National scan of child care workforce retention programs

Results from a 2018 evaluation of the Retaining Early Educators through Attaining Incentives Now (R.E.E.T.A.I.N.) Bonus Program

Child care programs nationwide struggle to retain qualified employees, and low wages may be one factor influencing providers’ decisions to leave the field. R.E.E.T.A.I.N., Minnesota’s child care workforce retention program, provides a wage bonus to highly trained child care providers who agree to remain in their current positions for at least one year following receipt of the bonus. Across the country, just 16 similar programs use funds to supplement wages with the intent of reducing turnover among center-based and/or family child care providers.

At a glance: How does R.E.E.T.A.I.N. compare to other retention programs?

12 Require a minimum length of employment at same location ✔
11 Use wage supplements and do not restrict how recipients use funds ✔
11 Require a minimum level of education ✔
  7 Require applicants to enroll in the state’s professional development system ✔
  6 Tie supplement or bonus amount to career lattice level ✔
  4 Fund tuition and college materials only ✗
  3 Require applicants to work for a QRIS participating program ✗
  3 Require applicants to serve a portion of children from specific populations ✗

Note: Green checkmarks indicate commonalities with the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. program.

How effective are similar programs at improving workforce retention?

Outcomes studies have found some positive associations between wage incentives and retention, but findings may not be generalizable.

Further research is needed to explore long-term outcomes for a wider variety of participants.

1 Based on internet searches conducted for the study
2 Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
Perceptions of R.E.E.T.A.I.N.
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Child care programs nationwide struggle to retain qualified employees, and low wages may be one factor influencing providers’ decisions to leave the field. R.E.E.T.A.I.N., Minnesota’s workforce retention program, provides a wage bonus to highly trained child care providers. A total of 571 center-based and family child care providers completed an online survey about their experiences with and perceptions of the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. program.

92% of surveyed recipients* indicated that the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. bonus was enough to help them, even in a small way. Over half of participants used funds to purchase good or resources for their personal use (see fact sheet on how providers use R.E.E.T.A.I.N. funds).

* Providers who reported receiving one or more bonuses since 2013 (n = 301)

Did receiving a bonus influence recipients’ decision to remain in the workforce?

About half of surveyed recipients somewhat or strongly agreed that receiving a bonus influenced their decision to remain in the workforce. Responses did not differ among center-based and family child care providers.

What are the overall perceptions of R.E.E.T.A.I.N. among applicants (including those who did not receive a bonus)?

93% somewhat or strongly agreed they would recommend R.E.E.T.A.I.N. to another provider.

87% somewhat or strongly agreed the application was worth their time.

74% plan to apply to R.E.E.T.A.I.N. again.
How providers use R.E.E.T.A.I.N. funds

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How did recipients* report using the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. funds?

Surveyed recipients most commonly described the funds as helpful for purchasing goods and resources either for personal use or for their child care program.

* Providers who reported receiving one or more bonuses since 2013 (n = 301)

Family child care providers were more likely to describe bonuses as really helpful for purchasing resources for their child care programs.

Center-based providers were more likely to describe bonuses as really helpful for purchasing personal resources.

Note: * indicates a statistically significant difference (p < .05)
This is one in a series of fact sheets from an evaluation of Minnesota’s R.E.E.T.A.I.N. Bonus Program. For more information, visit: https://www.childtrends.org/publications/evaluation-of-reetain
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