

## Early Childhood Education and Care

**Early Childhood Education:** Positive, encouraging adult-child interactions are important to high-quality early learning, both at home and classroom. Children who receive high-quality early childhood education (ECE) are better prepared to succeed in K-12, are more likely to go on to college, and see improved outcomes as adults. Because of the underfunding of the ECE system and the resulting low wages, the ECE workforce was already facing major challenges before the pandemic. Over the last several years, the sector has reported high levels of stress and elevated depression risk, difficulty attracting and retaining staff, lost revenue, and difficulty maintaining health and safety standards. COVID relief funds may have helped temporarily, but further support for the ECE workforce is necessary.

**Build the birth to age 3 system:** The first three years of a child's life affect all future learning, behavior, and health. This time period is the most sensitive for a child's developing brain and body, yet many families face substantial challenges finding child care during these years. Statewide, just 1 in 10 working parents can find quality, licensed care for their infant or toddler. This leads to many parents deciding to not reenter the workforce until their child reaches Pre-K. Growing our infant and toddler system would have an immediate impact on families across the state and would set our young children up for success in the later years.

### What to Ask Candidates

- What are your thoughts on increasing funding to support high-quality infant and toddler programs?
- What are your thoughts about a bigger state investment in pre-k education?
- How would you work to address the challenges facing our early childhood workforce?



### More than Half of Arkansas's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Workforce has Less than a Bachelor's Degree, and Average Pay is Well Below Other State Averages

Education Level	Percentage
Less than a bachelor's degree without credentials	34.1%
Less than a bachelor's degree with credentials	28.6%
Any degree in unrelated field	6.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher in related field, regardless of credentials	30.7%

Average Pay Rate in Arkansas	Dollars
ECCE with Associate's degree without credentials	\$24,315
ECCE with Associate's degree with credentials	\$25,459
ECCE with Bachelor's degree in related field, regardless of credentials	\$32,240
All women in Arkansas	\$42,470
ECCE with Master's degree or higher in related field, regardless of credentials	\$40,206
Arkansas kindergarten teachers	\$45,850
All men in Arkansas	\$51,694