

Illinois'

# Infant Toddler Workforce

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Professional Development  
Needs and Gaps





# Illinois' Infant/Toddler Teaching Workforce – Professional Development Needs and Gaps

It is widely accepted that the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of early care and education professionals are important factors that contribute toward a child's positive cognitive development, socio-emotional development, and health and physical well-being. All are factors critical to ensuring children enter school ready to learn and succeed. Even more important is the fact that the foundations of school readiness are built within the first three years of a child's life. In the recent report entitled *Developmental Foundations of School Readiness for Infants and Toddlers: A Research to Practice Report*, the authors point to the importance of teachers and caregivers being aware of opportunities to support infants and toddlers as they develop these skills and underscore the importance of professional development as the means to stay current with the latest research and what it means for their daily interactions (Horn, Norris, Perry, Chazan-Cohen, & Halle, 2016).

The purpose of this report is to surface what we have learned through Illinois' Infant Toddler Teacher Quality Initiative (ITTQI) about the professional development needs and preferences of the infant/toddler workforce, as well as the characteristics of professional development opportunities that currently exist for this workforce.

## Overview

INCCRRA conducted an online survey to determine the professional development preferences, needs, and gaps for Illinois' infant/toddler teaching workforce. The survey was administered with two separate groups. The first was sent by email to all participants in the Infant Toddler Teacher Quality Initiative (ITTQI) trainings that were held in October, November, and December 2015. There were 175 valid responses to this survey. The second was presented to all Gateways Registry members who visited the Gateways Registry website and logged in to their online dashboard between February 12, 2016 and April 5, 2016. Upon accessing the Registry Dashboard, individuals were shown a pop-up window that explained the purpose of the survey and invited them to take it at any time during their visit. This survey had 399 valid responses. Overall there were a total of 574 valid responses with 65.3 percent being fully complete and 34.7 percent being incomplete responses. For purposes of this report, responses were included in analysis as long as there was a valid response for the variable being analyzed.

Survey respondents were also asked to identify the primary age group of children they work with. Over half (55.9 percent) responded that they worked with infants and toddlers, 28.4 percent worked with preschoolers, and 3.5 percent with school-age children. There were 12.2 percent who responded they did not work directly with children.



[Professional development] is more than attending this conference or that specific program. It is the ability of the teacher/caregiver to put into practice what was learned. The presenters are very knowledgeable about specific topics [and] we the students need to be challenged more in our thoughts and ideas of how we are planning to implement the information given to us. As directors we should ask, observe, and guide the teachers [implementing what they learned].

- Center Director, West Chicago



For purposes of this report, we selected the subset of survey respondents who worked directly with infants and toddlers in group settings and who had a role where they worked with children regularly. This removed directors/assistant directors, education coordinators, home visitors, and those in the “other” category, even if they stated the primary age group they served was infants/toddlers. In addition, due to the small cell size (n = 4), teacher aides working with infants and toddlers were also removed from subsequent analyses.

