Results from the National Inventory of Extension Programming for the ECE Workforce

Katherine E. Speirs[1], Courtney Aldrich[2], Kyleigh Brown[3], Azriella Friedman[1], Courtney T. Luecking[4], Audrey Rider[5], Carrie Shrier[2], Hope Wilson[1], LaDonna Werth[6]

[1]University of Arizona, [2]Michigan State University, [3]University of Missouri Extension, [4]University of Kentucky, [5]South Dakota State University, [6]University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Background

- Early childhood, the period between birth and age five, is a time of significant cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development that lays the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and behavior (Institute of Medicine, 2000).
- Almost 50% of children five and younger in the US spend time in early care and education (ECE) settings.
- ECE occurs in a variety of settings including child care centers, preschools, Head Start or Early Head Start centers, pre-kindergarten classrooms, and family child care homes.
- Benefits of high-quality ECE programs for children:
  - Short term: develop skills that support school readiness – cognition and learning approaches, language and communication, social and emotional skills, and health and well-being (Institute of Medicine, 2000; Morrissey, 2019)
  - Longer term: increased educational attainment, increased likelihood of employment and higher earnings, and better health (Sparling & Meunier, 2019)
- Benefits for parents: high-quality ECE is an important support for pursuing education and/or securing and maintaining paid employment (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015)
- CES are uniquely positioned to provide ECE programming: expertise in translating research to action, experience providing programming through local networks, and ability to reach rural and other underserved populations (Harden et al., 2021; Nelson-Smith, 2011)
- Cooperative Extension Systems (CES) provide ECE programming (e.g., direct education to young children; professional development; technical assistance; and policy, systems, and environmental change interventions; Durden et al., 2013; O'Hara-Tompkins et al., 2021; Ostergren et al., 2011)

Aims of the National Inventory of Cooperative Extension Programming

- provide information about how Cooperative Extension Systems provide programming and disseminate information to ECE professionals;
- catalogue the direct education and policy, systems, and environmental change interventions that CESs provide for ECE professionals and young children in ECE settings;
- document the state and local ECE systems, agencies, and programs that Cooperative Extension professionals work with and the nature of these relationships; and
- describe how Cooperative Extension professionals who serve the ECE workforce connect and network with one another.

Methods

Data Collection

- Compiled a list of all 111 Land Grant Institutions (LGI; 1862, 1890, & 1994)
  - Requested surveys from 142 people representing 87 CES in 50 states, WDC, & 6 territories
- Initial email & reminder 2 weeks later
- Unlimited number of respondents from each CES
- Inclusion criteria: over 18 & employed by a CES

Instrument

- 2 rounds of cognitive interviews
- 58-question Qualtrics survey
- Survey data collected March - June 2021

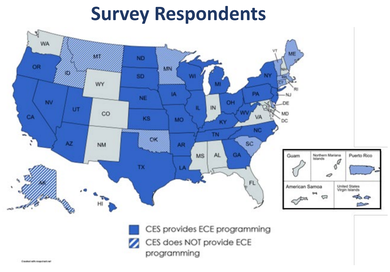
Sample

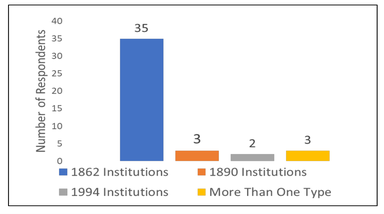
- Final sample: 73 individuals from 43 CES in 38 states and 2 territories
  - 49% response rate
- Respondents from all regions & types of LGIs
- 95% of respondents worked for FCS Extension
- 50% worked for Extension for ≤ 10 years
- 13 CESs (30%) did not provide ECE programming

Analysis

- Unit of analysis: CES
- Multiple respondents from 15 CES
  - Resolved discrepancies by including all reports of programming and services

Survey Respondents





Conclusions and Implications

Need for Additional Programming

- 30% of CESs do not provide ECE programming
- Likely need additional funding & personnel

Multistate & National Initiatives

- This inventory identifies several areas of shared work across CESs
- Organize through Extension Foundation and NEAFCS

Opportunities to Diversify ECE Programming Provided by CESs

- Current focus is health/wellness, nutrition, & physical activity
- Leverage SNAP-Ed and EFNEP funding to develop and grow programming in other areas
- Bring together CE professionals working in different areas

Acknowledgements

- We would like to thank Haley Adams at the University of Kentucky for her help in entering the survey into Qualtrics and Dominique Garcia at the University of Arizona and Lindsay Luebbe at Michigan State University for their help with participant recruitment.
- We would also like to thank the eight Cooperative Extension professionals who participated in the cognitive interviews and the 73 survey respondents.
- We acknowledge funding from the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families for poster printing.

