



EARLY CHILDHOOD
RESOURCE CENTER

2023 Needs Assessment



**Service Delivery Area 4: Mahoning, Medina, Portage,
Stark, Summit, & Trumbull counties**

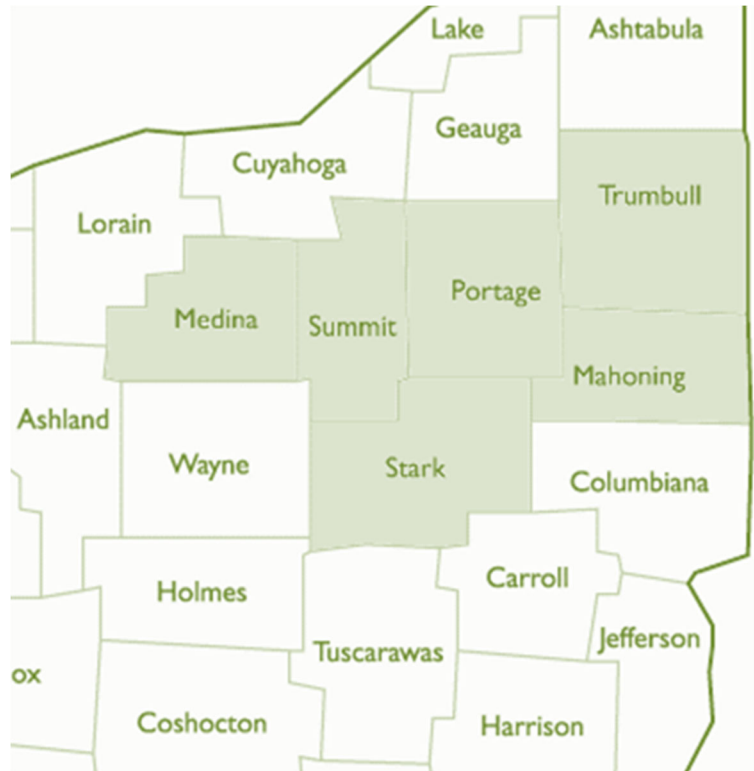
About This Needs Assessment

In 2017, the Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) in Canton, Ohio became the State of Ohio's Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for Service Delivery Area 4 (SDA 4), the six-county region that's shaded on the map.

Needs assessments are conducted annually to ensure the ECRC is assessing and meeting needs throughout the region. We collect data from key stakeholder groups, including parents and caregivers, child care providers, and agency representatives.

This year's needs assessment focused on the six objectives the State of Ohio has set for our work:

1. **Increase awareness of early childhood education (ECE) options for providers, families, and community stakeholders;**
2. **Assist families in accessing early care and education services that meet both the developmental needs of children and the employment-related needs of families;**
3. **Support ECE providers in increasing the supply and quality of early care and education services;**
4. **Increase the quality of services provided by ECE programs by making professional development and technical assistance available to programs;**
5. **Provide information to communities on the importance of quality and the impacts of ECE, and support community involvement to improve the early childhood system; and**
6. **Provide the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the community with updated reports and current ECE statistics.**



SDA 4 includes Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, & Trumbull counties.

This needs assessment includes both qualitative and quantitative data measures, and it follows the framework provided by ODJFS.

Three surveys (one for parents, one for ECE providers, and one for community members) were launched in mid-June 2023; responses were accepted through June 26th. Surveys were completed by 22 parents, 95 employees of child care programs, and 32 community representatives.

This report also includes information gathered in the field and gained during discussions with providers about their needs. Additional survey data not included in this report is available upon request.



Outreach



The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) in Canton, Ohio (Stark County) serves as the lead agency coordinating all SDA 4 services from three strategically located regional offices: the administrative office in Canton serves the entire SDA and houses staff members who directly serve Stark county; the Boardman office serves Mahoning, Portage, and Trumbull counties; and the Akron office serves Medina and Summit counties. The Akron office is inside the United Way building in downtown Akron. This arrangement facilitates collaboration with other nonprofit organizations.

Each regional office offers Child Development Associate classes and Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) supports and resources, in addition to the training and technical assistance needed to earn, maintain, and increase star ratings. While the Stark County office oversees all programs and services for SDA 4, having offices spread throughout the SDA allows for greater collaboration and deeper community relationships, closer oversight of services, better and more efficient coordination, easier access and more input around local needs, reduced travel expenses, and more seamless delivery. All calls are fielded in the central office and deployed to the respective departments. Technical assistance staff members are available Monday through Friday to assist child care providers and families.

1. How do you make your presence known in the community and how are you accessible?

Each regional office is overseen by a Regional Coordinator, who provides outreach and referral services to families, oversees programs and services for families and providers, and coordinates and delivers training and technical assistance in the region. To engage the early childhood community (county agencies, providers, legislators, schools, the faith-based community, etc.), our Regional Coordinators make themselves visible and present within the cities, counties, communities, and agencies served, and they develop local relationships in order to understand local needs, available services, challenges, and opportunities. Staff members strive to understand the local dynamics and demographics at play and build local relationships that foster effective collaboration and service delivery.



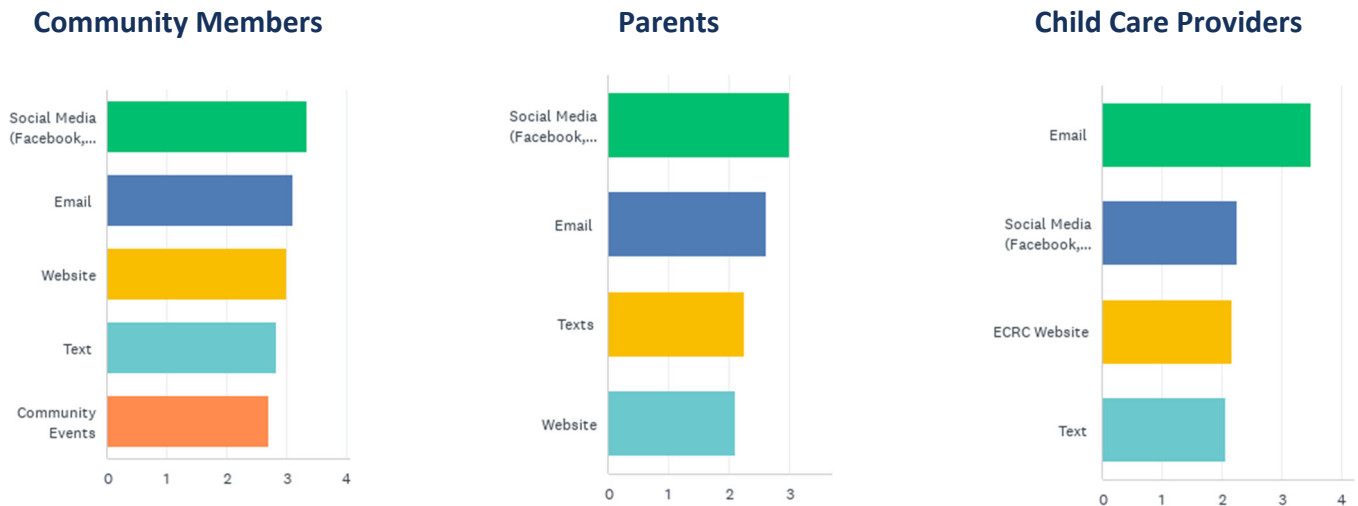
Each regional office houses at least three Early Childhood Specialists and works closely with contracted trainers. The Regional Coordinators conduct outreach throughout the counties they serve, and they coordinate and provide professional development and technical assistance to providers.

Since SDA 4 is vast in size, population, and number/types of child care programs, the ECRC plans training calendars regionally, spreading training locations throughout the SDA to ensure convenience and access. Training locations include libraries, child care facilities, churches, and community centers. We also offer virtual and hybrid training options. Planning, preparation, and coordination of training are conducted in regional offices to ensure local needs are considered, to reduce travel expense, and to ensure easy access to resources and materials. Each office continually gathers information on what programs and services are working effectively and where deepening or extending services might be beneficial. Information gathered through the needs assessment process is articulated into a strategic plan that serves as the roadmap for delivery of services across the SDA.

