

Child Care Hiring Problems May Affect Larger Job Market

By George Hagenauer 4-C (Draft February 10, 2016)

Child care programs are having difficulty hiring teachers and the end result may be increased difficulty for parents to enter the workforce if it becomes increasingly difficult to expand child care.

4-C Community Coordinated Child Care, a child care resource and referral agency noted a high number of empty child care slots in its 2015 child care survey. Several staff suggested that the unused capacity was the result of an inability of centers to hire qualified staff as opposed to a lack of demand.

A short survey was sent to 251 group child care centers with emails in 4-C's eight county service area. Programs were asked to complete the survey even if they had hired no staff in 2015. 44% (109) of the programs responded within a one week period. Only 7% did not hire any staff in 2015. The rest reported a job market in which it was usually difficult to find teachers.

Of the 402 job openings for teaching staff posted in 2015 – 21% (86) went unfilled in 46% of the centers. When programs could not find teachers they often also had to reduce the number of children they could serve. Approximately 350 slots for children were not able to be used due to a lack of staff. 30% of the centers reported spaces for children that could not be filled due to lack of staff. This was especially a problem for newer centers or centers who were increasing capacity due to increased demand. When the number of slots are extrapolated to the entire market, it suggests that a majority of the empty slots discovered in the 2015 4-C enrollment survey were empty not due to lack of demand but due to lack of staff.

In terms of the number of applicants, 65% reported they had fewer teachers applying; 24% the same and 11% had more than normal applicants. In terms of the applicants' quality and skills, 70% said that the quality was worse than usual, 7% said it was better and 23% said it was about the same.

The hiring problems were not limited to any particular type of teacher or level of skill. Analyzing it by Youngstar rating there was little variation in the number of unfilled or lost slots between unrated or two star centers requiring just basic training and 5 star centers which rely more on degreed staff. While Dodge, Walworth and Sauk counties reported no unfilled positions or lost slots, they expressed the same amount of difficulty in terms of lower numbers and worse quality of applicants. While Dane as the largest market and the market with the most growth had the highest numbers of unfilled positions and lost slots, Columbia had the highest percentage of empty slots; and Rock county with one out of 3 positions unfilled, the highest percentage of unfilled positions.

Part time position and substitutes were especially difficult to fill. Some programs indicated that they were able to fill their staff openings but it was impossible to find substitutes. The end result is overworked and stressed staff with directors and others often filling in to cover classroom vacancies.

There were indications that lost slots were disproportionately in the infant toddler area, the age categories where there is already a shortage of child care. If the child care teacher shortage continues, it may become difficult for parents to enter the workforce further compounding the scarcity of skilled workers in 4-C's eight counties during a period of increased unemployment.

The following are some comments made by programs as part of the survey (note we didn't ask for comments they just appeared):

We ended up hiring staff we had to train and might need to send back to school!

We were successful at hiring for the positions HOWEVER we have not had success in hiring qualified, degreed and/or "good" staff. We have had to hire what we can get and that led to additional turnover. I have one class that since September has had 6 different teachers.

Half of The people who applied were not qualified / or no experience.

We do need subs (not counted in this survey) but have had no luck finding any!!!

My existing staff are OVERWORKED!

By the time someone is trained and I'm feeling comfortable, someone else leaves.

Office staff had to fill teaching positions resulting in putting the office work on hold.

It took weeks if not months to find properly qualified staff.

Two were filled on a timely basis, however, the one posted in August 2015, took 5 months to fill.

Hiring was difficult! We did it but it was exhausting and we spent more than expected.

It took a long time and the people I have hired are not qualified so we are paying for them to get qualified.

Here are some highlights from the data results (data based only on programs returning surveys:

County	Openings	Filled	Unfilled	% Unfilled	Empty Slots	% capacity empty
Dane	261	201	60	23%	277	5%
Columbia	25	18	7	28%	24	11%
Walworth	8	8	0	0%	0	0%
Sauk	26	24	2	8%	0	0%
Rock	29	19	10	34%	30	5%
Dodge	13	13	0	0%	0	0%
Jefferson	19	13	6	32%	16	4%
Green	21	20	1	5%	4	1%
Total	401	316	86	21%	351	5%

How did the number of applicants you had last year compare to prior years?

The Same	More	Less				
24%	11%	65%				

How did the quality of applicants you had last year compare to prior years?

The Same	Better	Worse
24%	7%	69%

An analysis by County or Youngstar rating is available on request:

City Accredited Center Analysis:

				Empty	% capacity
Openings	Filled	Unfilled	% Unfilled	Slots	empty
40	33	7	18%	30	1%
Quantity of applicants compared to year before.					
The Same	More	Less			
8%	8%	83%			
The Quality of applicants compared to the year before.					
The Same	Better	Worse			
33%	0%	67%			