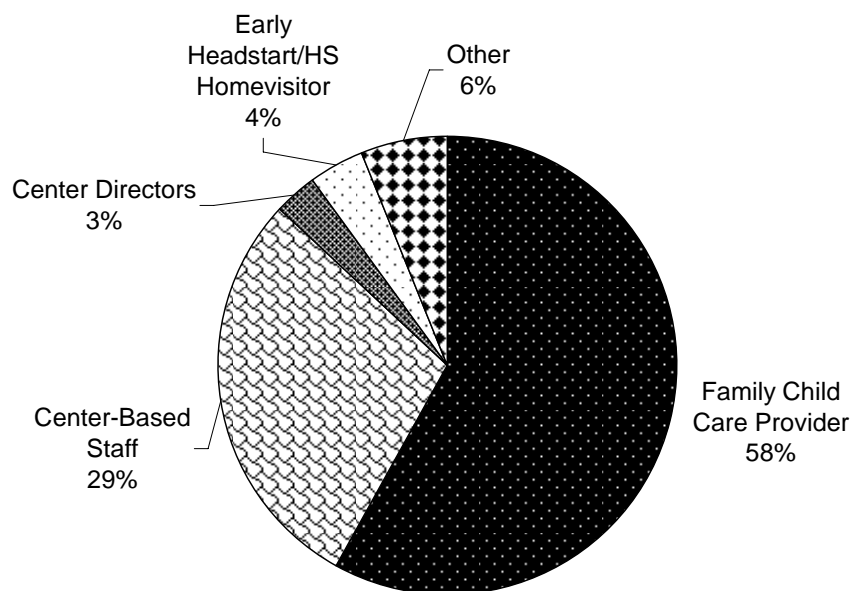


What Types of Providers Were Interviewed?

A total of 72 providers who received the \$1000 bonus were interviewed by telephone. Forty-four (58 percent) of these providers were family Child Care providers, twenty-one (29 percent) were staff at child care centers. Other providers identified themselves as Head Start home visitors (4 percent), center directors (3 percent), and 6 percent were other care providers (e.g. Nannies, Parent educators).

Figure 1: Type of Providers Surveyed

n=72



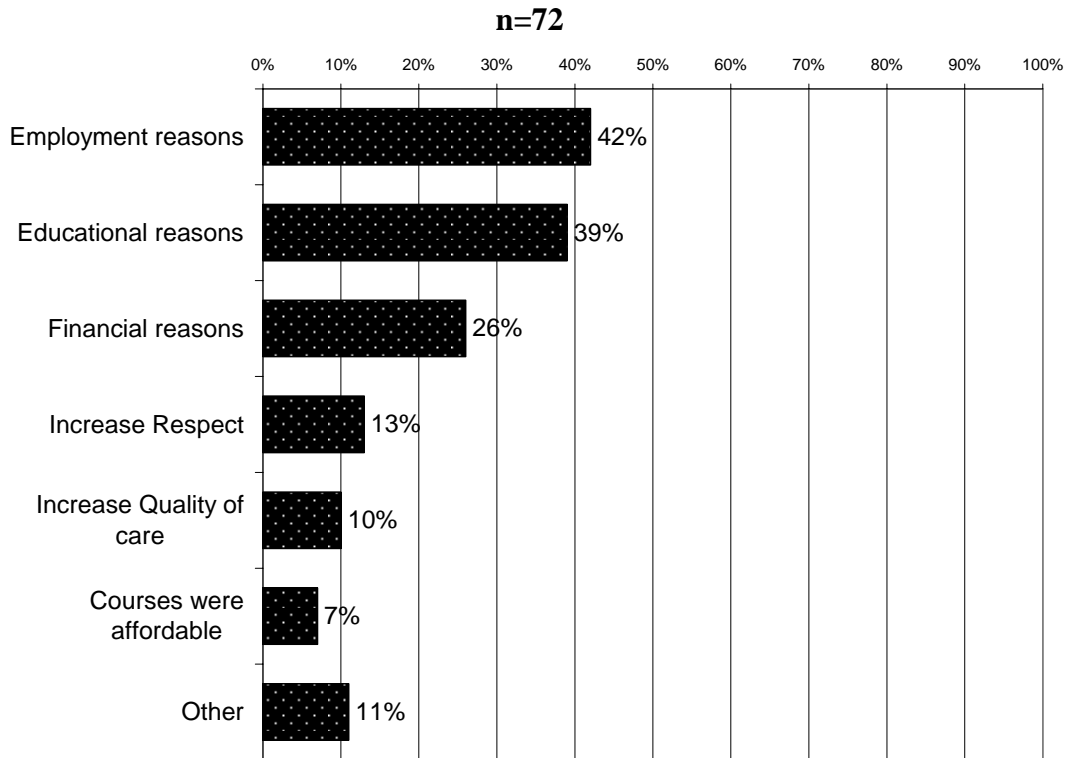
How Many Years of Experience in Early Care and Education Did the Providers Have?