The ECRC uses a wide variety of communication strategies and tools to make its presence known in the community. Periodic newsletters feature our services and the individuals we serve, as does an annual report highlighting our impacts throughout SDA 4. We post daily on Facebook and Instagram to reach several distinct audiences.



As shown below, the responding community members and parents prefer to be kept informed via social media, followed by email, whereas providers prefer to be kept informed via email, followed by social media.



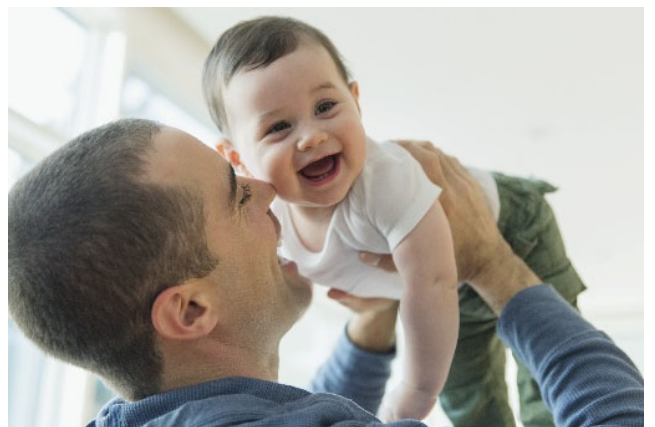
2. How do you assess the needs of families needing child care?

Trained Early Childhood Specialists and Referral Specialists support families in finding child care and other resources they need. Specialists meet with families in person or discuss families' needs over the phone, based on what is convenient for and preferred by the family. Staff members conduct a needs assessment at intake and then link the family to a child care program, appropriate agency, or special service that best meets the identified needs.

After staff members make referrals, they follow up with the family by phone or email a survey to see how things are going and assist further as needed. Outreach services target locations and agencies where we may find families with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and other families with barriers to access, in order to assess their child care needs and provide information, resources, and services.

Information gathered through ongoing formal and informal needs assessments is used to plan additional ways of meeting the needs of families seeking care. Child care searches are conducted via the WorkLife Systems (WLS) program. This user-friendly solution allows families to explore their child care options online and provides great data tracking to analyze needs. The WLS database has a portal that allows each provider to update their program profile and add enrollment information in a timely manner. This ensures our referral staff can efficiently provide real-time referral information.

In 2023, the ECRC worked with the Medina County Board of Developmental Disabilities on Project Open House for child care programs in Medina County. Agencies that serve families and those that serve children with disabilities came together to strategize about how to create a seamless process for families seeking inclusive child care. Families had been encountering obstacles: many providers indicated they didn't have openings, when in fact many didn't have the training or staffing needed to provide care to children with disabilities. We surveyed parents and providers; the responses helped the committee make recommendations on next steps. Through this partnership, we identified three child care centers and one



family child care provider in Medina County that were committed to increasing their capacity to serve children with disabilities. ECRC staff collaborated with staff from the Medina County Board of Developmental Disabilities to conduct an Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) assessment on each program. The ICP is a program observation instrument used to assess the quality of daily classroom practices that support the developmental needs of children with disabilities. Baseline data was collected and programs' needs were identified. Based on each program's need to enhance its environments to accommodate children with disabilities, each provider was given classroom and teacher materials that enabled it to serve children with a wide variety of social-emotional and physical needs. The administrators and teachers also attended a four-part training series on inclusion.



In FY23, 17 families sought child care referrals for children with disabilities. Five families indicated their child was on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The most frequently mentioned disabilities related to speech and language delays, followed by autism.

3. Do you link families with additional resources to assist the family to move toward self-sufficiency?

In close consultation with the family, the Referral Specialist develops a plan to support the family's unique goals and needs. Specialists have available a wide range of brochures, along with information on numerous community services, support groups, and resources for families who are experiencing homelessness, have children with special needs or health conditions, or are facing a wide range of other challenges. For example, we have identified more than 45 organizations that offer housing assistance. We work with these organizations—and many other community organizations—to ensure outreach is provided to families.

Our staff members make referrals, follow up, and provide information on community resources as needed to ensure a positive outcome of the service plan. At a minimum, families are provided with ODJFS's Resource Guide (JFS form 01224) to link them to services that may be available. Information on choosing high-quality child care is provided, along with a description of policies to prevent suspension, expulsion, and denial of services due to behavior in child care (45 C.F.R.), so families understand their child's rights and the processes child care programs must undertake before suspension, expulsion, or denial.

In addition, the ECRC continually seeks additional funding to provide parenting education, resources, and advocacy. Grant funding allows us to help families navigate the family court systems in Stark and Summit counties. We help families get answers about divorce, child and spousal support, custody and visitation, contempt of court, restraining orders, move-away issues, and attorney concerns. We also help non-custodial parents understand their responsibilities and rights so they can make smart choices, both for themselves and their children. Referrals to job and resource assistance help to remove barriers that might otherwise prevent them from spending time with their children.

Parenting education is a key component of our services. We offer many Parent Cafés throughout SDA 4. These parent-run meetings help parents connect, share, and learn from one another in a casual, open environment. Parent Cafés help parents find supports and develop coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. The mutual support cultivated during Parent Cafés helps parents strengthen their parenting skills, learn how to respond to crisis situations, and become effective, supportive, and resilient.



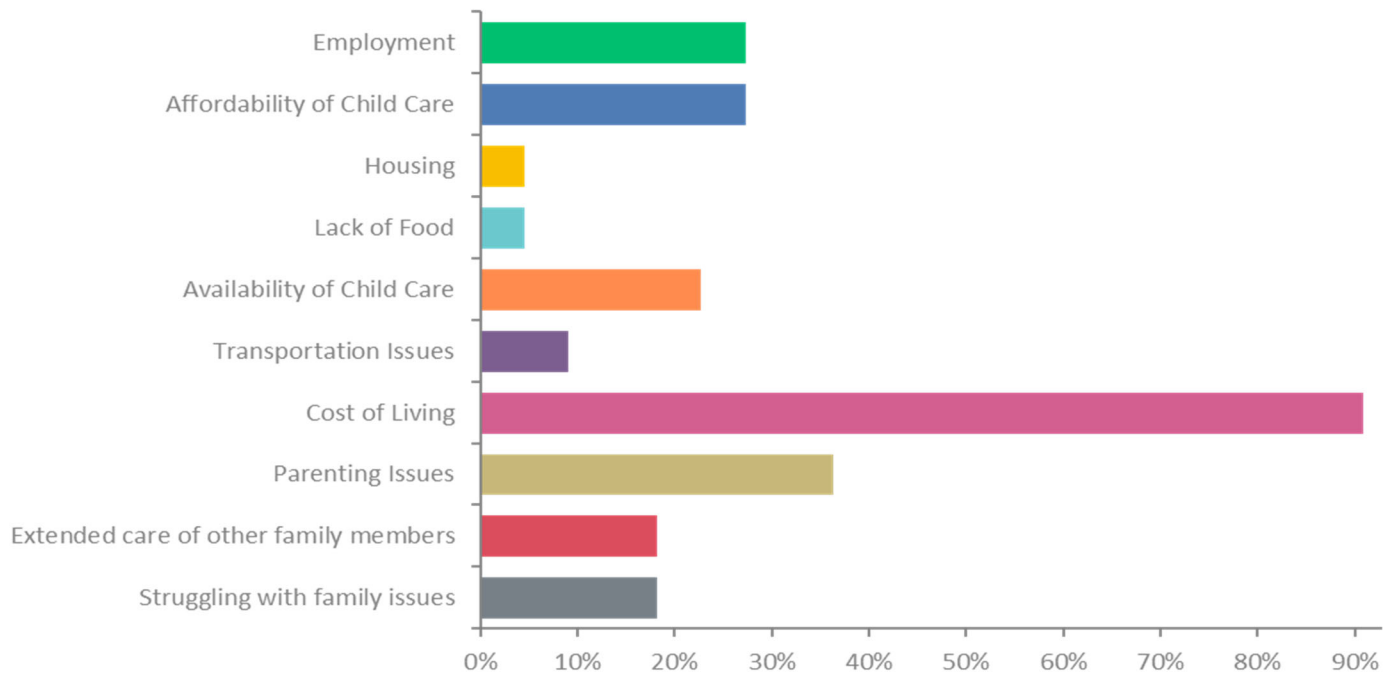
We offer several parenting courses, including *Active Parenting Now* and *Love Notes*. These courses help parents understand and fulfill the critical role they play in their children’s lives. For fathers, we offer the *24/7 Dad* course, which is taught by dads, for dads of infants and children 12 and younger. This course helps dads understand and fulfill the critical role they play in their children’s lives. And the *On My Shoulders* course helps dads step into their most important life role as they develop strong relationships with their children and co-parents.



