

Childcare Workers Leah Hardy

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What are the duties of a childcare worker?

Childcare workers monitor infants and children to ensure their well-being and safety. They provide primary care for infants (change diapers, prepare bottles, put them down for naps, etc.) and provide activities to keep older children occupied and help them to “develop self-esteem, curiosity, imagination, physical skills, and speech.”ⁱⁱ

What is the job market for childcare workers?

There are many job openings for childcare workers, because there is high turnover. Dissatisfaction with a lack of benefits, low pay, and often stressful working conditions cause many workers to leave the industry. The anticipated job growth for center-based childcare workers was estimated to be between 33 and 39 percent between 1998 and 2008. This is relatively high, considering other occupations average 15 percent in order to accommodate increased demand and staff turnover.ⁱⁱⁱ

How many people are employed in the childcare industry?

About 1.3 million people are employed as childcare workers. This includes both in home care as well as care provided at daycare centers.^{iv}

How many children are in childcare every day?

In the United States about 12 million children are in childcare settings every day, with 4.6 million families relying on childcare so that they can work.^v

How many children are assigned to one childcare worker?

In order to be a licensed childcare facility in New York State, the facility must maintain the following ratios of children to caretakers:^{vi}

- 6 weeks to 9 months 4:1
- 18 to 36 months 5:1
- 3 years 7:1
- 4 years 8:1
- 5 years 9:1
- 6-9 years 10:1
- 10 years and older 15:1



What qualities make a successful childcare worker?

Successful childcare workers have the ability to:^{vii}

- Anticipate and prevent problems
- Deal patiently and effectively with disruptive children
- Provide fair but firm discipline when required
- Be enthusiastic
- Be constantly alert
- Communicate effectively with the children, their parents, and co-workers.
- Act in a mature fashion
- Be patient and understanding
- Possess physical stamina

In addition, it is beneficial for the childcare worker to possess skills in music, art, drama and storytelling.^{viii}



What education is needed to become a childcare worker?

The State of New York has set the following educational requirements for

childcare workers in various capacities:^{ix}

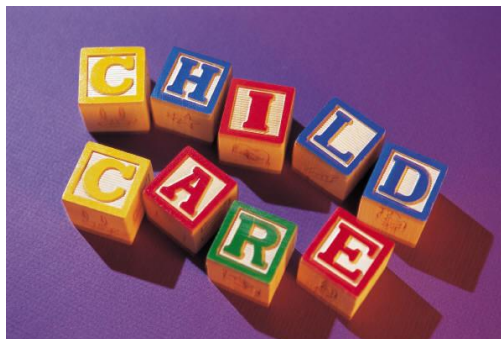
- Head of Group for preschoolers
 - Associate's degree in Early Childhood, Child Development or related field and no additional experience, or
 - Child Development Associate credential, or 9 credits in Early Childhood, Child Development or a related field, with a plan leading to a Child Development Associate credential and two years experience related to caring for children
- Head of Group for Infants/ Toddlers
 - In addition to the above, 1 year of specific training and/or experience in infant or toddler care which may be demonstrated by obtaining an Infant Toddler Child Care credential
- Head of Group for School Aged Children
 - Associate's degree in Child Development, recreation or related field and no additional experience, or
 - High School Diploma or its equivalent and two years direct experience working with children under 13 years of age
- Assistant to Head of Group (all age groups)
 - High School diploma or its equivalent, or
 - Substantial experience working with children under 13 years of age

What is the education level of the typical childcare worker?

About half of all childcare workers have earned their BA degree or higher, and more than half completed a practicum in early childhood as part of their training.^x In New York State, the percentage of childcare providers with a four-year degree has decreased from 42% in 1980 to 23% in 2000.^{xi}

What are the hours of childcare workers?

The hours of a childcare worker vary from day to day to accommodate the parents' needs, and many centers are open more than 12 hours a day. Childcare workers must stay until all children are picked up by their parent or guardian, which means traffic jams, late meetings and emergencies may cause the childcare workers to work extra hours.^{xii}



Are there any opportunities for advancement in the childcare profession?

Opportunities for advancement in the childcare industry are limited. However, some workers may be able to move into supervisory or administrative positions as they gain experience in large childcare centers.^{xiii}

Are most jobs in childcare part-time or full-time?