Those who completed the interview had a great deal of experience in the field, working in an average of almost 11 years (mean of 10.86 years), with a range of 1-26 years experience.

Why did Providers Pursue their CDA or Degree?

Providers were asked the open ended question “Why did you choose to pursue your CDA or other education at this time?”. Responses were coded into categories illustrated below.

Figure 2: Reasons Why Providers Chose to Pursue CDA/Education



Providers most often (42 percent) gave employment-related reasons for obtaining their CDA or degree. Employment reasons included needing to meet job or position related requirements, and wanting to increase job opportunities. Over one-third (39 percent) of the providers gave educational reasons, wanting to increase their knowledge base. Twenty-six percent of those surveyed cited financial benefits (obtaining the bonus, receiving more pay⁶), and 13 percent stated that they wanted to obtain their CDA/degree to increase the respect of the community for the work they perform. Ten percent of the providers stated that they wished to increase the quality of care provided, and 7 percent spoke of the affordability of classes offered. Other reasons (11 percent) included personal growth, to be a better role model, to obtain an increase in benefits, and a sense of accomplishment.

“I was looking to validate my experience and show my professionalism” –
Family Child care provider

⁶ Family child care providers who have a CDA or NEFCC, and accredited program receive a 15% increase d subsidized rate, which factored into some of the responses of providers when they mentioned financial reasons.

Did the Bonus Impact Providers' Decision to Pursue CDA or Degrees?

When asked specifically if the \$1000 bonus impacted their decision to pursue their CDA/degree, 38 percent stated that it did. Although a question was not asked specifically, ten providers spontaneously remarked that they were not aware of the bonus at the time they began the process.

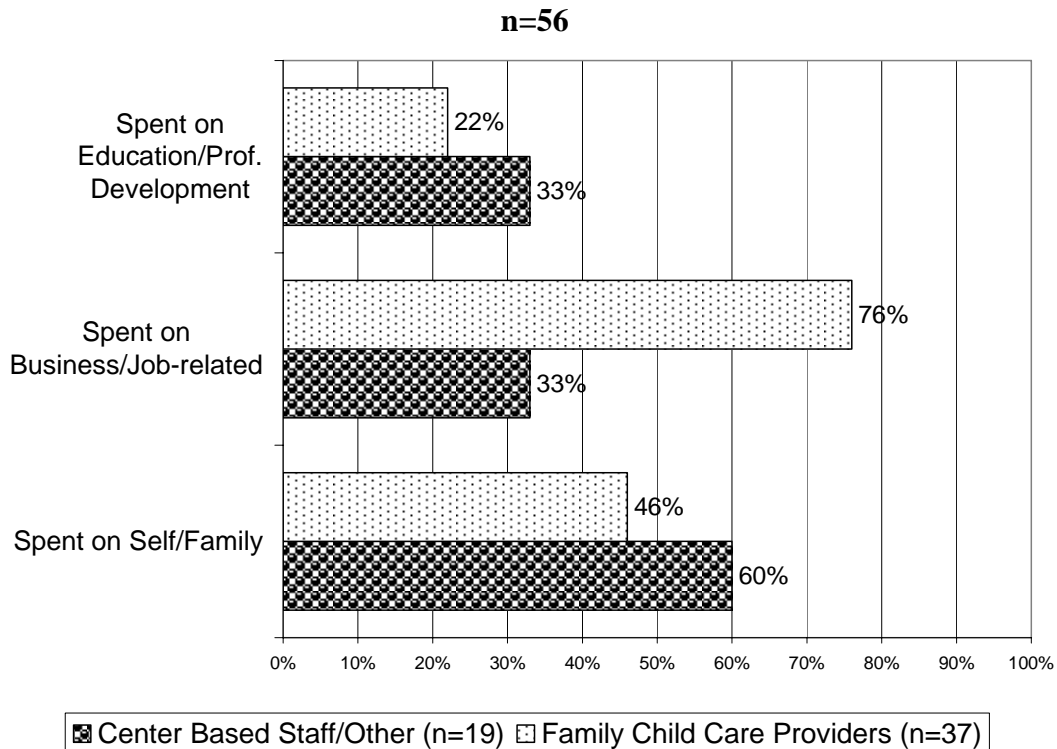
Did the Bonus Encourage Providers to Continue to Develop Professionally?