We also train and coach child care center directors and staff on the Strengthening Families framework. The Center for the Study of Social Policy developed the framework. Their website states that, “Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key Protective Factors: Parental resilience, Social connections, Knowledge of parenting and child development, Concrete support in times of need, and Social and emotional competence of children.”

As the chart shows, families responding to our most recent needs assessment survey indicated that the cost of living is overwhelmingly the most important factor they currently face, followed by affordability and availability of child care and parenting issues.

Most Important Factors Facing Families



4. How do you assist the family in making them aware of the options available for child care in their community?

When speaking with families seeking care, staff members use a parent intake form to ensure consistency of services and thorough investigation of family needs. During intake, information is provided on the types of care available, extra service options (such as before- and after-school care, languages spoken at the program, environmental specifications such as pets in a family child care setting, special needs supports, options for extended care hours, subsidized care choices and assessment, and meal provisions), and SUTQ star rating information.

Families are given brochures and information on relevant community resources, along with any child care referrals. At a minimum, the information provided includes the ODJFS Resource Guide and information on choosing high-quality child care. Additional information is provided based on identified needs and interests. For example, a family might receive information on choosing the best setting to meet their child's temperament or information on nutrition, depending on concerns expressed during the referral call. Links to helpful online resources are also provided as applicable.

Our informational card for families (pictured at right) is distributed widely at organizations where families access goods, services, and resources throughout our region. The card provides information on SUTQ, our referral services, and what to look for when choosing a child care program.

Social media is another tool we use to make families aware of care options, especially with regard to understanding SUTQ and indicators of quality. With more than 33,000 followers and robust engagement, our main Facebook page is highly effective at widely disseminating valuable information to families and the community.



Wait – HOW many stars are good? Is there high-quality child care near my house? What should I look for when I visit?

Where should I start?

We are the experts: let us help!
 Call us at (877) 691-8521
 or visit ecresourcecenter.org

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER

A Child Care Resource and Referral Agency proudly serving Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, and Trumbull counties.

What To Look For When Choosing Child Care

- Step Up To Quality star rating
- Clean, safe environment
- Open door policy
- Knowledgeable, trained staff
- Age-appropriate activities and environments
- Appropriate supervision
- Written policies and procedures
- Warm, responsive teachers
- Licensing inspection results posted

Let us help you Follow the Stars to find high-quality child care that meets your needs.

Call us at (877) 691-8521 or search online anytime at ohiochildcarefinder.org

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5. Do community members, parents, and the providers in your area understand the requirements to participate in SUTQ and the benefits the children will see as a result?

As more programs become rated, prominently displayed banners and signs are getting more attention. When **parents** call seeking child care referrals, they often indicate that they've seen the banners or signs, but aren't always sure of what they mean. We make sure to share information on SUTQ requirements with families as they are seeking care, so that they can make informed choices. Despite widespread marketing strategies to increase awareness, only 45.45% surveyed indicated they are familiar or somewhat familiar with SUTQ.

The ECRC's leadership team represents the agency on a variety of committees and stakeholder groups throughout the region. During meetings, we speak with **community members** about SUTQ and our progress toward increasing



quality in each county. It seems many agencies in the early childhood world are quite familiar with SUTQ. When surveyed, 92.31% indicated they were familiar or somewhat familiar with SUTQ requirements and benefits.

The ECRC's **community partners** often reach out to request data and solutions to child care issues. Staff attend regular meetings of numerous stakeholder groups that are working to address local child care needs and solutions.

Higher reimbursement plays an important role in prompting **providers** to enter and ascend the tiered quality rating and improvement system. As new programs become licensed, specialists reach out to set timelines for earning the initial star rating. Over the course of fiscal year 2023 (from July 1 2022 through June 30, 2023), providers were saturated with a variety of communications to ensure they understood the benefits and requirements of participating in SUTQ. In fiscal year 2023, our social media posts on SUTQ and the importance of high-quality care reached 355,885 people on social media. Those social media posts, along with ODJFS licensing staff and resource and referral staff making calls, dropping by, and sending emails, would have made it impossible for providers to be unaware of SUTQ. As far as the benefits of SUTQ, we find that as providers gain more education and move into higher star ratings, they have a better understanding of how high-quality practices impact children and serve as an invaluable resource for families.

6. How do you plan to outreach to the licensed providers in your network to move them into and maintain Step Up To Quality ratings?

We will continue using a variety of outreach techniques to engage and support child care programs as they gain and implement strategies for providing high-quality care under SUTQ rating requirements.

Personal Calls and Technical Assistance: Each Early Childhood Specialist is assigned a caseload that includes both rated and non-rated programs. The Specialists are expected to call and support each assigned program on an ongoing basis to assess program needs and offer updates on available services and resources. This coordinated outreach ensures regular contact with all child care programs in the region. Support may be provided on site at child care programs, through Zoom, or at individual in-person meetings at an ECRC office. Specialists inform their assigned programs about available services, programming, and information, discuss each program's current and desired rating status, and gather data about individual program needs and barriers to improvement.

Each regional ECRC office has specific goals for engaging new programs in our Step Up to Quality curriculum, including enrolling them in individualized SUTQ coaching sessions and offering technical assistance to maintain or increase star ratings. Staff members review caseloads with their supervisors regularly and goals are reviewed monthly to plan individual program engagement strategies, so that all programs have access to services.

Specialists also contact individuals who are in the beginning stages of starting a child care business to offer professional development, technical assistance, and information on the benefits of being star rated, as well as to engage new program owners in individualized SUTQ coaching sessions.

Marketing and Social Media: Survey respondents continue to indicate that email and social media are their preferred ways of receiving information on our services, followed by text messages. That is why we continue to regularly send emails to child care programs about our services, including information on the Child Development Associate classes offered by each regional office and on SUTQ services (which include individualized SUTQ coaching sessions for non-rated programs). In addition, we use social media to share a wide range of information for both



providers and families, including updates on SUTQ and information on the benefits of high-quality care. Our SDA 4 Facebook group provides timely updates and offers providers numerous opportunities to network and ask questions. Licensing questions are referred to an ODJFS licensing specialist or to the ODJFS website. Facebook groups and apps such as Remind are used for those enrolled in Child Development Associate classes, as is Google Classroom.

Conferences, Community Events, Fairs, and Networking Opportunities:

To ensure we are reaching providers and potential providers, we maintain a consistent presence throughout the region at resource fairs, provider events, conferences, and provider networking meetings. We have partnered with many local high school career planning staff throughout SDA 4 to educate interested students about the early childhood field and recruit potential Child Development Associate training participants, in order to create a pipeline of educators into the workforce. In June 2023, we held our first *Celebrate Your Mission* Early Childhood Conference for 112 teachers, administrators, and family child care providers. Participants received training on business supports, mindfulness, retaining and hiring staff, and self-care.

7. How do you plan to outreach star-rated providers in your network to help them improve their star rating to a 3-5?

The ECRC will continue using a variety of ways to reach out to star-rated programs, including:

- Sending regular emails to keep providers informed about available programs and services,
- Making targeted outreach calls and technical assistance visits (on site or online via Zoom) to discuss the benefits of being highly rated and devise strategies for increasing ratings, and
- Using social media to advertise the benefits of providing high-quality care and create a sense of urgency in getting highly rated.