The majority of jobs in this industry are full-time, with slightly less than 71% working full-time in 2008.^{xiv}

What is the average age of a childcare worker?

The average age of a childcare worker is 38 years old.^{xv}

Are childcare workers predominantly male or female?

Childcare workers are predominantly (98%) female.^{xvi}



What is the average hourly wage for childcare workers?

The average childcare worker in the United States receives \$9.32 per hour in wages, or \$18,623 per year.^{xvii} In comparison, the average New York childcare worker makes \$9.50 per hour, and one out of three child care providers' incomes are less than 200% of the federal poverty level.^{xviii}

Do childcare jobs include health benefits and pensions?

Nationally, less than 50% of all teaching staff receive health benefits or a pension through their job.^{xix} In New York State, only 36% of childcare workers receive health care benefits through their employers.^{xx}

Is it common for childcare workers to live in low-income families?

One in every three childcare workers lives in a low-income family.^{xxi}



What are the hazards childcare workers face in their daily duties?

- Strain/sprain from constantly picking up, holding, and carrying children
- Slips, trips and falls are common for childcare workers because they work around small furniture, children, and toys
- Infection from handling sick children, helping children in the bathroom, and changing diapers.^{xxii}

What makes the childcare field rewarding?

Since childcare workers “operate in the borderline family,” they develop close relationships, which they find very gratifying, with both the children they care for as well as their families. Additionally, childcare workers are able to witness many of the children’s milestones, such as their first steps, first words, potty training, etc. Many childcare workers find watching the children grow and develop their life skills to be very rewarding.^{xxiii}

Are childcare workers unionized?

About five percent of childcare services are union members or are covered by a union contract, compared to workers in all other industries which average 14% union membership.^{xxiv}

Is there a substantial benefit to childcare workers becoming members of a union?

Unionized childcare workers make, on average, 30% more than un-unionized workers.^{xxv}

Interview with a Washington, DC Childcare Worker Conducted on March 13, 2010

What is your Educational history?

I have a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education.

What are the hours of the childcare center?

The hours of the Center are 7am to 6pm.

What is the age range of the children at the childcare center?

Ages 6 weeks through Kindergarten.

How many children are you responsible for?

It depends on the age you are assigned to. The younger the children you are looking after, the more care and attention they require, the fewer you are responsible for: for children ages six weeks to 12 months, there is one adult to four babies; for children 12 to 36 months, there is one adult to five children; for children three years to Pre-Kindergarten, there is one adult to ten children, and for Kindergarten there is one adult to 12 children. I work in the 24 to 36 month group, so I'm responsible for five children.

What are the challenges of the job?

One of the most difficult aspects of the job is the unpredictable hours because your schedule depends on the parent's schedule. If they have to work late, I have to stay late. If they are stuck in traffic, I have to stay late. You have to wait around until all of the children have left. It is also difficult and can be stressful when you are trying to address five kids that are upset at the same time. By the time I leave at the end of the day I am worn out.

Are you a member of a union?

No.

What are the wages and hours?

I make \$10.00 per hour and the hours vary.

Do you get benefits?

I do not get benefits, and I am currently without health insurance.

**How many people live in your household?**

Three, including myself. Me, my boyfriend and a roommate all share a two-bedroom apartment.

Are there other wage earners in household?

Yes, my boyfriend and my roommate.

Do you face any challenges of living with low wage?

I do not have healthcare and I can't afford to have my own car. I'm lucky I live with my boyfriend and a roommate so I can afford an apartment.

Do you work more than one job?

No. I am so exhausted by the end of the day I can't even imagine going to another job.

Do you receive any public assistance, including Medicaid, Food Stamps, subsidized housing, HEAP, etc.?

No, but if I did not live with my boyfriend I'd probably have to take advantage of some of those programs.

How do you get to work?

My boyfriend drops me off on his way to work.

Would you like to stay in this occupation or move on?

I'd like to move on. I'm planning on going back to school and getting my Masters in Education next year, but I'm not sure what I want to do after that. I do know that I will not come back to work as a childcare worker because there is no position for me to advance to here.