While the bonus may not have been the reason that providers chose to obtain a degree or accreditation, it did appear to encourage providers to continue to develop professionally. A large majority (81 percent) of the individual providers agreed that receiving the bonus encouraged them to continue on their professional pathway.

How Was the Bonus Money Spent?

Survey respondents were asked how they spent the bonus money they received. Fifty-six providers responded to this question, thirty-seven of which were family child care providers. Providers sometimes gave more than one response; all responses were recorded and assigned into categories. Responses differed by type of provider, as illustrated below.

Figure 3: How Did Providers Spend the Bonus? Reported Spending by Type of Provider



Family child care providers were more likely to spend at least part of their bonus on business-related expenses (76 percent). One-fifth (21 percent) of all types of providers reported spending

at least part of the bonus on education/professional development. Family child care providers reported spending at least part of the bonus on themselves and their family less often than other types of providers.

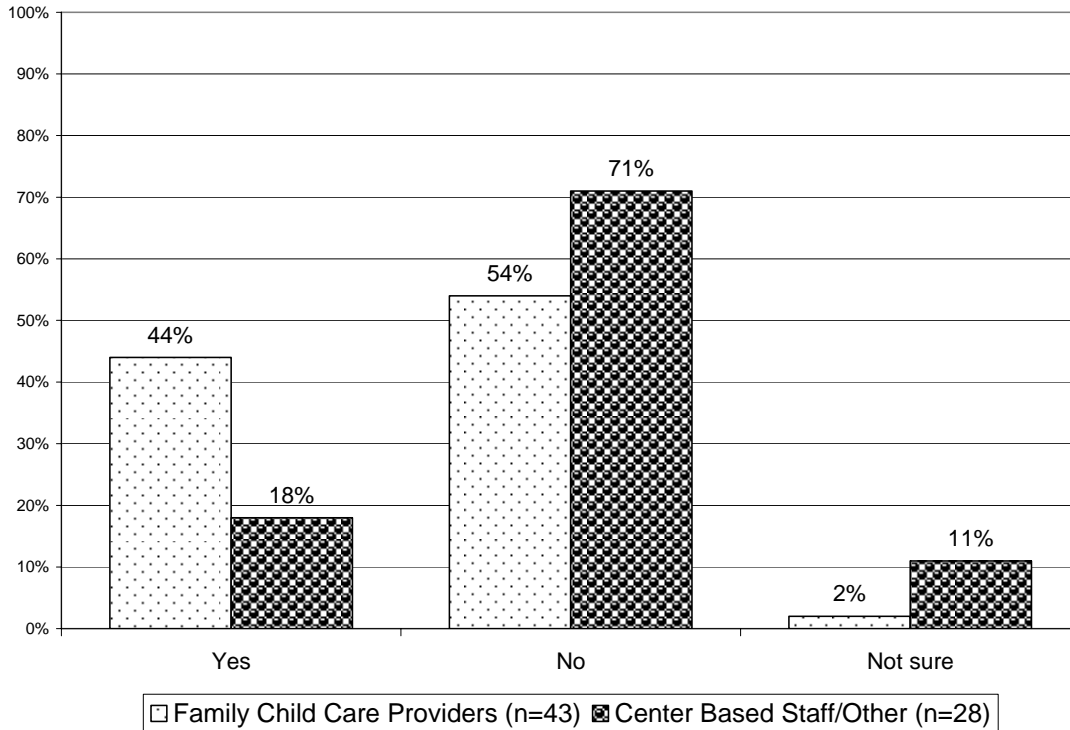
“I took courses paid for with bonus money”
- Family Child Care Provider

