

A Wage and Staffing Model for Non-Teaching Roles at Georgia Child Care Centers: Expectation Versus Reality

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Collected Data from More than 34,000 Child Care Workers to Better Understand Child Care Service Costs

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces wage estimates annually for more than 830 occupations identified as Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC).¹ The estimates are organized by job characteristics and geographic location, including national, state, and metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. Among the occupations of interest to child care cost modelers are Education and Child Care Administrators, Preschool and Daycare (SOC 11-9031); Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education (SOC 25-2011); Teaching Assistants, Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School, Except Special Education (SOC 25-9042); and Child Care Workers (SOC 39-9011). Occupational estimates are also available at the national level for specific industries, including Child Day Care Services (NAICS 64400).

Seeking to advance its child care cost modeling efforts, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) identified an opportunity to improve on the BLS estimates and better understand the drivers of wage differences to build an alternative methodology for establishing state child care subsidy rates. As part of its STABLE 4WARD stabilization grants, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), DECAL obtained quarterly reports between 2022 and 2024 from 3,677 providers including their employees' hourly wages and education credentials. To date, the agency has collected data on more than 34,000 active workers in the child care industry, including center directors and those in other non-teaching roles. DECAL examined this information not only for wage statistics for non-teaching staff but also for staffing levels as a function of facility size, enabling the agency to create a staffing model for Georgia child care centers.

DECAL examined wage statistics for non-teaching staff and staffing levels as a function of facility size, facilitating the creation of a staffing model for Georgia child care centers.

Expenses related to non-teaching staff is an important consideration in estimating the cost of providing child care services. However, little data is available to explain which roles are typically filled at what compensation level and the variations by facility size. Anecdotally, larger centers may employ support staff in addition to their teaching staff, while smaller centers may employ few, if any, additional staff beyond their teachers and a director who share the operating and maintenance responsibilities. But does this represent reality?

To answer this question, DECAL identified 16 roles common to child care providers. Seven of these roles pertain to teaching, including two for Georgia's Pre-K Program, the state's free, lottery-funded educational program that prepares four year olds for kindergarten.² The other nine roles cover non-teaching responsibilities at child care centers, including director, assistant director, cook/nutrition staff,

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/oes/>

² The seven roles include the following: child care center lead teacher, assistant teacher, floater, Georgia's Pre-K lead teacher and assistant teacher, family home provider, and family home teacher or aide.

administrative support staff, custodian/janitorial staff, bus driver, child care center owner, family service/transition coach or staff working directly with families, and curriculum coordinator. From its STABLE 4WARD wage data, DECAL was able to isolate the effects of geographic location, participation in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) child care subsidy program, and star ratings assigned by Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system. Table 1 shows the median statewide hourly wage rates for non-teaching roles, in which DECAL observed a consistent trend of higher wages in more

Table 1: Median Hourly Wages for Non-Teaching Staff at Child Care Centers in Georgia, by Geographic Location, and Wage Factors for Employer's Child Care Subsidy Participation

	Child Care Center Director	Child Care Center Assistant Director	Child Care Center Cook/Nutrition Staff	Administrative Support Staff	Child Care Center Custodian/Janitorial Staff	Child Care Center Bus Driver	Child Care Center Owner	Family Service/Transition Coach Staff Working Directly	Curriculum Coordinator
MRZ 1	\$23.78	\$18.00	\$14.00	\$17.96	\$13.17	\$14.00	\$25.00	\$20.37	\$20.19
MRZ 2	\$18.67	\$15.00	\$11.59	\$15.00	\$11.00	\$10.50	\$20.00	\$17.33	\$17.88
MRZ 3	\$15.00	\$14.00	\$10.00	\$15.50	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$12.37	\$20.00
Total	\$20.19	\$17.00	\$13.00	\$17.00	\$12.00	\$13.00	\$22.50	\$20.13	\$20.00
Counts:	996	790	563	168	122	133	124	87	82
	553	373	305	63	88	75	55	29	17
	<u>190</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>
	1,739	1,246	965	251	233	217	199	121	106

MRZ 1 - No Subsidies	1.25	1.18	1.19	1.06	1.25	1.06	1.11	1.24	1.05
MRZ 2 - No Subsidies	0.90	0.93	0.92	0.95	1.00	0.79	0.89	0.72	0.89
MRZ 3 - No Subsidies	0.74	0.77	0.77	0.85	0.83	0.77	0.67		
MRZ 1 - Receives Subsidies	1.07	1.00	1.02	1.00	1.04	1.10	1.11	0.99	1.00
MRZ 2 - Receives Subsidies	0.94	0.88	0.85	0.82	0.85	0.81	0.79	1.04	0.90
MRZ 3 - Receives Subsidies	0.74	0.82	0.77	0.91	1.04	0.88	0.67	0.61	1.00

Note: Georgia divides its geographic regions into three market rate zones (MRZs): MRZ 1 represents the larger urban and suburban areas of the state; MRZ 2 represents smaller urban and suburban areas; MRZ 3 represents the remaining, more rural areas of the state. A list of counties by MRZ can be found at <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/AppendixC-CAPS%20Reimbursement%20Rates.pdf>. Blanks indicate no reported staff by MRZ and subsidy participation.