## Characteristics of the Selected Survey Respondents

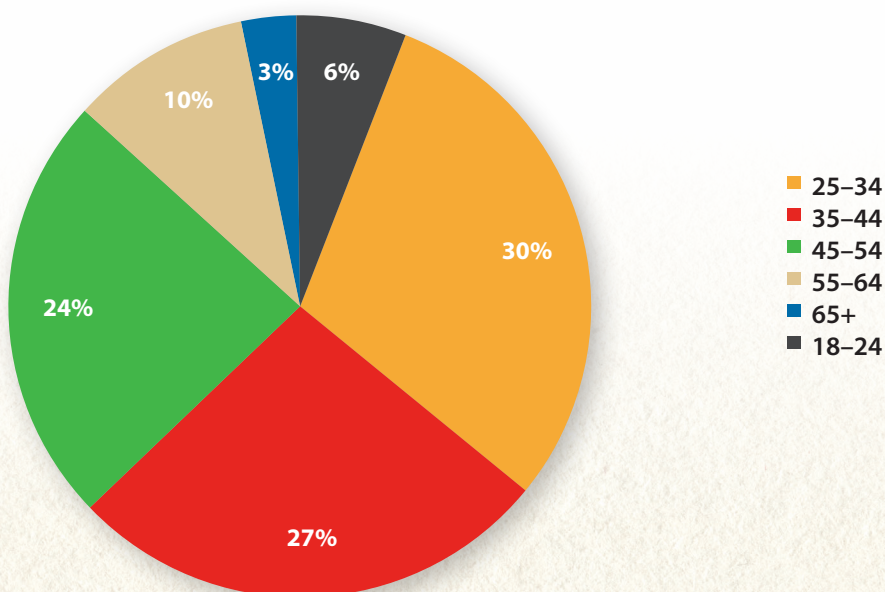
After narrowing the data set, there remained a total of 270 valid survey responses with 40.7 percent being from those who participated in the ITTQI trainings. Most of the respondents were teachers, followed by assistant teachers, and family child care providers.

**Table 1: Role of Survey Respondents**

Primary Role	Percent	Respondents
Teacher	60.6%	171
Assistant Teacher	22.3%	63
Family Child Care Provider	12.8%	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>

The majority of survey respondents (81.4 percent) were between 25-54 years old with only 5.2 percent being 24 or younger and 13.4 percent being 55 or older.

**Figure 1: Age Range of Survey Respondents**



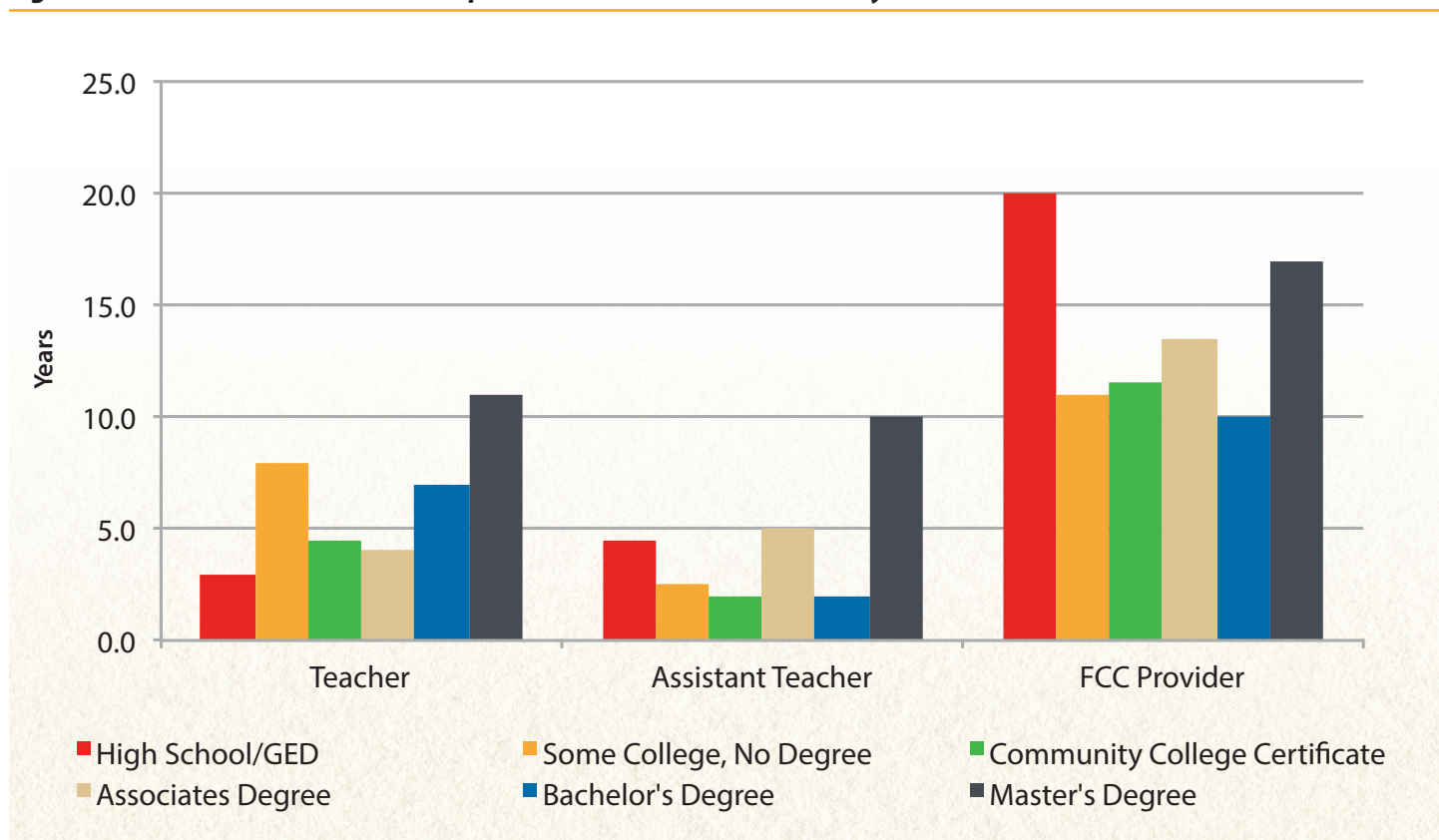
More than 90 percent of respondents had some college-level education; approximately one third completed an associates degree and another third completed a bachelor's degree or higher. In addition, those who reported they had "some college coursework" had completed an average of 45 semester hours of college coursework (median = 41, range = 1-130).