In 2022, additional American Rescue Plan Act funding enabled us to create a project focused on supporting programs as they worked to become highly rated. Through an application process, we identified 18 child care centers and 10 family child care providers that were committed to pursuing higher star ratings. We recruited one family child care provider and one center administrator to provide peer mentoring and coaching to the participants on star rating requirements. To date, seven participating child care centers and six participating family child care providers have increased their star rating. Programs that successfully increased their star rating received mini-grants for needed supplemental classroom materials.

Strategies for engaging rated programs will include:

- Addressing controllable barriers, such as staff education and qualifications, by providing scholarships and both online and in-person options for CDA classes;
- Offering on-site or online (Zoom) technical assistance and classroom-based coaching for programs, based on individual action plans, to gear up to apply for 3-5 stars;
- Offering online or small-group, in-person curriculum and assessment training, along with annual Ohio Approved training, to meet biannual professional development requirements; and



- Using annual provider survey responses about which SUTQ supports and communication methods are working best to enhance planning for individual and group messaging and services.

The ECRC's SUTQ coaching and technical assistance have been highly effective at getting programs rated and helping them increase their star rating. Recent provider survey responses support the value and continued use of this approach and development of similarly structured supports. With 60% of centers and Type A home providers in our region highly rated, SDA 4 offers families lots of high-quality choices.

Professional Development

1. How many providers are in your service area?

As of July 1, 2023, there are 1,042 licensed programs in SDA 4, up from 1,032 programs in 2022. These include child care centers, family child care homes, Ohio Department of Education (ODE) licensed programs, day camps, and in-home aides. Of the 1,042, three are in-home aides, 17 are registered day camps, 25 are ODE licensed school programs, 553 are Job and Family Services licensed centers, 164 are ODE licensed centers, and 280 are Type A/B. Across the region, approximately 7,300 total child care staff members offer all types of care, including 1,642 administrators, 3,522 aides, 3,578 lead teachers, and one in-home aide.

2. How many of those providers are employed at a program that has earned a Step Up To Quality rating?

The table shows the number of staff members, by role, working in SUTQ-rated programs. The greatest number of responding staff serve Summit county (the largest county in SDA 4); the smallest number serve Medina County.

Number of Staff Members (SUTQ-Rated Programs)	Mahoning	Medina	Stark	Summit	Trumbull	Total
Administrator on JFS License	83	19	67	117	44	330
Administrator/Director	15	2	6	10	2	35
Assistant Teacher	192	123	309	569	104	1297
Assistant Teacher/Teacher's Aide/Student Aide	1	-	-	2	-	3
Cook	15	12	38	46	13	124
Driver	11	4	2	12	27	56
Extracurricular Not Used in Ratio	83	9	35	66	22	215
Extracurricular Used in Ratio	18	2	13	7	1	41
Floater	132	62	123	181	50	548
Individual Service Provider Not Used in Ratio	25	2	12	20	7	66
Individual Service Provider Used in Ratio	29	-	11	20	12	72
In-Home Aide	-	-	-	1	-	1
Lead Teacher	91	62	120	268	76	617
Other Staff Counted In Ratio	16	12	8	16	4	56
Other Staff Not Counted in Ratio	4	11	7	29	20	71
Owner	12	7	15	20	5	59
Program Management Not Used in Ratio	10	5	7	21	-	43
Program Management Used in Ratio	2	1	5	8	-	16
Total	739	333	778	1,413	387	3,650



3. What professional development classes have the providers in your area taken in the past two years?

Every year, the ECRC offers Child Development Associate classes to hundreds of providers throughout SDA 4. We offer several options, including fast-track day classes that allow providers to complete the coursework in five to six months, and extended courses that last eight to nine months. The ECRC also offers training throughout SDA 4 on a variety of topics. The list below shows all classes offered over the past two years.

Advancing to Professionalism	Avoiding the Battle of Wills: Empower Children Through Opportunities to Make Choices	Cultural Responsiveness: Analyzing the Culture of Your Program
Maintaining a Commitment to Professionalism	Baby Doll Circle Time: Strengthening Attachment, Attunement, & Social Play	Cultural Responsiveness: Becoming Culturally Aware
Observing & Recording Children's Behavior	Battling Burnout: What it is, Why it Happens, & Mindful solutions	Cultural Responsiveness: Planning for Culturally Responsive Child Engagement
Positive Ways to Support Social & Emotional Development	Behavior: Understanding Vs. Expression-Building Relationships	Daily Experiences for Infants & Toddlers
Steps to Advance Children's Physical & Intellectual Development	Behavioral Planning 1	Developmentally Appropriate Behavior
Planning a Safe, Healthy Learning Environment	Behavioral Planning 2	Different Yet Alike: Inclusion Teaching Practices for Children with Special Needs
Advancing to Professionalism	Bouncing Back 1: How Resilient Are You?	Discoveries of Infancy: Cognitive Development & Learning 0 to 3
A Guide to Transformative Family Engagement	Bouncing Back 2: How Do You Build Resilience?	Earth Day...Every Day!
All About the CDA: Orientation to the CDA Process	Bring On the Sunshine: Using Literacy as a Springboard for Teaching Social Studies	Easy Integration of Mindfulness Into Work & Daily Living
All Around Literacy: Tools & Strategies to Enrich the Preschool Classroom	Building A Better Child Portfolio: Capturing Children's Progress	Elevate Your Employee Engagement
All Our Kin Family Child Care Business Institute Class 0: Technology	Building Character in Preschool Classrooms	Enriching the Classroom with Language & Literacy
All Our Kin Family Child Care Virtual Business Series Class 1: Introduction	Captain of the Ship: Sailing Your School to Success With Compassion & Strength	Essential Elements for Designing an Inclusive Classroom
All Our Kin Family Child Care Virtual Business Series Class 2: Marketing	Positive Ways to Support Children's Social & Emotional Development	Essential Elements for Family Conversations
All Our Kin Family Child Care Business Series Class 3: Family Child Care Contracts	Changing the Way We See Behaviors: Becoming Trauma Competent	Essential Elements for Successful Inclusion
All Our Kin Family Child Care Business Series Class 4: Policy Handbook & Partnerships	Circle of Influence--Implementing Shared Decision Making & Participative Management	Every Child Ready to Learn Series: Language & Vocabulary
All Our Kin Family Child Care Virtual Business Series Class 5: Risk Management	Classroom Management 101	Every Child Ready to Learn Series: Phonological & Print Awareness
All Our Kin Family Child Care Business Series Class 6: Time - Space Percentage	Communication is Key	Explore This! Arts & Crafts for School-Age Programs
All Our Kin Family Child Care Business Series Class 7: Accounting for Income & Expenses	Compassion Fatigue	Explore This! Drama & Dramatic Play for School-Age Programs
All Our Kin Family Child Care Virtual Business Series Class 8: Budgeting & Savings	Conflict Resolution: It's not Personal, It's Personality	Family Child Care Homes: Creative Spaces for Children to Learn
All Our Kin Family Child Care Virtual Business Series Class 9: Preparing for Taxes	Conscious Discipline for Preschoolers: Creating a Safe Haven of Cooperation	Family Engagement: A Five Protective Factor Approach
All Our Kin Family Child Care Virtual Business Series Class 10: Concluding Session	COOK-A-DOODLE-DOO! Cooking With Children in the Classroom	Family-Driven Engagement: A Strength-Based, Parent-Centered Approach
Any Time is 3Ts Time	Creating a Climate of Composure: Using the Five Steps of Self Regulations & the Safe Place (Conscious Discipline)	Fingerplays: The Best-Kept Secret for Transitions & Learning!
ASQ-3 Ages & Stages Questionnaires, 3 rd Ed.	Creating Adaptations, Routines, & Activities to Support Individual Needs of Preschoolers	FLIP IT Overview
ASQ-3 Resource Work Session	Creating Classrooms that Spark Creativity, Imagination, & Learning	FLIP IT: Four steps to help children learn about feelings & reduce behavior
ASQ-3 Ages & Stages Questionnaires	Creating the School Family Through the Environment	Hands Off the Worksheets, Hands on Fun...
ASQ:SE-2 Ages & Stages Questionnaires-Social-Emotional, 2 nd Ed.	Cultivating Self-Compassion	Dittoes Don't Build Dendrites
		Healing with Laughter & Grace
		Healthy Kids, Healthy Future: Best Practices for Physical Activity in ECE Settings



