

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday July 12, 2016

Contact: Ruth Schmidt, Executive Director

ruschmidt@wisconsinearlychildhood.org 608.729.1042

Poverty-level wages sparking child care teacher turnover in Wisconsin

More than a third of teachers leave their jobs every year, disrupting the quality of care children need in their most formative years

Madison--The 22,000 child care teachers caring for a majority of Wisconsin's youngest children are so poorly paid that more than a third of them leave their jobs every year, disrupting the quality of care children need in their most formative years, according to a [new study](#) released today by the [Wisconsin Early Childhood Association](#).

The study, based on a survey of the state's 2,600 child care centers, shows median starting wages of \$10 an hour for teachers, and \$8.50 an hour for assistant teachers. The study notes that even though 52% of the state's child care teachers have associate degrees, or higher, their average annual salary is \$20,800. (The 41% of the Wisconsin workforce that also hold associate degrees earn an average of \$38,625 annually.) The low wages, along with few, if any, health insurance benefits, are the primary reasons 30 percent of teachers and 45 percent of assistant teachers leave their jobs every year in the state.

"We have evidence that shows high turnover hurts the quality of care children need. The research demonstrates that children thrive when they have consistent, supportive relationships with the adults who care for them," said Ruth Schmidt, WECA executive director. "This is both a wage issue and a quality of care issue for our children. It's about doing everything we can to build a better future for our children and our state."

Teacher turnover has statewide impact. In Wisconsin, 73 percent of children age birth through five years are in some form of care outside their home, as they live in households where all available parents are working.

"The dilemma is how we compensate our child care workers more to build a sustainable workforce to ensure our young children receive high-quality care while also making child care more affordable for our working parents," said Schmidt. "This is an issue we must address together in cooperation with businesses, educators, and policy leaders because we all have a stake in quality early care and education for our children."

Along with the report, WECA has published a companion [Insights and Recommendations](#) document that points to potential short- and long-term solutions.

The study was paid for by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. The report was written by COWS – a research and policy center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison — and based on results of a survey designed by COWS and the University of Wisconsin Survey Center.

WECA is a statewide nonprofit organization for early childhood professionals that offers training, professional development, educational scholarships, a child nutrition program, and more. WECA calls for greater public investment in early education and promotes excellence in the child care profession.

###