Did the Bonus Have An Impact on Retention?

Providers were also asked whether or not receiving the bonus influenced their decision to stay in the child care business. One-third (34 percent) reported that receiving the bonus did influence their decision to stay in the business. Types of providers responses differed as illustrated in the following chart.

**Figure 4: Does the Bonus Influence Your Decision to Stay in Business?
Response by Type of Provider**

n=71



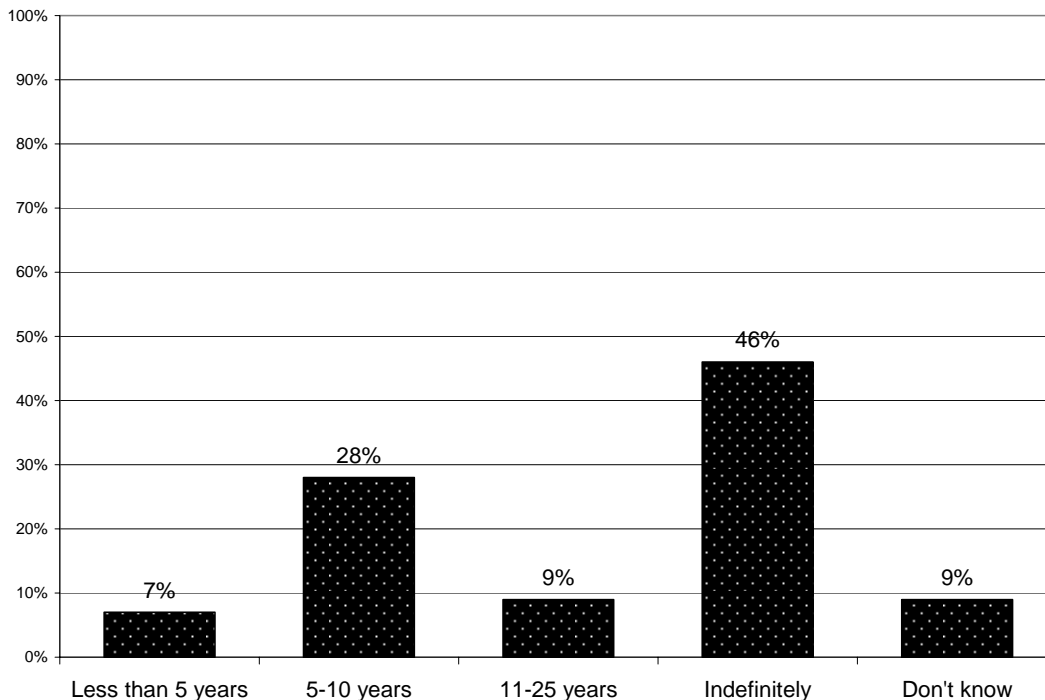
Family child care providers (44 percent) were more likely to report that they were influenced to stay in business than other types of providers (18 percent).

How Long Did Providers Expect to Stay in the Field of Child Care?