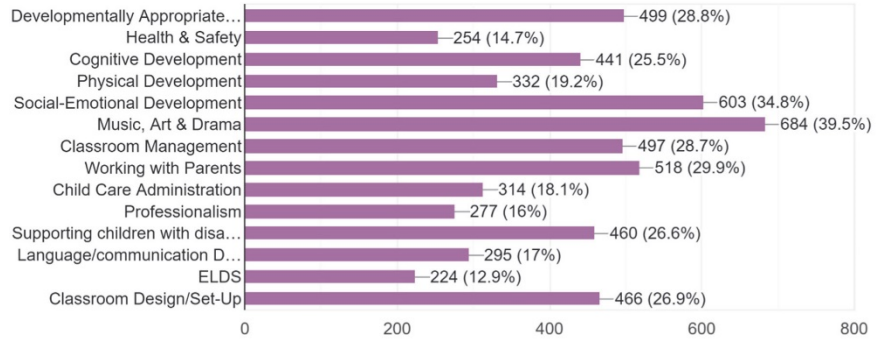
Heartsaver CPR-Infant, Child Adult, AED
 Heartsaver First Aid-Adult, Child, Infant
 Hide a Butterfly
 How to be Flexible when Planning Family Engagement
 I am a Lead Teacher in a High-Quality Program...Now What?!? Part 1
 I am a Lead Teacher in a High-Quality Program...Now What?!? Part 2
 I am a Lead Teacher in a High-Quality Program...Now What?!? Part 3
 Implementing Daily Literacy Routines: Language & Vocabulary
 Implementing Daily Literacy Routines: Phonological & Print Awareness
 Importance of Play
 Infant & Toddler Best Practice - Infant/Toddler Environments for Group Care
 Infant & Toddler Best Practice - The Developing Brain of an Infant/Toddler
 Infant & Toddler Best Practice - Transforming Your Day Through Play
 Intervention Strategies
 It Starts at the TOP: Creating a Culture of Inclusion as an Administrator in the Early Childhood Field
 Join Forces: What Makes a Team?
 Keeping Children Safe: Child Abuse & Neglect Curriculum for Early Childhood Professionals
 Laugh The Stress Away
 LENA Grow 1: Essentials
 Lesson Planning for Mixed-Age Groups in Family Child Care Homes
 Lesson Planning: Planning Meaningful Individualized Experiences for Young Children
 Life Savers for Administrators, Version 2
 Loose Parts & Intelligent Playthings
 Maintaining a Commitment to Professionalism
 Making the Most of Meetings
 Managing Conflict & Change
 Math Around the Room
 Mindful Recess
 Mindful Teachers, Mindful Classrooms
 Mission, Mindset, Money - Why Each One Matters in our Success Journey!
 Motivating Employees
 New to the Crew: Now What do I do?
 Observing & Recording Children's Behavior
 Observing Children: Understanding Why & How
 Outdoor Experiences
 Parents are Partners
 Planning a Safe, Healthy, Learning Environment
 Planning Great Staff Meetings
 Play Dough Extravaganza
 Positive Approaches to Difficult Conversations
 Preschoolers at Play: How Materials Can Support Learning & Development
 Prescription for Play: Encouraging Risky Play Prevention Strategies
 Principles of Child Development & Learning
 Product versus Process Art
 Professional Development: Planning Ahead
 Professional- Yes! Babysitter-No! The Link Between Professionalism & High-Quality Care
 Promoting Fun With Language
 Promoting Fun with Language-Oral Language Vocabulary Development
 Rat A Tat Tat!
 Routines, Transitions & Schedules for Infant & Toddler Classrooms
 Safety First! Considerations for Home Visitors
 Schemas in Young Children's Play
 School Readiness: Creating Lifelong Learners
 Social Media: Marketing for Your Child Care Business
 Steps to Advance Children's Physical & Intellectual Development
 Storytelling Techniques for Preschoolers
 Storytime Techniques for Preschoolers
 Strategies to Establish Productive Relationships with Families
 Strategies to Manage an Effective Program Operation
 Strengthening Business Practice for Family Child Care Module I: Budgets, Projections, & Planning
 Strengthening Business Practice for Family Child Care Module II: Financial Reports & Internal Controls
 Strengthening Business Practice for Family Child Care Module III: Marketing Your Program
 Strengthening Business Practices for Centers Module I: Budgets, Projections, & Planning-
 Strengthening Business Practices for Centers Module II: Financial Reports & Internal Controls
 Strengthening Business Practices for Centers Module IV: Recruiting & Retaining Staff
 Summer Programming: Activities to Enrich Summer Learning for School-Agers
 Supervision: Traditional & Contemporary Trends
 Team Heart Building Workshop
 The ABCDs of Language Nutrition
 The Challenge of Recruiting, Hiring, & Then Retaining Employees
 The Critical Need for Caring Champions
 The Empowered Educator: 3 Success Secrets to Terrific Teaching
 The Family Child Care Home Environment
 The Organized Classroom: Using Learning Centers
 The Right Fit-Recruiting, Selecting & Orienting Staff
 The StoryWalk : An Adventure in Literacy!
 Time to Rhyme
 Transitions, Routines, & Schedules for Preschool Classrooms
 Ultimate Concoctions
 Understanding Autism in the Preschool Years
 Unit 1: The Growing Brain: The Basics
 Unit 6: The Growing Brain: Understanding Behavior
 Unit 7: The Growing Brain: Everyday Play
 Using Classroom Management Practices to Plan- Conscious Discipline
 Welcome to the Crew: What Do I Do?
 Welcoming Children With an Official Diagnosis
 We've Got the Beat! Enhancing Your Program with Music & Movement
 What is Challenging Behavior
 What's Love Got to do With Teaching Early Childhood?
 What's Your Story & Why is it Important?
 When Mission Matters, Money Matters: Aligning Your Mission & Financial Model
 When Waiting Your Turn Doesn't Sound Like Fun- A Guide to Positive Problem Solving Strategies
 Why Appreciation is More Than a Thank You
 Why Are You Here? Understanding Challenging Behavior & Developing Strategies
 Why Do Babies Chew on Books: Understanding the Importance of Early Literacy Experiences During the Infant/Toddler Years
 Why Do Kids Misbehave?
 Why Won't They Listen? A Guide to Creating a Positive Classroom
 Worms, Shadows & Whirlpools Science is Everywhere!
 Your Trauma-Competent Tool Kit



4. How many professionals have taken your classes in the last year?

From July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, 16,045 professionals took ECRC classes. This includes all participants who have completed classes in the SDA.

I would like to attend trainings in the future on the following topics:
1,731 responses



5. What are their professional development needs in the upcoming two years to meet the requirements of the SUTQ professional development certificate?

Training attendees were surveyed about which training topics were of most interest. The 1,731 survey responses are summarized in the table above.

These responses, along with information gathered in the field, will be used to determine the ECRC’s professional development offerings over the next two years. The topics of most interest were creative arts (music, drama, art), social-emotional development, developmentally appropriate practice, and classroom management topics.

We also anticipate the need for additional health and safety training (including first aid/CPR), as well as business support training.

In June 2023, we surveyed providers across the system to ask what topics would be of most interest. The table to the right shows those responses. Similar to responses in 2022, lesson planning, curriculum and assessment, and hiring and retaining staff are most of interest, followed by social-emotional development and developmentally appropriate practice and play.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Art	0.00%	0
Cultural awareness	8.42%	8
Environments	9.47%	9
Mindfulness	9.47%	9
Self-care	10.53%	10
Supporting children with special needs including homelessness	11.58%	11
Observation	12.63%	12
Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)	12.63%	12
Gross motor	12.63%	12
Portfolios	13.68%	13
Self-Care	13.68%	13
Nature and outdoor activities	13.68%	13
Trauma/Resiliency	14.74%	14
Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)	16.84%	16
Literacy	16.84%	16
Running effective staff meetings	16.84%	16
Business practices	18.95%	18
Science/Social Studies/Math	20.00%	19
New staff orientation	22.11%	21
Systems to support high-quality ratings	23.16%	22
Family Engagement	26.32%	25
Developmentally appropriate practice and play	26.32%	25
Social/emotional	27.37%	26
Hiring and retaining staff	29.47%	28
Lesson planning	30.53%	29
Curriculum and assessment	30.53%	29
Total Respondents: 95		

6. What do the providers who are not already at a rated program need to focus on to meet Step Up To Quality requirements?