**Table 2: Highest Level of Education by Role of Survey Respondent**

Highest Level of Education	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Family Child Care Provider
Less than High School	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%
High School/GED	1.8%	17.7%	13.9%
Some College, No Degree	12.4%	24.2%	16.7%
Community College Certificate	5.3%	6.5%	5.6%
Associates Degree	38.8%	30.6%	22.2%
Bachelor's Degree	37.6%	16.1%	27.8%
Master's Degree	4.1%	4.8%	8.3%
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>36</b>

Survey respondents had the greatest number years of experience working with children birth to three, with an average of 7.9 years (median = 6.0). This was followed by an average 6.6 years working with preschoolers (median = 3.0) and 3.8 years working with school-age children (median = 1.0). Family child care providers had an average of 5 more years of experience working with infants and toddlers compared to teachers (12.6 years compared to 7.8 years). Teachers had 2.5 years more experience than assistant teachers (7.8 years compared to 5.3 years). Figure 2 illustrates the number of years of work experience with infants and toddlers by role and highest level of education.

**Figure 2: Number of Years of Work Experience with Infants/Toddlers by Role and Education**



# Professional Development Planning, Needs, and Preferences

## Professional Development Planning

According to the training and technical assistance glossary published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)<sup>1</sup>, an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is a valuable tool that provides a "...framework for connecting professional development experiences to each other and to the common core of knowledge and professional standards for early education professionals." The process of developing an IPDP includes self-reflection and assessment of current knowledge and skills; review of self-reflection and any available performance data to identify goals; and finally the identification of action steps and specific resources needed to achieve the goals. Regular review of the IPDP, including reflection and documentation of progress toward goals is also an essential part of the process.

More than half of the survey respondents reported that they did not have an individual professional development plan (IPDP). For those 47 percent that reported having an IPDP, the content of the plans varied. In the survey, the most frequently endorsed goal was "Obtain a credential" followed by "Obtain a college degree".

**Table 3: Individual Professional Development Plan Goals Reported by Role**

Goal on IPDP	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Family Child Care Provider
Take college coursework	37.7%	57.1%	16.7%
Obtain a college degree	41.6%	64.3%	25.0%
Obtain a credential	61.0%	53.6%	83.3%
Engage in a formal mentoring/coaching relationship	27.3%	17.9%	33.3%

*Note: Percentages will not add to 100% as multiple items could be selected.*

When it comes to guidance and help with professional development planning, center-based staff reported most often seeking support from within their program, either from their director or a co-worker. Teachers and assistant teachers also reported turning to Gateways Professional Development Advisors (PDAs) for professional development planning support more often than their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency. By contrast, family child care providers more often turned to other providers or their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency for support.

