

Illinois After-School Partnership Out-of-School-Time Workforce Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

The Illinois After-School Partnership (the Partnership) is a statewide project co-chaired by the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois State Board of Education, which is working to increase the quality and availability of after-school programs. Recognizing that quality staff members are one of the most important factors in delivering effective services, the Partnership determined that one of its priorities should be to enhance and coordinate the professional development system for the Out-of-School-Time (OST) workforce¹ in Illinois. In order to do that effectively, the current study was undertaken to gather data on the nature and needs of the current workforce in the state. In spring 2005, 286 respondents representing a wide variety of OST workers in the state completed an on-line survey. While the survey results cannot be generalized for the entire OST workforce in Illinois as respondents were self-selected and due to the small sample size, they do provide descriptive information that is useful when considering the further development of a professional development system.

Summary of Overall Results

Experience

- Survey respondents were **diverse** in terms of age, amount of experience in OST, and primary job responsibilities.
- In terms of **educational background**, 20.9% (n = 56) had received master's degrees, 27.6% (n = 74) a bachelor's degree, 8.6% (n = 23) a high school diploma, 1 had a GED, and 2.2% (n = 6) had not graduated from high school.
- Respondents had a variety of **credentials and accreditations**, most frequently in teaching, food sanitation, youth development, child development, and childcare.

Current Position in OST

- Respondents were split between **full-time** (46.3%, n=124) and **part-time** staff (49.6%, n=133).
- Among part-time staff, the majority (65.9%, n=89) did **not want to be working full-time** in OST.
- Almost half (49%, n = 130) of respondents either had a **second job or attended classes** in addition to their job in OST.

Benefits & Compensation

- The most common **salary** ranges were \$25,000-30,000 as earned by 21% (n=25) and \$30,000-35,000 as earned by another 17.6% (n=21).
- The most common **hourly wage** was \$7-8.99 as earned by 33.3% (n=35), but 18.1% (n=19) earned \$9-10.99 and an additional 16.2% (n=17) earned \$15-20 per hour.
- The most commonly received **benefits** were: paid vacation (39.5%, n=113), paid time for training (39.2%, n=112), medical insurance (38.8%, n=111), paid holidays (38.5%, n=110), and paid sick leave (37.8%, n=108).
- A fifth of workers (19.6%, n =56) reported **not receiving any benefits**.

¹ For this study, the Out-of-School-Time workforce was broadly defined as including workers and volunteers involved in programming for children and youth in the non-school hours (after-school, before school, and summer) in a variety of settings, such as daycare, recreational facilities, community-based organizations, and schools. The workforce encompasses a diverse array of professionals, including Youth Workers, Daycare Providers, and Educators.

Future Career Considerations

- Half of respondents (n= 125) considered OST to be their **chosen profession**.
- In terms of **retention**, 35.4% (n = 90) planned to stay in the field less than 6 years, 30.7% (n =78) more than 6 years, and another third (33.9%, n =86) that were unsure how long they would stay.
- Factors most frequently rated as important when considering a future career in OST were: **personal interest in the field** (44.1%, n=126), **increased wages** (37.4%, n=107), **sufficient resources** for programming (36.7%, n=105), program **sufficiently staffed** (35.7%, n=102), and **opportunities for advancement** within the program (32.9%, n=94).
- A third of respondents (33%, n=74) reported awareness of **challenges** to long-term careers in OST, and cited barriers such as **low salaries** (33.3%, n =21) and **inadequate funding** for the field and program sustainability (28.6%, n =18).
- Overall there was a **lack of career planning** among OST workers with a third (n = 86) reporting not having done any planning. Some workers reported having done informal planning on their own (31.5%, n = 82) or with a supervisor (24.2%, n = 63), but few had developed formal, written career plans either on their own (10%, n = 26) or with a supervisor (9.2%, n = 24).

Educational Aspirations

- Forty-one percent (n = 98) of workers are currently or **planning to pursue higher education** in OST or a related field.
- The most frequent **field of study** being pursued was education (40%, n = 46), followed by social work (7.8%, n = 9), psychology (7%, n = 8), and youth development (6.1%, n = 7).
- The majority of respondents (60.9%, n = 148) were **not aware of formal higher educational opportunities** in OST.
- Almost half of respondents (46.8%, n = 108) reported experiencing **barriers to higher education**, and having scheduling conflicts with their job was the most frequently cited (54.8%, n = 63) barrier.

Training Opportunities

- Workers reported having **received a variety of training**, including safety issues, disciplinary techniques, teaching social skills, computer skills, and conflict resolution.
- Workers reported that many employers **required employee training** on various topics, such as safety, professional certifications, and how to work with youth, but 16.5% (n = 26) reported that their employer had no training requirements at all.
- Respondents were **interested in receiving training** on many topics including, Positive Disciplinary Techniques/Behavior Management (23.7%, n = 46), Organizing/Planning Youth Activities (18.6%, n = 36), Grant Writing/Fund Raising (17.0%, n = 33), Working Effectively with Parents/Family Outreach (16.5%, n = 32), Supervisory Skills/Management (13.4%, n = 26), and Safety Regulations/CPR/First Aid (12.4%, n = 24).
- A third of respondents (35.8%, n = 59) reported **barriers to receiving training**, and most frequently cited financial barriers (29.5%, n = 49), scheduling conflicts (25.3%, n = 42), and unawareness of training opportunities (22.3%, n = 37).