As we provide technical assistance and coaching, providers indicate a need for training on requirements and steps, assistance in walking them through the process, and help with navigating the OCLQS. Many also need help with developing systems to maintain licensing requirements, leadership development assistance, and peer support. Staff often need to dispel myths about SUTQ and explain the benefits for providers, for families, and for children. Since the pandemic caused a shortage of early childhood staff, many programs also need help with staff recruitment, retention, and engagement. In addition, there is high demand for staff orientation training and CDA classes to support new staff coming into the field.

7. Which classes do you plan to provide to ensure all providers can meet the SUTQ requirements?

The ECRC will offer a variety of Ohio Approved classes, based on information gathered through this needs assessment process, during outreach calls, and from training attendees. There is significant interest in the following topics:

- Health and safety, including CPR/first aid
- Fiscal management
- Child Development Associate classes
- Classroom management
- Curriculum and assessment
- The ASQ questionnaires
- Aligning lesson plans with ELDS and curriculum and assessment tools
- Supporting children who have experienced trauma
- Supporting children with special needs
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Administrator training
- Program assessment: BAS, PAS, Environmental Rating Scales
- Classroom environments
- Creative arts
- Working with families
- Language and communication
- Developing systems to reduce likelihood of serious and moderate risks
- Emergency preparedness
- Supporting families experiencing homelessness

8. How will you advertise classes available online?

Classes are listed in the Ohio Professional Registry, and the class schedule is posted on our website. Social media and email are also used to promote upcoming training opportunities. In addition, Training Specialists and Early Childhood Specialists provide ongoing technical assistance to help programs find training that meets their needs. Upcoming training sessions are promoted during current training sessions and by staff working in the field to help providers meet their professional development goals. When asked about how they prefer to learn about available classes, providers indicated they prefer to receive information via email, followed by texts, social media, and our website.

9. How will your agency utilize resources to implement ELA within your region?

As the need arises, we will ensure programs that are interested or that are mandated to participate are trained and have ample offerings available. We have identified online training opportunities through the Ohio Department of Education that can be shared with programs in need of access.



Health and Safety Training

1. How many providers are in your service area?

Each quarter, we assess demand for and supply of health and safety training in each county by contacting local providers and reviewing course offerings. Currently, 10 providers offer a variety of health and safety training classes in our SDA. Some classes are currently on hold or offered virtually. They're listed below.

Organization	Training Provided	Mahoning	Medina	Portage	Summit	Stark	Trumbull
CPR First Aid Training of Ohio	CPR/First Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
YMCA of Youngstown	CPR, First Aid	X					X
First Choice CPR	CPR, First Aid, Health & Safety, Child Abuse Recognition & Prevention, Communicable Disease	X	X	X	X	X	X
Med-Cert Training Center	Communicable Disease, Child Abuse & Neglect, CPR, First Aid				X		
Boardman Fire Dept.	CPR, First Aid	X					
Medina County Health Dept.	CPR, First Aid, Communicable Disease		X				
American Red Cross	First Aid, CPR	X	X	X	X	X	X
Air Child Care Training Solutions	CPR, First Aid, Communicable Disease, Child Abuse and Neglect	X	X	X	X	X	X
Early Childhood Resource Center	CPR/First Aid (blended course), Child Abuse & Neglect Recognition & Prevention	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kent Parks & Recreation	Varies each year			X	X		

2. How will you ensure there is adequate health and safety training offered in your area?

We will work through the providers listed above, and with qualified contracted individuals, to meet the demand. In addition, one ECRC staff member is trained to deliver child abuse and neglect prevention and identification training and two staff members are trained to deliver CPR/First Aid, thus enabling us to offer this training.

Where a need exists, we will schedule CPR/First Aid with our staff or partner with a local provider to ensure additional courses are delivered. We also partner with local agencies to provide training on a variety of health and safety topics that support caregiver preparation for emergencies and pandemics, prevent injury or death, and keep children safe. Topics will be based on identified needs, but could include safe sleep (health departments); environmental hazards (EPA, health departments, and fire departments); emergency drills (lockdown, fire, tornado); prevention of injury (including administration of medication and health and safety checks); caring for children with special needs/health conditions; and developing policies and procedures that prevent suspension, expulsion, and denial of service due to behavior in child care (45 C.F.R).

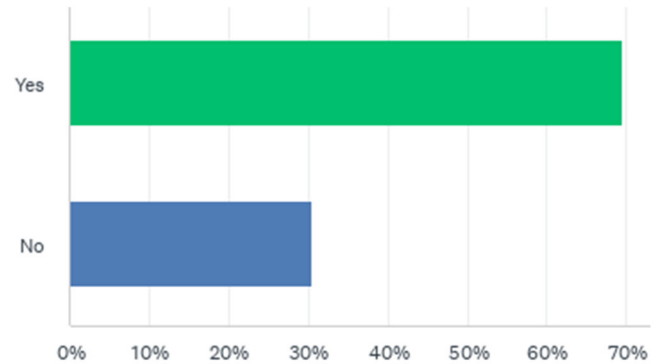


Most survey respondents (69%) indicated that ample health and safety training was available in their area. Those who indicated that ample training was not available were asked what training they felt was needed. Of those respondents, 25% said First Aid/CPR, while a little over 7% said Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Communicable Diseases.

3. How will you make your providers aware of trainings?

Because the survey responses clearly indicate that a majority of providers prefer email contact, email is our primary way of reaching providers about training. Each quarter, we create a training calendar listing all classes scheduled for the upcoming quarter. The calendar is promoted via email and on social media, and it's posted on our website. Training is also listed on the Ohio Professional Registry, and social media is used to promote upcoming classes. Training Specialists and Early Childhood Specialists will continue to help programs find training that meets their needs. Upcoming sessions are promoted during current training sessions and are promoted by staff working in the field to help providers meet their professional development goals.

Availability of Health & Safety Training



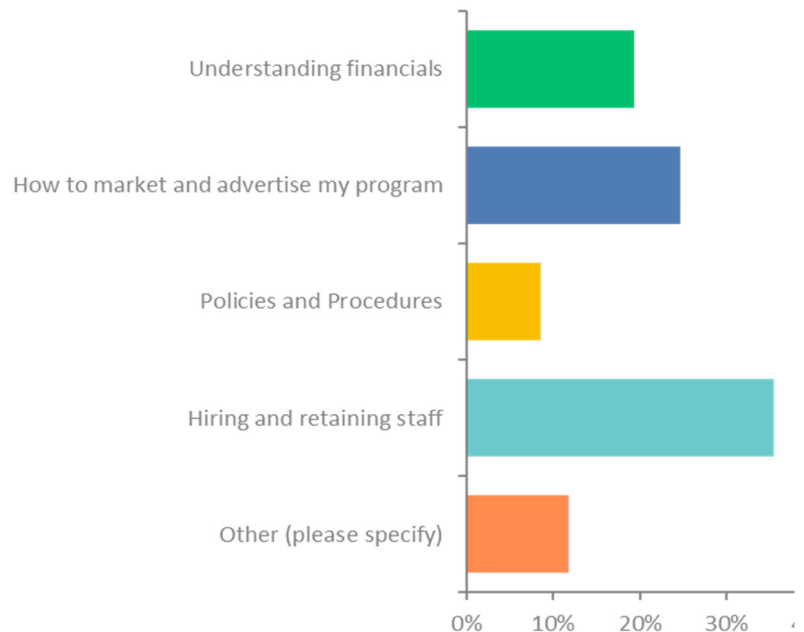
Technical Assistance

1. What are the primary issues the providers in your area are having with earning or maintaining a Step Up To Quality rating?