ⁱ Picture available at

<http://www.blogcdn.com/jobs.aol.com/articles/media/2009/05/childcare.jpg>.

ⁱⁱ State University, Day Care Worker Job Description, available at

<http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/682/Day-Care-Worker.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sakai, Laura and Marcy Whitebook, Turnover begets turnover: an examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Early Childhood Research Quarterly 18 (2003) 273-293 at 276, available at <http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/turnover.pdf>.

^{iv} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Career Guide to Industries, 2010-11 Edition, Child Care Day Services, Available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/cgs032.htm>.

^v Center for the Child Care Workforce, Wage Data Fact Sheet (2009 Edition), available at <http://www.ccw.org/storage/ccworkforce/documents/04-30-09%20wwd%20fact%20sheet.pdf>.

^{vi} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, State Requirements for Child-Staff Ratios, Available at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/ratios.html>.

^{vii} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-11, Child Care Workers, available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos170.htm>.

^{viii} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-11, Child Care Workers, available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos170.htm>.

^{ix} Child Care Regulations §418-1.13 (e) Staff Qualifications, Available at

http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/regs/418-1_CDCC_regs.asp#s13.

^x Sakai, Laura and Marcy Whitebook, Turnover begets turnover: an examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Early Childhood Research Quarterly 18 (2003) 273-293 at 276, available at <http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/turnover.pdf>.

^{xi} Community Collaboration for Quality Child Care in Downtown Buffalo, New York , Buffalo Child Care Means Business, pg. 10, Available at

http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/wied/economic/childCareCoalition/upload/Cornell_BuffaloChildCare_study_6-18-071.pdf.

^{xii} State University, Day Care Worker Job Description, available at <http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/682/Day-Care-Worker.html>.

^{xiii} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-11, Child Care Workers, available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos170.htm>.

^{xiv} State University, Day Care Worker Job Description, available at <http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/682/Day-Care-Worker.html>

^{xv} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Career Guide to Industries, 2010-11 Edition, Child Care Day Services, Available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/cgs032.htm>.

^{xvi} Bellm, D., Burton, A., Shukla, R., Whitebook, M., (1998) Making Work Pay in the Child Care Industry, Report Promising Practices for Improving Compensation, Washington, DC: National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force, available at http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED406026&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED406026.

^{xvii} Center for the Child Care Workforce, Wage Data Fact Sheet (2009 Edition), available at <http://www.ccw.org/storage/ccworkforce/documents/04-30-09%20wwd%20fact%20sheet.pdf>.

^{xviii} Community Collaboration for Quality Child Care in Downtown Buffalo, New York , Buffalo Child Care Means Business, pg. 10, Available at http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/wied/economic/childCareCoalition/upload/Cornell_BuffaloChildCare_study_6-18-071.pdf.

^{xix} Sakai, Laura and Marcy Whitebook, Turnover begets turnover: an examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Early Childhood Research Quarterly 18 (2003) 273-293 at 276, available at <http://www.irl.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/turnover.pdf>.

^{xx} Community Collaboration for Quality Child Care in Downtown Buffalo, New York , Buffalo Child Care Means Business, pg. 10, Available at http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/wied/economic/childCareCoalition/upload/Cornell_BuffaloChildCare_study_6-18-071.pdf.

^{xxi} Baughman, Reagan and Kristin Smith, Carsey Institute, pg. 9, University of New Hampshire, Low Wages Prevalent in Direct Care and Child Care Workforce, Policy Brief No. 7, Summer 2007, available at http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB_caregivers.pdf.

^{xxii} Childcare Worker Safety, State Fund Ca, Available at <http://www.statefundca.com/safety/safetymeeting/SafetyMeetingArticle.aspx?ArticleID=329>.

^{xxiii} Murray, Susan B., Child Care Work: Intimacy in the Shadows of Family-Life, Qualitative Sociology Volume 21, No. 2, (June 2008), pgs. 149-168, Available at <http://www.springerlink.com/content/pp87316164u86482/>.

^{xxiv} (2001 Just Economics, Inc., <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/curricula/childcarewages.pdf>)

^{xxv} 2001 Just Economics, Inc., Lifting the Lid on Child Care Workers Wages, Available at <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/curricula/childcarewages.pdf>.