Providers were asked to estimate how long they would remain in the child care business. Seventeen responses were unable to be clearly coded (e.g. “a long time”) and one response was missing. The remaining 54 providers responded as follows:

Figure 5: How Long Did Individual Providers Plan on Staying in the Child Care Business?

n=54



The question was asked in an open-ended manner, and there are limitations due to this. For instance, one providers’ response of “indefinitely” could have meant until retirement, the timing of which could vary by provider. However, it is worth noting that only 7 percent of the respondents reported planning on remaining in the child care field for less than 5 years.

Would a Yearly Bonus Impact Providers’ Decision to Remain the Field of Child Care?

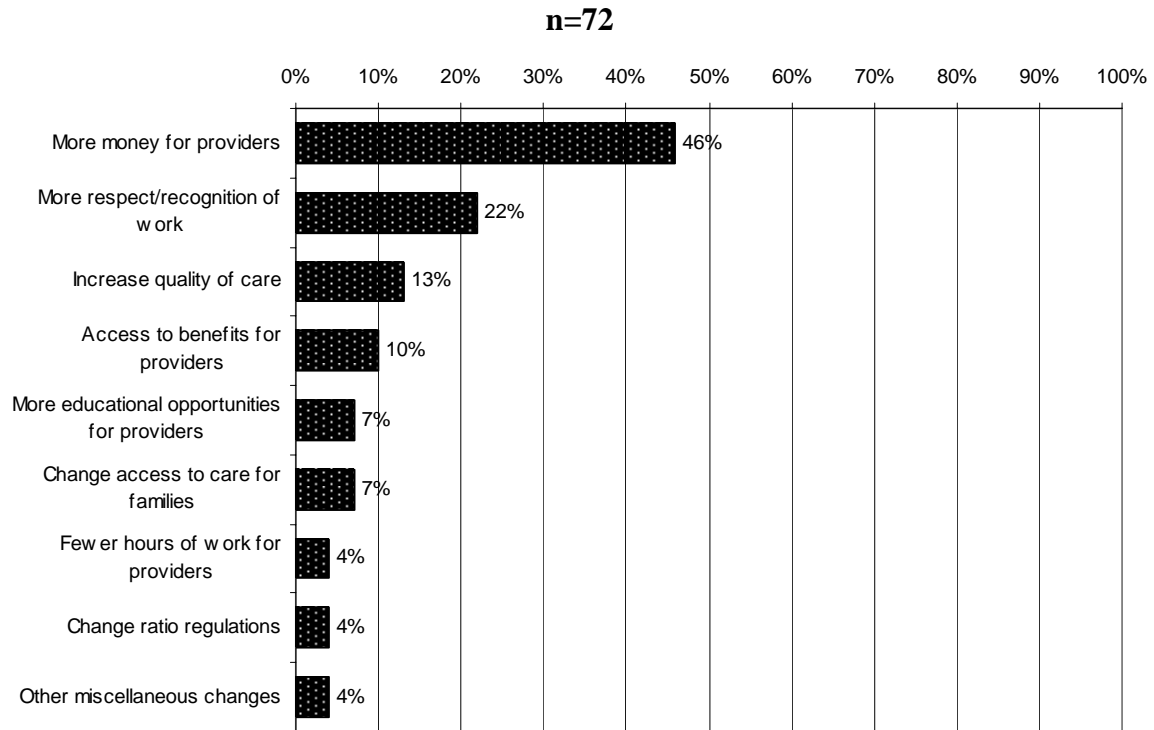
When asked if a yearly bonus would influence their decision to remain in the child care business, 78 percent of all providers responded “yes”. Both types of providers (77 percent of FCC, 79 percent Center based/Other) were as likely to respond positively to this question.

“I really appreciate the bonus. I appreciate the 15 percent bonus also. It makes a big difference, and I really appreciate the support from the people in the field”
—Family Child Care Provider

What Did Providers Want Changed in the Child Care Field?

Providers were asked “If you could change one thing in Child Care in Vermont, what would it be?”. Providers sometimes mentioned more than one issue, all responses were coded and categorized.