Programs in the region have identified a wide range of barriers to earning or maintaining ratings. Some barriers we have documented through our technical assistance and coaching efforts include:

- Finding, retaining, training, and paying high-quality staff to meet SUTQ standards;
- Meeting deadlines due to missed communication from the OCLQS system;
- Finding the time and financial resources to send staff to training;
- Completing SUTQ forms and using computer technology to complete applications/reports;
- Adjusting and maintaining business practices to sustain star ratings;
- Maintaining staff morale amid increasing job expectations;
- Avoiding licensing non-compliances through staff education and oversight; and

Support and Training Needs Without Stabilization Grants



- Obtaining curriculum and assessment materials and training staff to use them.

In addition, we asked providers about what type of training and coaching they will need since the Stabilization Grants have ended. The chart above shows their responses. By far, hiring and retaining staff and marketing their businesses were identified as the greatest needs.

2. How will you provide targeted technical assistance to providers?

Each regional ECRC office has from three to five Early Childhood Specialists with specific early childhood expertise. They provide targeted technical assistance to programs serving a wide range of ages, from birth to school age. Every effort will be made to provide training across age ranges, so that staff can be early childhood generalists and work with programs in a variety of ways. Technical assistance will be given to programs that are not yet working toward a star rating, including helping them find training, answering age-specific questions, and making referrals for services (early childhood mental health, health department, etc.), and to individuals seeking to open a child care program.

Early Childhood Specialists focus specifically on age-related questions related to infants and toddlers. Regional Coordinators and Early Childhood Specialists work with programs' SUTQ-related quality improvement goals centering on administrative and leadership practices, family and community partnerships, learning and development, ratio/group size and licensing adherence, and staff qualifications and professional development needs.

Administrators wishing to earn or increase a star rating work with Regional Coordinators/Early Childhood Specialists, who act as coaches to help them develop goals and strategies to increase program quality by focusing on the standards needed to achieve their desired star rating. One of the most frequently cited obstacles to increasing star ratings is the ability to meet the staff education requirements in the program standards. Programs need support in developing administrative leadership that can provide the infrastructure required to move toward higher quality. Program directors often cannot see the path and are overwhelmed by day-to-day challenges. Coaches can provide the necessary outsider perspective to help administrators strategize and devise a systematic approach to moving toward higher quality. In addition, coaches can answer age-related questions and concerns and direct staff in finding resources and implementing best practices. Coaches provide consultation to the programs they serve, and they work with program administrators to review SUTQ guidance documents and examine the program's readiness for the star rating being pursued. The coach works alongside the program administrator to create a quality improvement plan that includes goals, a timeline, and a to-do list that outline specific steps and strategies for reaching goals. The coach provides in-depth coaching, targeted services, and interventions in adherence with the domains of the program standards.

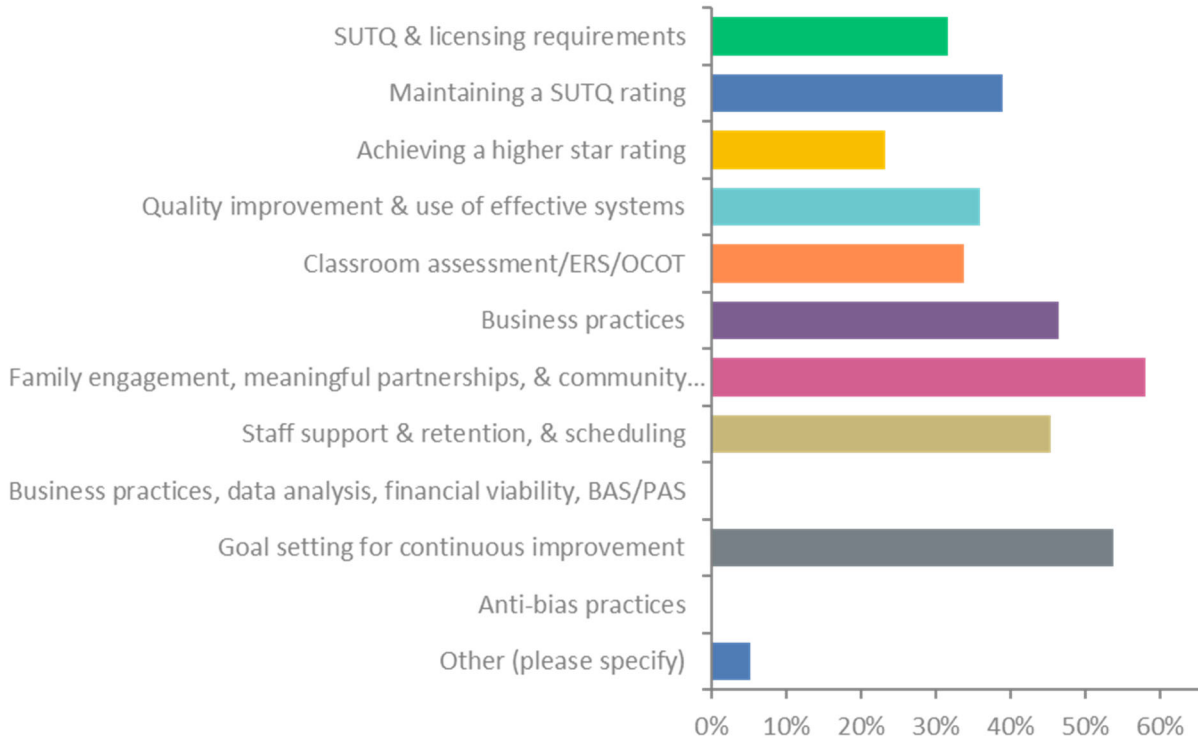


When asked what coaching topics would be most needed by ECRC staff, most respondents cited family engagement, followed by goal setting for continuous improvement, and business practices.

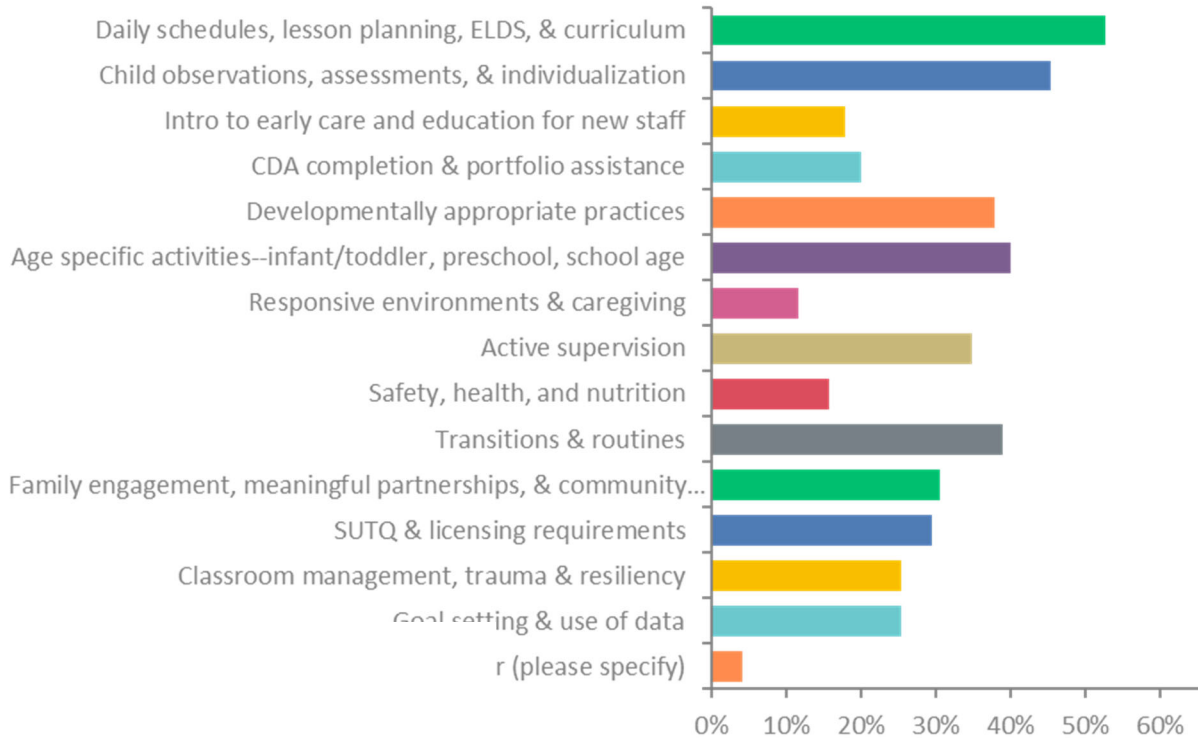
Child care providers surveyed indicated that classroom staff need the most coaching on daily schedules, lesson planning, ELDS & curriculum, and age-specific activities. Our Early Childhood Specialists are qualified to provide individualized classroom assistance in all of these areas.