**Table 4: Sources of Professional Development Support Used "Often" or "All of the Time"**

Sources of Support	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Family Child Care Provider
Director/Supervisor	47.8%	58.9%	8.8%
Co-Worker	38.8%	50.0%	11.7%
Another Provider	17.8%	23.2%	40.0%
CCR&R	14.1%	12.5%	37.2%
Gateways PDA	17.2%	16.1%	20.0%

<sup>1</sup>NACCRRA is now Child Care Aware of America.

## Access to Training Opportunities

There are multiple options for accessing professional development training in Illinois. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) System is the largest provider of training for licensed center-based staff and family child care providers. Conferences sponsored by professional associations, such as the Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (ILAEYC) are another means by which professionals access training. Program directors hold in-service training for their staff and may offer content they develop themselves or bring in a trainer with expertise in specific topic areas. The Gateways i-learning System is also a major source for online training in Illinois.

Respondents were asked to identify the five most frequent ways they found out about professional development opportunities. Center-based staff reported learning about training often from their director or a co-worker. Over two-thirds of family child care providers turn to their local CCR&R training calendar and 36.1 percent reported calling the CCR&R to learn about opportunities.

Across all three roles examined, there were similarities in the other sources frequently referenced, with several resources available through Gateways to Opportunity (i-learning System, Statewide Training Calendar, Registry Newsletter) being frequently endorsed.

**Table 5: Most Frequent Ways of Learning about Training Opportunities**

Source of Information	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Family Child Care Provider
Ask my director/supervisor	63.7%	68.3%	8.3%
Ask a co-worker	49.7%	46.0%	22.2%
Call my local CCR&R	9.9%	7.9%	36.1%
Read local CCR&R training calendar	19.3%	22.2%	69.4%
Read Gateways Registry Newsletter	35.1%	28.6%	27.8%
Search Gateways Statewide Training Calendar	35.7%	39.7%	44.4%
Look at online options through Gateways i-learning	48.5%	42.9%	52.8%
Receive emails directly from training sponsors	37.4%	38.1%	55.6%
Look at local college/university website	11.1%	11.1%	5.6%



At my site we have an enormous amount of support related to different training opportunities. Our director is always on top of the current trainings being offered. We have completed a variety of Gateways trainings, online trainings, as well as trainings in the city.