Figure 6: Changes Wanted by Providers



Almost half (46 percent) of the providers mentioned increasing salary of providers. Twenty-two percent reported wanting increased respect and recognition of the work they do in the field of child care. Thirteen percent of the respondents mentioned quality of care, 10 percent wanted access to benefits. Seven percent wished for more educational opportunities, and 7 percent had concerns about families’ access to care. Fewer hours of work (4 percent) and change in ratio regulations (4 percent) were also mentioned. Other responses included wanting better interactions between schools and child care providers, changes in zoning regulations, and more men in the child care field.

ACCREDITED PROGRAMS SURVEY



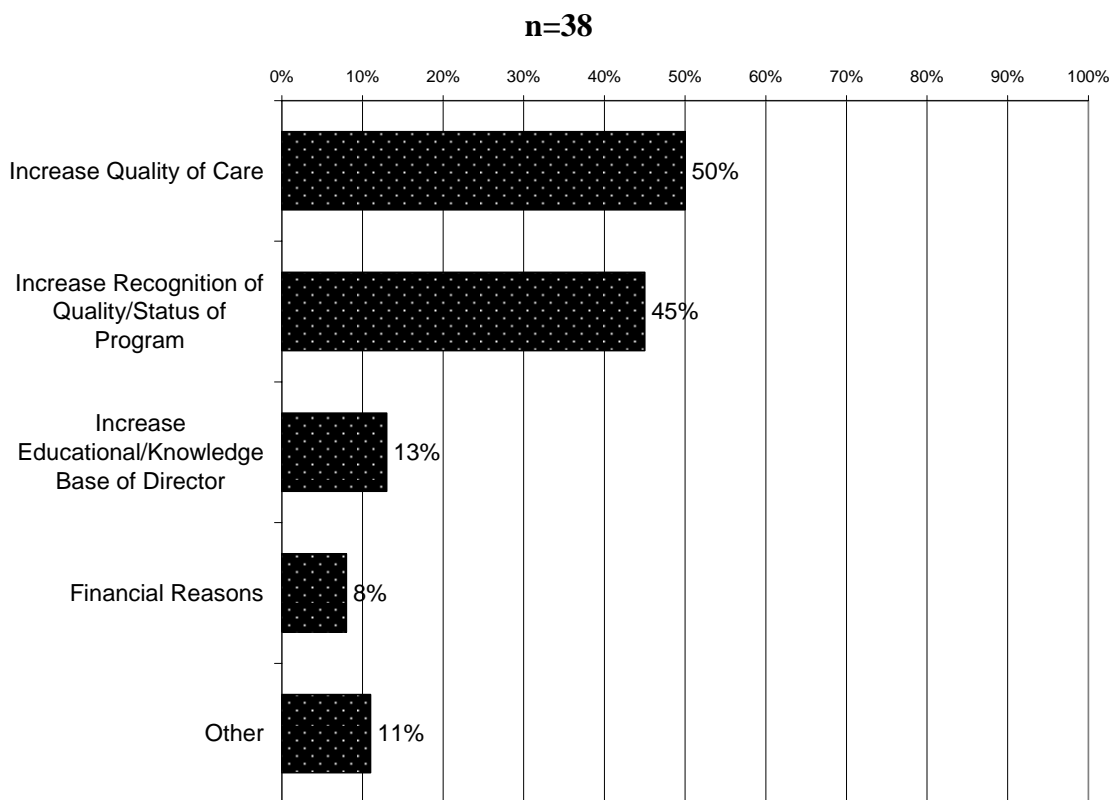
Forty-five directors of accredited programs that received the Credential/Accreditation Bonus were interviewed by telephone. Fifteen of the programs (33 percent) had at least one provider who was credentialed or had a degree.

“We wanted to have the quality of our program validated for the parents, staff and children”
– Accredited Program Director

Why Did Programs Pursue Accreditation?

Directors were asked “What influenced your decision to pursue accreditation?”. Program directors sometimes offered more than one reason; all responses were coded into categories. Some responses were so general that they were unable to be coded. Thirty-eight responses that were categorized are illustrated below.