Sub-group Analysis

Along with the overall findings, the Partnership deemed it important to view the data through various lenses, particularly for various sub-sets of the workforce. These sub-groups include 1) workers who consider OST their chosen profession; 2) workers with different job responsibilities; 3) younger and older workers, and 4) full-time and part-time workers.

Workers Who Consider OST their Chosen Profession

Half of the survey respondents reported that they considered OST their chosen profession, while the remaining half did not.

Workers who viewed OST as their chosen profession were more likely to:

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| <i>Current Position:</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work full-time in OST • Want to work full-time in OST, if they were part-time workers |
| <i>Experience:</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intend to stay more years in the field • Be older • Be experienced in both OST and other fields |
| <i>Future Career Considerations:</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate having a clear plan for professional development as important • Rate having opportunities for job advancement as important • Have engaged in career planning • Be aware of challenges to a long-term career in OST |
| <i>Educational Aspirations:</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to pursue higher education in OST or a related field • Report facing barriers to pursuing higher education • Be aware of higher education opportunities in OST |

Workers with Different Job Responsibilities

Survey respondents included OST workers with different job responsibilities: 35.7% were direct service workers, 27.7% were program administrators, 6.3% provided both direct service and program administration, and 30.3% had other job responsibilities.

As compared to workers with other job responsibilities, **direct service workers**:

- Current Position:*
 - Were more likely to work part-time in OST
 - Were paid lower hourly wages (but no significant differences in pay for those workers who were paid an annual salary)
- Experience:*
 - Intend to stay fewer years in the field
 - Were younger
 - Were less experienced in both OST and other fields
 - Were less tenured at their current organization
- Future Career Considerations:*
 - Rate being able to work part-time as important
 - Were less likely to have done any career planning
- Educational Aspirations:*
 - There were no significant differences in the educational aspirations of workers with different job responsibilities.

Younger and Older Workers

Survey respondents included OST workers at different career phases, as indicated by their age: 23.8% were early career (under 25 years old), 33.6% were mid-career (26-39 years old), and 42.6% were later career (40 or older).

Early career workers were:

- More likely to be part-time staff
- Less likely to consider OST their chosen profession
- Less likely to have done any career planning
- Less likely to intend to remain in the OST field long-term
- More likely to plan to pursue higher education
- Less likely to report barriers to pursuing higher education

Mid-career workers were more likely to:

- Rate being able to work full-time as important
- Rate increased wages as important
- Rate opportunities for advancement as important
- Rate having a retirement plan as important
- Plan to pursue higher education in OST or a related field
- Report facing barriers to pursuing higher education

Later career workers were more likely to:

- Be experienced in both OST and other fields
- Have longer tenure in their current position and at their current organization
- Rate being able to work full-time as important
- Rate having a retirement plan as important
- Less likely to plan to pursue higher education in OST or a related field
- Report facing barriers to pursuing higher education

Full-time and Part-time Workers

Respondents were fairly evenly split between full-time staff (46.3%, n=124) and part-time staff (49.6%, n=133). Among part-time staff, the majority (65.9%, n=89) did *not* want to be working full-time in OST.

As compared to full-time workers, **part-time workers:**

- Experience:*
 - Intend to stay fewer years in the field
 - Were younger
 - Were less likely to have completed higher education
 - Were less tenured at their current organization
 - Were less experienced in the OST field
- Compensation & Benefits:*
 - Were more likely to be paid at either the lower (under \$20,000) or upper (over \$50,000) ends of the annual salary range
 - Were less likely to report receiving various employment benefits
 - 35.8% of part-time workers (compared to 6.8% of full-time workers) reported not receiving any benefits.
- Future Career Considerations:*
 - Were less likely to consider OST their chosen profession
 - Were more likely to rate being able to work part-time as important
 - Were less likely to have done any career planning
 - Were less aware of challenges to a long-term career in OST
- Educational Aspirations:*
 - Were less likely to plan to pursue higher education in OST or a related field
 - Were less likely to report facing barriers to pursuing higher education
 - Were less aware of higher education opportunities in OST

Full-time workers were more likely to rate the following factors as important when considering their future career in OST:

- Being able to work full-time
- Having a clear plan for professional development
- Increased wages
- Life insurance
- Opportunities to advance within the program
- Paid sick leave
- Public recognition
- Retirement plan

Among part-time workers, those **would like to work full-time** were:

- Less likely to have completed higher education degrees
- Less likely to have a public school teaching certificate
- More likely to plan to pursue higher education in OST or related field
- More likely to be receiving an hourly wage rather than an annual salary
- More likely to view OST as their chosen profession
- More likely to be aware of challenges to pursuing a long-term career in OST

Key Findings

This survey, with a sample of 286 respondents, provides insights into the composition, current needs, and future plans of the Out-of-School-Time workforce in Illinois. Offered below are the key overall findings from the data and implications of these findings for the future work of the Illinois After-School Partnership.