Coaching Needs of Administrators



Coaching Needs of Child Care Staff



The ECRC also hosts quarterly administrator meetings designed to strengthen administrative leadership skills, support networking, gather information on needs, and provide assistance. Guest speakers often present relevant information on services or issues facing the field. Representatives from ODJFS and child care licensing/SUTQ frequent the meetings to clarify steps and processes and keep administrators informed about rule changes.

3. Will you offer technical assistance on early childhood issues identified within the service delivery area?

The ECRC offers technical assistance based on issues identified within the region, and keeps ODJFS informed about barriers, inconsistencies, and issues that emerge during the process.

Providers tell us that guidance on forms and documents is the most helpful kind of technical assistance, followed by administrator support around leadership and organization, curriculum and assessment support, and technology support.

Other requested technical assistance includes:

- Strategies and systems to implement high-quality practices,
- Classroom observation to support teacher improvement,
- Peer-to-peer opportunities to gain new ideas and solve problems,
- Training on staff meetings and motivational sessions focusing on how to get rated, and
- On-site visits to show administrators how to navigate the OCLQS and instruct them on standards and best practices.

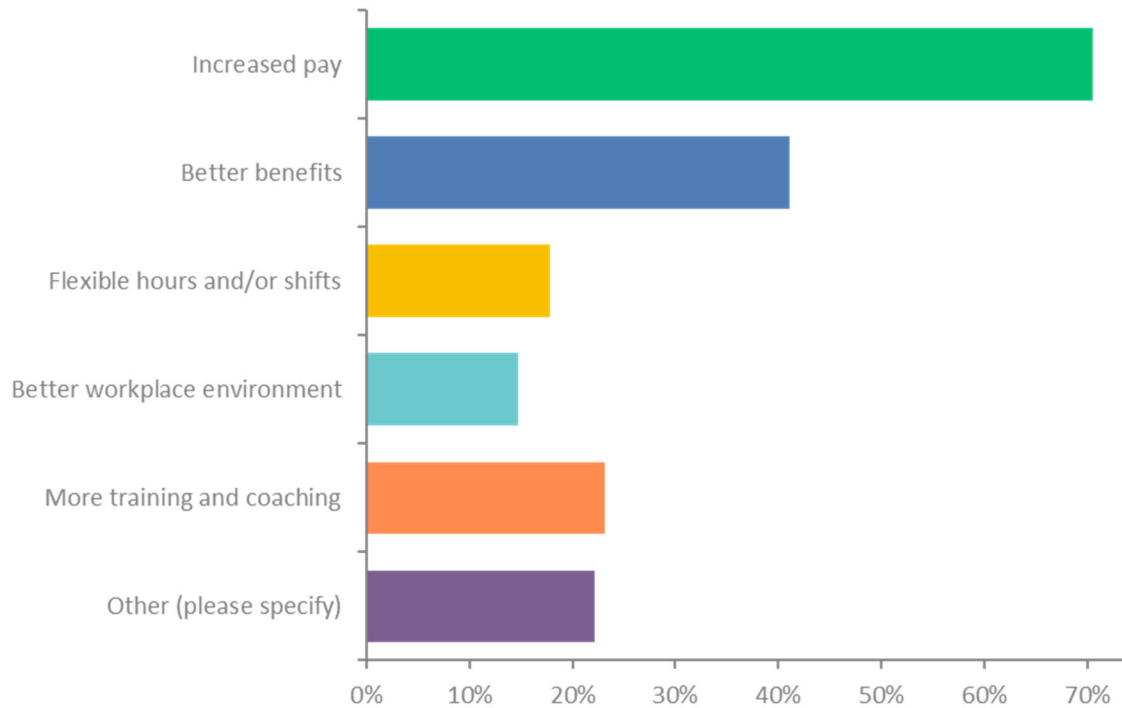
Many providers in our region are ineligible to participate in SUTQ due to serious or moderate risk points. Others have lost ratings because they did not submit SUTQ reports on time. These two areas are an ongoing focus. We help programs implement systems to prevent and lessen the likelihood of these issues while helping them develop organizational strategies to ensure reports get submitted on time so that ratings don't get lost.

Staffing remains a major challenge throughout the early childhood field. Nearly 46% of respondents indicated that they had one to five (or more) job openings available; nearly 15% indicated they had more than three openings to fill. Only 54% indicated they were fully staffed.

Of the 96 respondents, nearly 3% indicated they plan to leave the field within the next year, and 23% indicated they were unsure whether they would remain in early childhood. When asked about what support they would need to stay in their current positions, over 70% said increased pay and 41% said better benefits, as indicated in the chart. To tackle these issues, the ECRC is operating a number of workforce programs. The goal is to attract new individuals to the early childhood field and support programs in their efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified staff.



Supports Needed to Maintain Employment



4. How will you provide technical assistance to providers to achieve a higher star rating (3-5)?

Providers spend a great deal of time readying their programs to apply for an initial star rating or working to increase their star rating. The ECRC wants to make sure programs recognize that earning a star is only the beginning.

When a program loses a star, it's often because the administrative leadership, oversight, or systems are not in place to effectively monitor staff, licensing requirements, and SUTQ standards. Infrastructure must be in place from the top down and bottom up to ensure a program retains its rating. There's no sense in investing state resources to help a program become rated if the program doesn't have the leadership needed to understand and maintain basic licensure requirements. That's why the ECRC's Specialists spend a great deal of time focusing on how to build systems that sustain quality. ECRC Specialists are trained on a variety of classroom and program assessments that support programs in addressing continuous quality improvement. Instruments such as the Program Administration Scale (PAS) and Business Administration Scale (BAS) provide valid, reliable, and widely accepted measures of leadership and management practices of early childhood programs.

The ECRC helps program administrators to identify risks and potential licensing violations and to develop infrastructure at the center or home, using the PAS/BAS assessment as a springboard for program improvement and quality maintenance. Regular provider meetings serve as a forum for discussion of administrative topics and brainstorming about strategies to ensure programs continue to maintain and move toward higher quality practices. Meetings focus on topics such as creating a business model, developing marketing strategies, staff recruitment and retention, compensation and benefit packages, continuous quality improvement, and pulling it all together. The provider meetings also promote peer support and help the Early Childhood Specialists address barriers, recognize achievements, answer questions, and devise progress strategies.



5. What types of technical assistance are you providing to help providers become rated or maintain a star rating?

Our technical approach prioritizes providers that are not rated, that have lost a rating and need to re-apply, that are in need of renewal support, or that wish to increase or maintain a rating.

In FY24, we will continue to promote the advantages of star rating to providers that are not interested in becoming rated and will seek to engage providers in working to increase ratings.

The ECRC's technical assistance includes the following components:

- Contacting unrated providers and offering services that will prepare them for the rating process,
- Setting a schedule and specific work plan for each unrated provider,
- Giving unrated providers intensive technical assistance on SUTQ program standards,
- Assisting providers in obtaining necessary forms and documents to be submitted,
- Assisting and advising providers on registration and verification processes,
- Assisting unrated providers in the submission of required SUTQ documents,
- Assisting existing providers in rating renewals, and
- Assisting unrated providers that have lost their rating to build systems for improving and maintaining quality.