*Example: The statewide median hourly wage for all assistant directors is \$17.00, and assistant directors at child care centers in Market Rate Zone 1 and serving no children on subsidies have a wage factor of 1.18; therefore, the median wage for those assistant directors is \$17.00 * 1.18 = \$20.06.*

urban areas. The bottom of Table 1 shows the wage factors that can be multiplied by the hourly wage for each position to calculate the median wage by geography and CAPS participation. Such wage factors can make it easier to discern trends along these parameters, although low counts complicate the analysis in some cases. For example, after controlling for geographic region, the median hourly wage was lower among providers who serve children receiving subsidies. After controlling for geography and subsidy participation—and for education credentials in the case of center directors—DECAL did not observe trends in median hourly wage based on quality rating, so those results are not shown here.³

Prior to collecting the STABLE 4WARD data, the agency hypothesized there would be a difference in staffing levels between high- and low-quality providers. It believed higher-

Median hourly wages for non-teaching staff varied by geographic region and participation in child care subsidies, but not by quality level.

³ Center director wages as a function of education credential are discussed in a companion report: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2024). *Wages for Assistant Teachers and Center Directors Vary by Education and Subsidy Participation, But Not by Provider Quality*. https://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CostofCareReport_WagesforLeadTeachers.pdf

quality providers might employ more non-teaching staff so that teachers and directors could spend more time interacting with children and their families. Furthermore, DECAL believed that larger centers would employ more non-teaching staff in more varied roles than smaller centers. To test these assumptions, DECAL assigned a facility size based on classroom count to 1,363 centers receiving STABLE 4WARD grants. Table 2 shows the median staffing levels for child care centers when grouped as follows: small single-site centers of 1–4 classrooms; medium single-site centers of 5–8 classrooms; large single-site centers of 9–12 classrooms; super-size, single-site centers of 13 or more classrooms; and multi-site operators (MSOs) managing more than one child care center location. When the total non-teaching staff shown in Table 2 exceeds the sum of directors, assistant directors, and nutrition staff, the difference can be attributed to a mix of any one of the other roles identified in Table 1—but no single role dominated in the data.

Table 2: Median Headcount for Non-Teaching Staff at Child Care Centers in Georgia, by Facility Size and Quality Rating

	Child Care Center Director	Child Care Center Assistant Director	Child Care Center Cook/Nutrition Staff	Total Non-Teaching Staff	Total Provider Count
Single Site (small)	1.00			2.00	303
Single Site (medium)	1.00	1.00		3.00	633
Single Site (large)	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	196
Single Site (super-size)	1.00	1.00		3.00	81
MSO	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	150
Total	1.00	1.00		3.00	1363
Counts:	265	104	83		
	573	335	311		
	177	154	128		
	73	54	39		
	0	0	0		
Total	1088	647	561		
Headcount by Facility Size and Quality Level:					
Single Site (small) - 1 Star	1.00			2.00	97
Single Site (small) - 2 Star	1.00			2.00	83
Single Site (small) - 3 Star	1.00			2.00	34
Single Site (medium) - 1 Star	1.00	1.00		3.00	197
Single Site (medium) - 2 Star	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	227
Single Site (medium) - 3 Star	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	70
Single Site (large) - 1 Star	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	33
Single Site (large) - 2 Star	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	72
Single Site (large) - 3 Star	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	33
Single Site (super-size) - 1 Star	1.00	1.00		3.00	22
Single Site (super-size) - 2 Star	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	26
Single Site (super-size) - 3 Star	1.00			2.00	3

Note: Blank cells indicate a value of zero (0). MSO locations under the same operator can vary by quality level; therefore a breakdown of MSO headcount by quality level is not shown.

DECAL’s analysis showed that staffing levels rose with increasing facility size but not by as much as it had expected. The typical number of non-teaching staff varied from 2.0 for small centers to 4.0 for large centers, suggesting one staff member in addition to the center director for every four classrooms. Furthermore, the median staffing level at super-size centers was no higher than at large centers. Finally, the analysis did not show a correlation between higher quality ratings and higher non-teaching staff headcount. DECAL expected to find that high-quality centers invest more heavily in non-teaching staff, resulting in a higher operating cost per child. Instead, the agency found that center-based programs with higher quality ratings did not have substantially different staffing levels than those with lower ratings. While non-teaching staff are an important component of total provider costs, they do not appear to be a significant driver of the cost of quality, as measured by the agency’s quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).

There was not a strong link between quality level and non-teaching-staff level, and larger programs did not tend to employ significantly more staff than smaller programs.