- **The OST workforce is comprised of many different types of workers.** They are diverse in terms of job responsibilities, full and part-time workers, career phase and attitudes about OST as a profession. Workers in different groupings had different experiences, needs and future plans about their careers.
- **Part-time workers comprise an important segment of the workforce.** The survey sample was fairly evenly split between full-time and part-time workers. More importantly, the majority of part-time workers (65.9%, n=89) did not want to be working full-time in the field. These workers considered the flexibility to continue working part-time to be an important factor in considering their future career in the OST field. Future research should further investigate why some part-time workers do not want to work full-time in OST and whether this decision represents an individual career preference or whether it is driven by perceptions that full-time work in OST is not viable.
- **Workers at different career phases have unique needs.** Younger workers just starting their careers were less likely to consider OST their chosen profession, to intend to remain in the field, and to have done any career planning. To address this, efforts should be made to promote OST as viable long-term career choice to early career workers by assisting them with professional development and career planning opportunities. For mid-career workers, other factors were important in considering a long-term career in OST including, increased wages, opportunities for advancement, access to retirement plans, and addressing barriers to higher education. For these workers it is important to both address structural issues regarding program sustainability (so that there are opportunities for increased wages and expanded benefits) and individual workers' professional development (so that workers build skills to facilitate their professional growth and advancement).
- **Direct service workers have important career development needs that are not being met.** Direct service providers are the segment of the workforce that has the most contact with children and families participating in OST programs. Therefore, ensuring that these workers are well qualified, well trained, and retained in the field is vital to ensuring high-quality program delivery. However, data from this study revealed that direct service workers are lagging behind other OST workers in terms of experience, hourly wage rates, and full-time employment in the field. Additionally, while direct service workers were equally likely to consider OST their chosen profession, they were less likely to intend to stay in the field. The traditional career path in OST, like other human services fields, has been for direct service jobs to be considered entry-level positions with the primary means for advancement being moving to a program administration position. However, given the limited number of program administration positions, there is a ceiling effect for many direct service workers who have limited opportunities for promotion to such positions. Increasing the number of available program administrator positions is not a feasible strategy to address the lack of career advancement opportunities for direct service workers. Therefore, the field should

consider other ways to create career ladders for direct service workers so that they can grow professionally and be rewarded for such advancement while still serving in a direct service role. For instance, the creation of “mastery level” direct service positions (similar to a “master teacher” role) could provide a more feasible means of career advancement that would improve the retention of direct service workers.

- **Retention of workers in the OST field is an important outstanding issue.** While 30.7% (n=78) of workers intended to stay in the field at least 6 years, similar amounts weren't sure how long they would stay (33.9%, n=86) or intended to stay less than 6 years (35.4%, n=90). Workers that were less likely to intend to remain in the field were: younger, part-time, fulfilling direct service or combined service and administrative roles, and did not consider OST their chosen profession.
- **Both personal and structural factors were important to OST workers when considering their future in the field.** Personal factors important in considering a long-term career included: personal interest in the field (44.1%, n=126) and increased wages (37.4%, n=107). Workers also rated program and organizational level factors as important when considering their future in the field, including whether there were sufficient resources for programming (36.7%, n=105), whether the program was sufficiently staffed (35.7%, n=102), and whether there were opportunities for advancement within the program (32.9%, n=94).
- **Increasing recognition of OST as a career field, rather than as discrete, unrelated jobs warrants attention.** Only half of the survey respondents considered OST to be their chosen profession. While it might be considered progress in such a nascent field that half of respondents regard it as their chosen profession, this finding also highlights the need for further efforts to develop OST as a recognizable profession that is perceived as a viable career choice.
- **There was an overall lack of career planning among OST workers.** A third of respondents (33.1%, n=86) reported not having done any career planning and similar proportions had only done informal planning either on their own (31.5%, n=82) or with their supervisor (24.2%, n=63). Only 10% (n=26) had developed a formal written plan on their own and 9.2% (n=24) had developed one with their supervisor, while 7.7% (n=20) had done planning with another organization. Workers less likely to report having engaged in formalized career planning: were younger, worked part-time, and did not consider OST their chosen profession.
- **Many OST workers have plans to pursue higher education and training, but the majority was unaware of higher educational opportunities in the OST field.** Forty percent (n=98) of respondents reported either currently pursuing or planning pursue to higher education, and the most frequently reported field of study was education. However, 60.9% (n=148) of respondents were unaware of formal higher educational opportunities in OST. Workers that were pursuing higher education were: younger, full-time, and considered OST their chosen profession. Workers that were more likely to report experiencing barriers to pursuing their plans for higher education were: full-time, mid-career or later career workers, and considered OST their chosen profession.