*-Infant/Toddler Teacher, West Chicago*

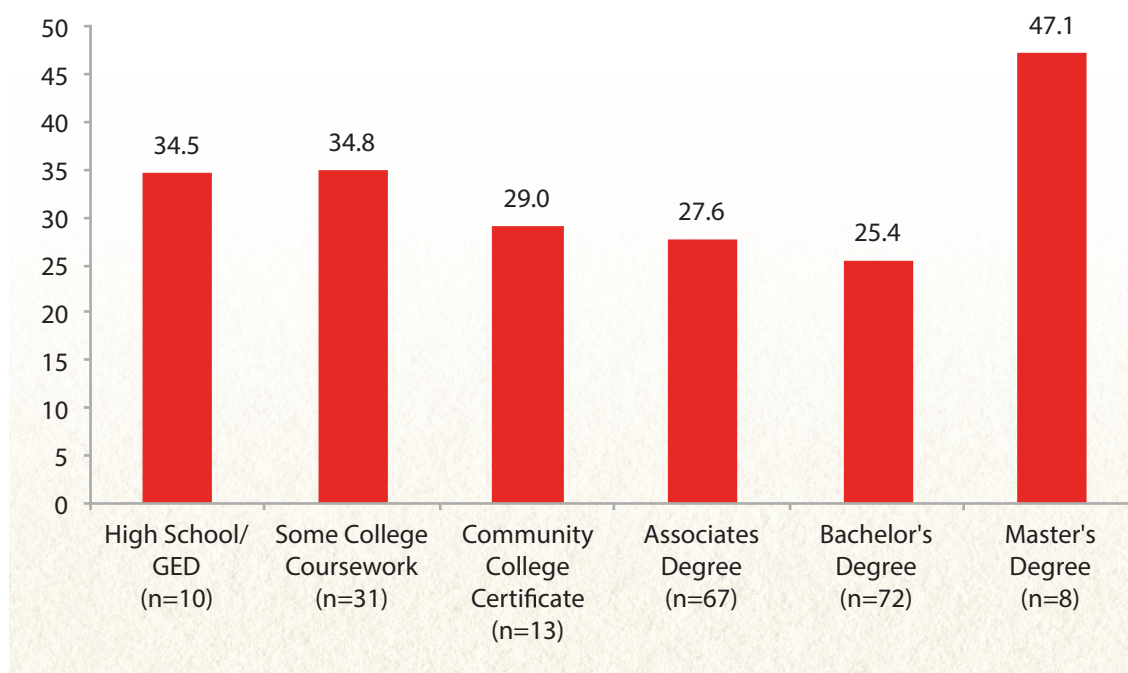




## Training Delivery Formats

Respondents in the survey reported taking an average of 29.0 hours of non-credit based training<sup>2</sup> in the preceding 12 months (n = 202, median = 24.0, range = 2.0-99.0). Assistant teachers reported taking the greatest average number of hours (32.0), followed by teachers (28.4), and family child care providers (27.3). With the exception of professionals with a master's degree, those with higher levels of education generally averaged fewer training hours than colleagues with less education.