Figure 7: Reasons Given by Program Directors on Why They Chose to Pursue Accreditation

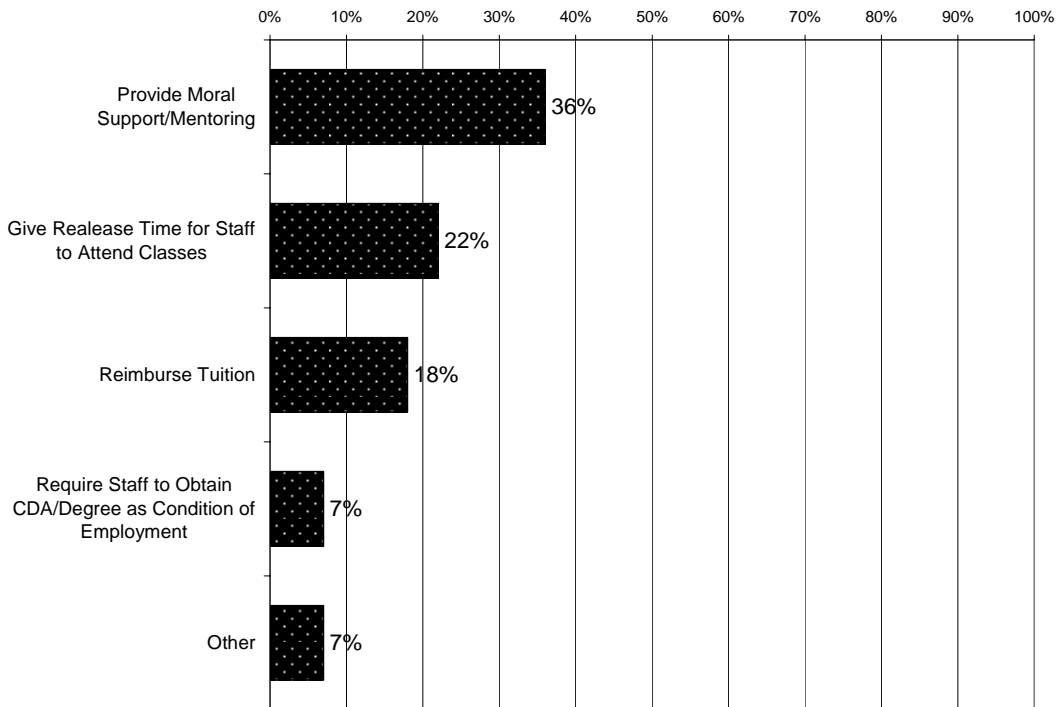


Half of the directors wanted to increase the quality of care provided at their programs (50 percent). The importance of having a program that was recognized as a quality program was mentioned almost as often (45 percent). Increasing the knowledge of the program director (13 percent) and financial reasons (8 percent) were also mentioned. Other (11 percent) reasons given were that it was required, that the program was a “lab school for teacher training, and “not sure”.

How Did Programs Encourage Staff to Pursue CDA Credentials or Other Degrees?

Program directors were asked if they encouraged staff to pursue CDA credentials or other degrees. An overwhelming majority (98 percent) reported encouraging staff to increase their education. Some respondents described strategies used to support staff.

Figure 8: How Programs Encourage Staff to Obtain CDA or Degree
n=45



One-third of the directors (36 percent) reported they encouraged staff through moral support and mentoring. Twenty-two percent of the programs offered release time so that staff could attend classes, and 18 percent offered tuition reimbursement for staff to attend classes.

Did Program Directors Believe the Bonus Had an Impact on Retaining Staff?

Program directors were asked if staff who obtained credentials or degrees were more likely to remain employed at their center; most believed (71 percent) that these staff were more likely to remain.

When asked whether or not staff who received the \$1000 bonus were more likely to remain, directors were less likely to agree, with 45 percent reporting they believed this to be true.