Results

Information Dissemination

- Most popular methods of disseminating information from CES to ECE teachers or providers: email (used by 87% of CES), print media (83%), in-person communication (80%), Extension website (80%), video conferencing (73%), and social media posts (73%).
- Most CES used multiple information dissemination methods; 70% of CES used seven or more.

Program Delivery

- Most popular methods of delivering ECE programming: in-person programs, classes, or meetings (90%); Extension fact sheets, briefs, or newsletters (87%); online programs, classes, or meetings (87%); and prepared curriculum for use by ECE teachers in the classroom (80%).
- Most CES used multiple program delivery methods; 43% of CES used five & another 30% used four.

Direct Education for Young Children

- 77% of CES provided direct education to 0-5-year-old-children in ECE settings, most commonly at Head Start Centers (87%), private child care centers (78%), public pre-school sites (78%), or family child care homes (57%)

Technical Assistance for ECE Professionals

- 63% of CES provided technical assistance with a variety of structures/programs

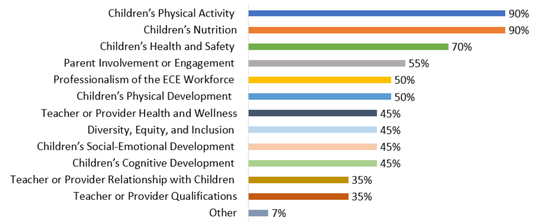
Professional Development & Training for ECE Professionals

- 87% of CES provided professional development for ECE professionals
- 96% of CES provided in-person or synchronous online classes, 50% provided asynchronous online classes

Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change Interventions

- 67% of CES used PSE in ECE settings

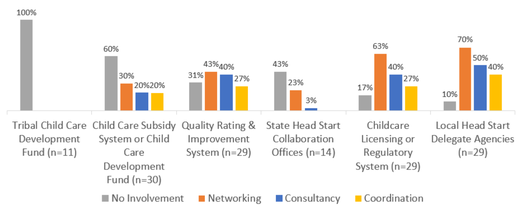
Outcomes Targeted by Cooperative Extension Systems that Implement PSE Change Strategies (n=20)



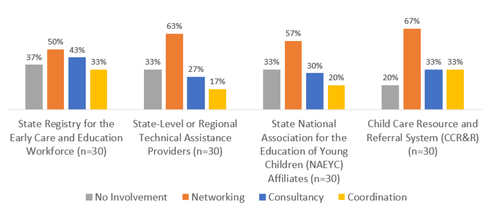
Involvement with State or Local Agencies & Programs

- **No Involvement:** CES does not work with this agency or program at all.
- **Networking:** CES shares information & talks with agency or program for mutual benefit; don't work together.
- **Consultancy:** CES delivers programming, training, or services requested by the agency or program; paid or unpaid.
- **Coordination:** CES and agency or program engage in mutual projects, both groups contribute to conceptualization & design, includes implementing a grant-funded program (e.g., SNAP-ed).

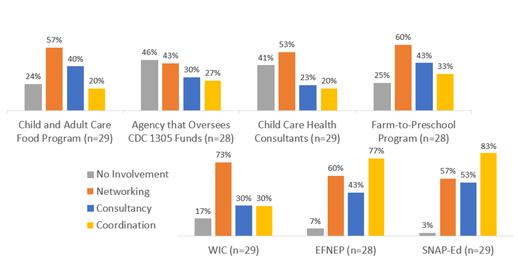
Licensing, Regulation, Quality Improvement, & Subsidy Agencies or Programs



Professional Development & Technical Assistance Agencies or Programs



Health, Nutrition & Wellness Agencies or Programs



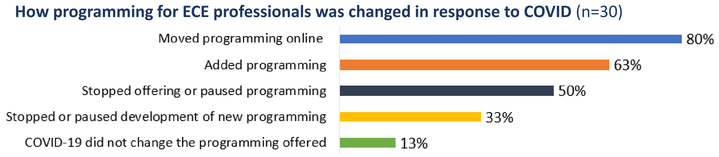
Networking

- 89% of individual respondents belonged to at least one professional association; 63% were members of NEAFCS

Response to the COVID Pandemic

- 22 CES offered programming specifically designed to help ECE professionals respond to COVID
  - >65% disseminated info to ECE professionals using email, Extension website, social media, print media, video conferencing and phone calls.

How programming for ECE professionals was changed in response to COVID (n=30)



Strategies Used by CESs to Make Decisions about Programming Designed to Help ECE Professionals Respond to the Pandemic (n=22)

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
Norton School of Human Ecology

A PDF version of this academic poster is available at:
http://fmi.arizona.edu/posters