**Figure 3: Average Training Hours Completed in Last 12 Months by Level of Education**

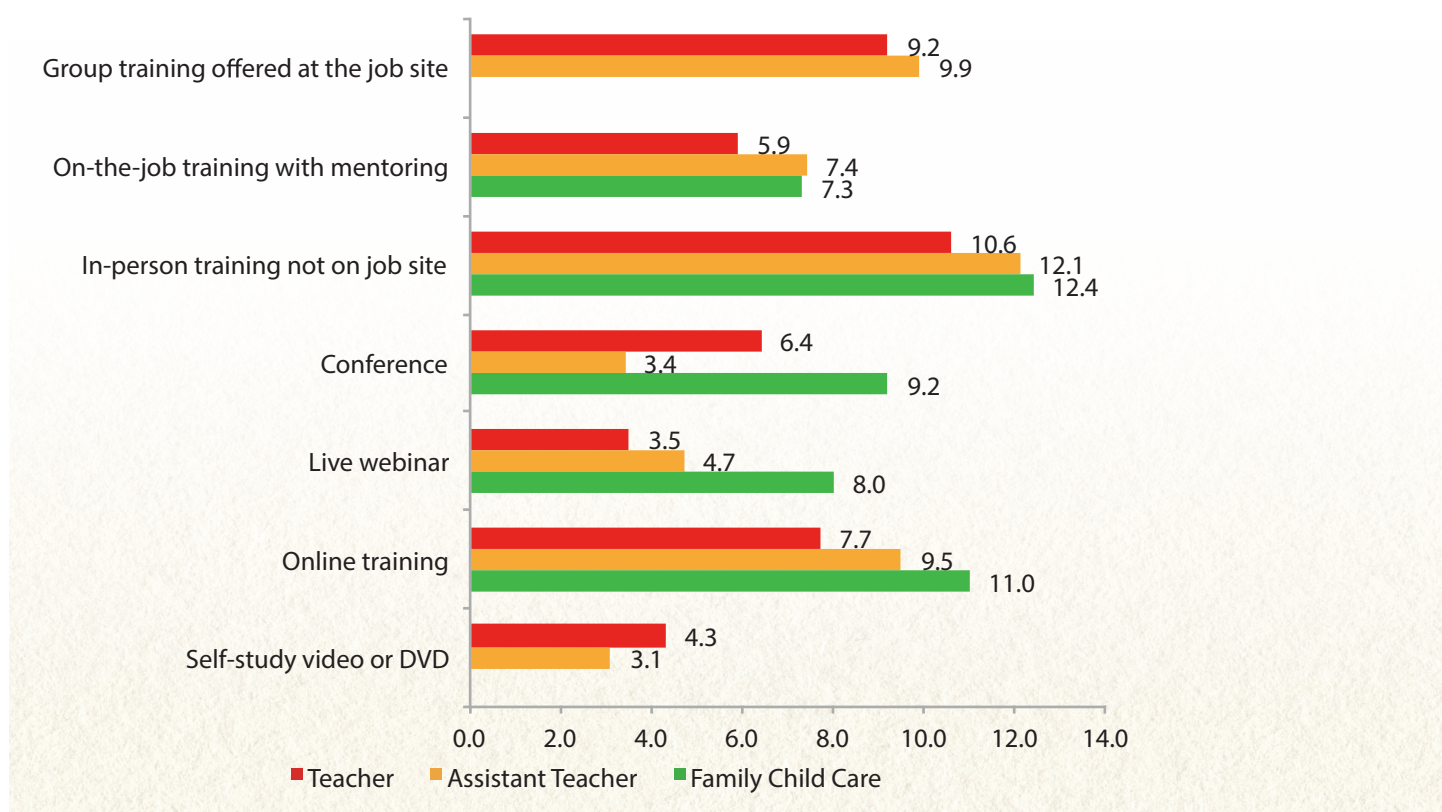


<sup>2</sup>The survey question asked how many hours of training were taken in the past 12 months in each of 7 different delivery formats: group training at the job site, on-the-job training with mentoring, in-person training at a location other than the job site, training at a conference, live webinar (phone/computer), online training, and self-study video/DVD. Not all formats may be accepted for DCFS-required in-service training.



Across all roles, the greatest number of training hours were from in-person training not at the job site. Teachers and assistant teachers reported the next highest number of hours being taken through group training at the job site and through online training, while family child care reported a greater number of hours coming from online training and conferences.

**Figure 4: Average Training Hours in Last 12 Months by Delivery Format and Role**



*Note: The number of family child care providers reporting group training offered on the job site and self-study video/DVD was less than 5 and was excluded from the figure above.*