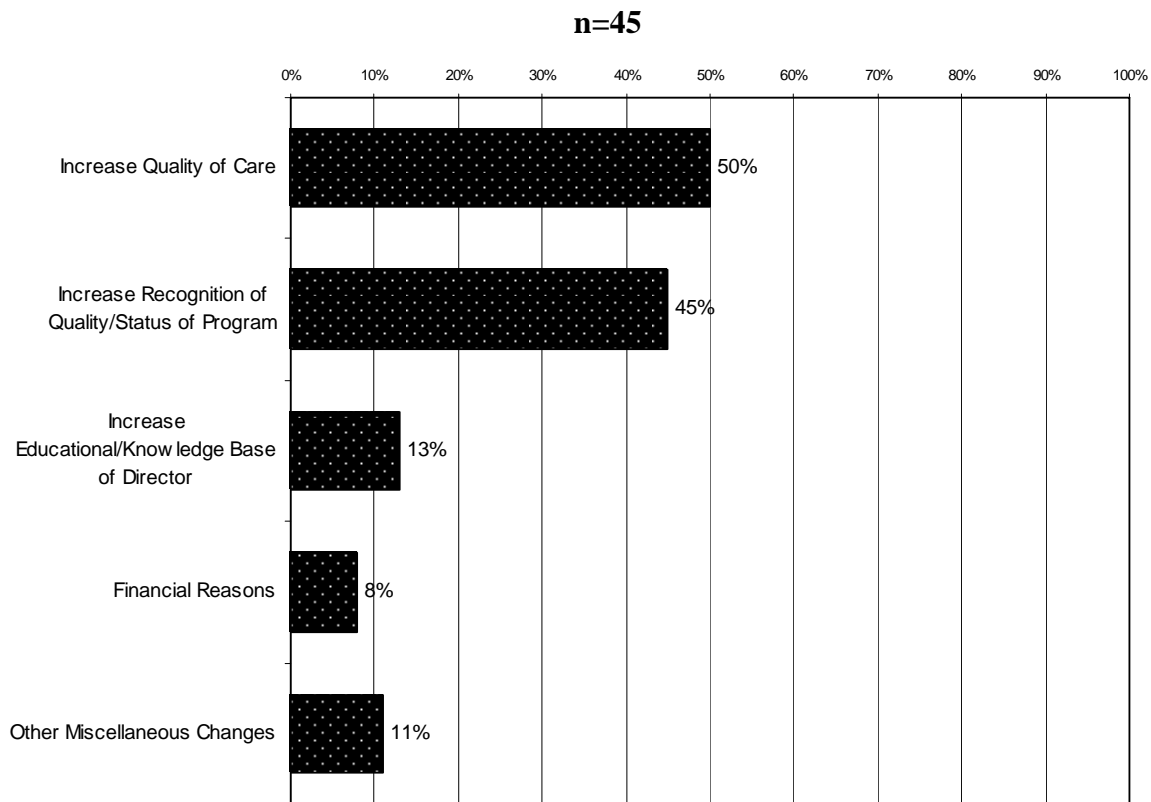
Does the Accreditation Process Increase the Quality of Program?

Most directors believed that the accreditation process improved the quality of their program (93 percent). Comments included “Believe so, through self-study and offers chance for staff to focus on what quality is”; and “The quality was already good, this helps us to maintain it”.

What Did Program Directors Want Changed in the Child Care Field?

Program Directors were asked “If you could change one thing in Child Care in Vermont, what would it be? All responses were coded and are illustrated below.

Figure 9: Changes Wanted by Program Directors



Two-thirds (62 percent) of the Program Directors wanted staff wages to increase. Changing benefits available to staff was a concern for 13 percent, and 11 percent wished to change the recognition of the value of work done in the child care field. Access for families to obtain child care services was mentioned by 7 percent, and changing educational requirements for those providing child care was a concern for 4 percent. Other miscellaneous changes included wanting substitutes for staff to attend conferences, changing the reimbursement rates for child care subsidies, reducing paperwork for Headstart staff, changes in curriculum or the focus of child care, more networking opportunities for teachers, more quality programs, and more money for those trying to complete their degree.

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