

Child Care and Early Years Act Policy Brief #2

Qualifications

This policy brief is part of a 4-part series intended to summarize community consensus, research and policy recommendations on the Ontario's government's proposed regulatory changes to the *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA). This brief responds to proposed changes to qualifications, including the re-definition of "qualified employee", the use of unqualified short-term supply staff, and removing a requirement for child care supervisors to have experience in licensed child care.

Community Survey Results

In a community survey of 2,400 ECEs, operators, and families:

- 62% opposed redefining "qualified employees", only 23% supported the proposal with 14% unsure,
- 68% opposed allowing unqualified short-term supply staff to replace qualified staff, 20% supported the proposal and 13% were unsure,
- 65% opposed changes to supervisor qualifications, and 24% supported the proposal and 11% were unsure.

Individual Consultation Responses

The AECEO and OCBCO received 57 individual submissions that specifically opposed changes to staff qualifications.

Organizational Consultation Responses

"Support and grow the number of ECEs in Ontario to meet the need. We do not support watering down qualifications as proposed. Reinstate the Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy." - Compass Early Learning and Care, Peterborough.

"The proposals with respect to the staffing and qualifications of the ELCC sector workforce are in direct opposition to the recommendations the College made in its last submission and put the safety, health and well-being of children at risk." - College of Early Childhood Educators.

"We have reviewed the research regarding...important structural features of ELCC programs, especially staff education in post-secondary ECE programs, that back our firm opposition to these changes." - Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

"Removing qualified staff who understand social and emotional child development is detrimental to the quality of childcare in Ontario." - Ontario Federation of Labour

"The strong opposition from parents and the implications for the reputation of the RECE designation suggest this [supply staff] proposal should not be pursued." - City of Toronto Children's Services.

Summary of Evidence /Research

Education and training specific to early childhood education is an important determinant in quality programs for young children. In Ontario Registered Early Childhood Educator is a protected professional title; they are accountable for meeting specific standards in order to practice the profession. While the government's proposals purport to address the issue of recruitment and retention in the child care sector, research, including a Ministry of Education sponsored study, indicates the best way to improve recruitment and retention is to ensure decent work and professional pay - not to deskill the profession.

Recommendation

The AECEO and OCBCO urge the Ministry of Education to abandon the proposed changes to staff qualifications, short-term supply staff, and supervisor qualifications and instead, immediately implement investments to support Early Childhood Educators and early years staff.