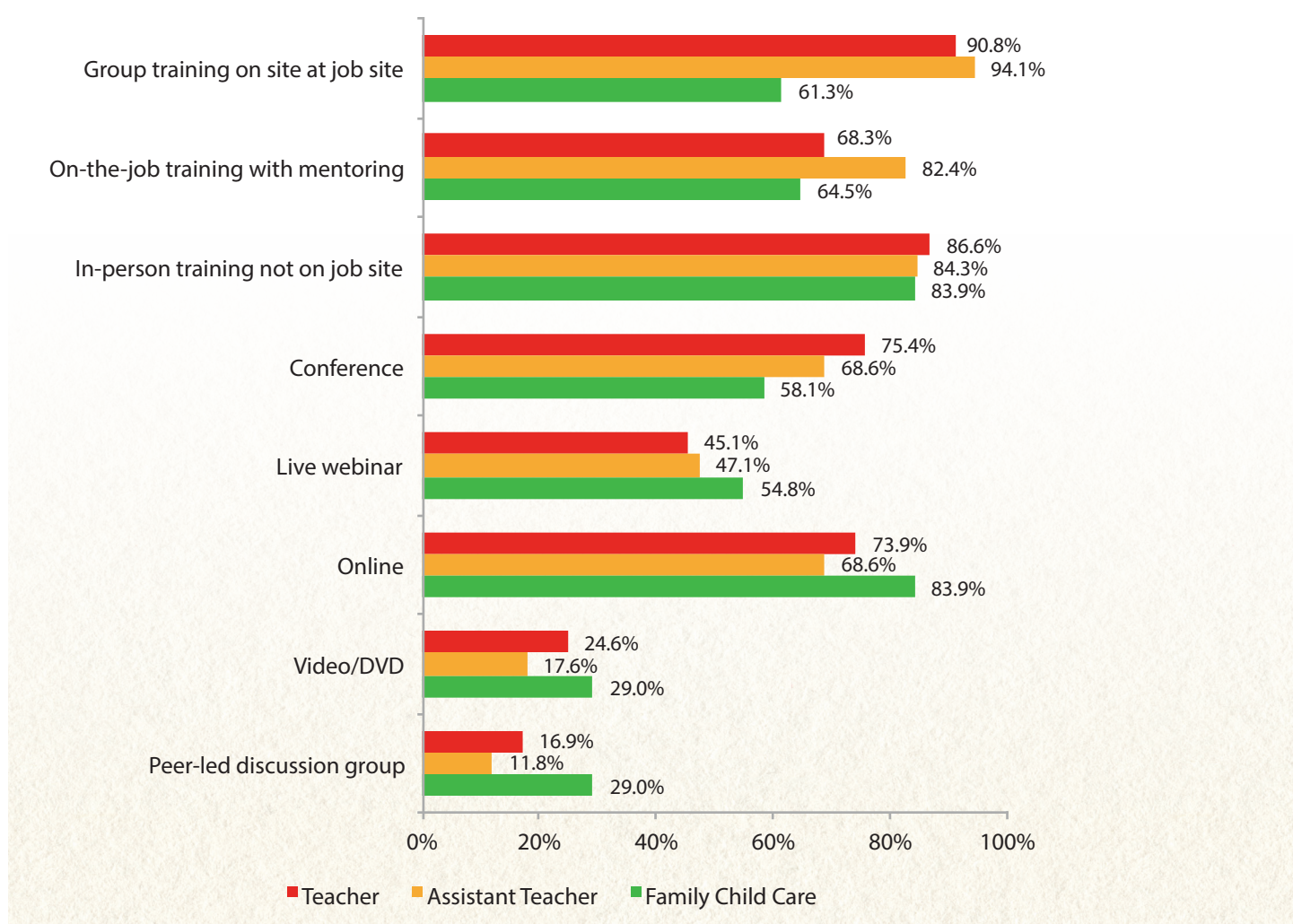




## Preferred Methods for Learning

Respondents were asked to identify their top five preferred methods of learning from a list of eight modes of professional development delivery as shown in Figure 5. Center-based professionals have a strong preference for in-person training either on-site at their center or at a location off-site. Assistant teachers also expressed partiality for on-the-job training with mentoring. Family child care providers conveyed nearly equal preferences for in-person and online training.

**Figure 5: Preferred Methods of Learning Reported by Role**



## Challenges in Getting Professional Development

Survey respondents were asked to review a list of 10 challenges to obtaining professional development and identify which items applied to them. The 221 individuals that responded to the question identified an average of 2 challenges (range 1-7) to getting professional development. Challenges related to time, cost, and location of trainings were identified more often than challenges related to the quality or content of the training; however, many respondents identified their own lack of knowledge about what training they want/need as a challenge.

**Figure 6: Identified Barriers to Obtaining Professional Development**



## Training Specific to Working with Infants and Toddlers

Research has shown that the relationships formed between children, parents, and early care and education providers have an influence on all aspects of a young child's development, from intelligence and language to emotions and social competence. In order to ensure that babies and toddlers in early care and education programs have quality relationships with nurturing, responsive caregivers, the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and ZERO TO THREE (2008) developed a policy framework with identified goals and recommendations for state policy. One of those recommendations relates to training specific to working with infants and toddlers:

*"Ensure that providers and caregivers for babies and toddlers have access to education, training, and support: Ensure access to specialized professional development and support systems for those working with infants and toddlers, including participation in higher education programs, ongoing community-level training, and family support strategies, so that infant and toddler providers and caregivers in all settings can meet the state's core body of knowledge and education standards."*

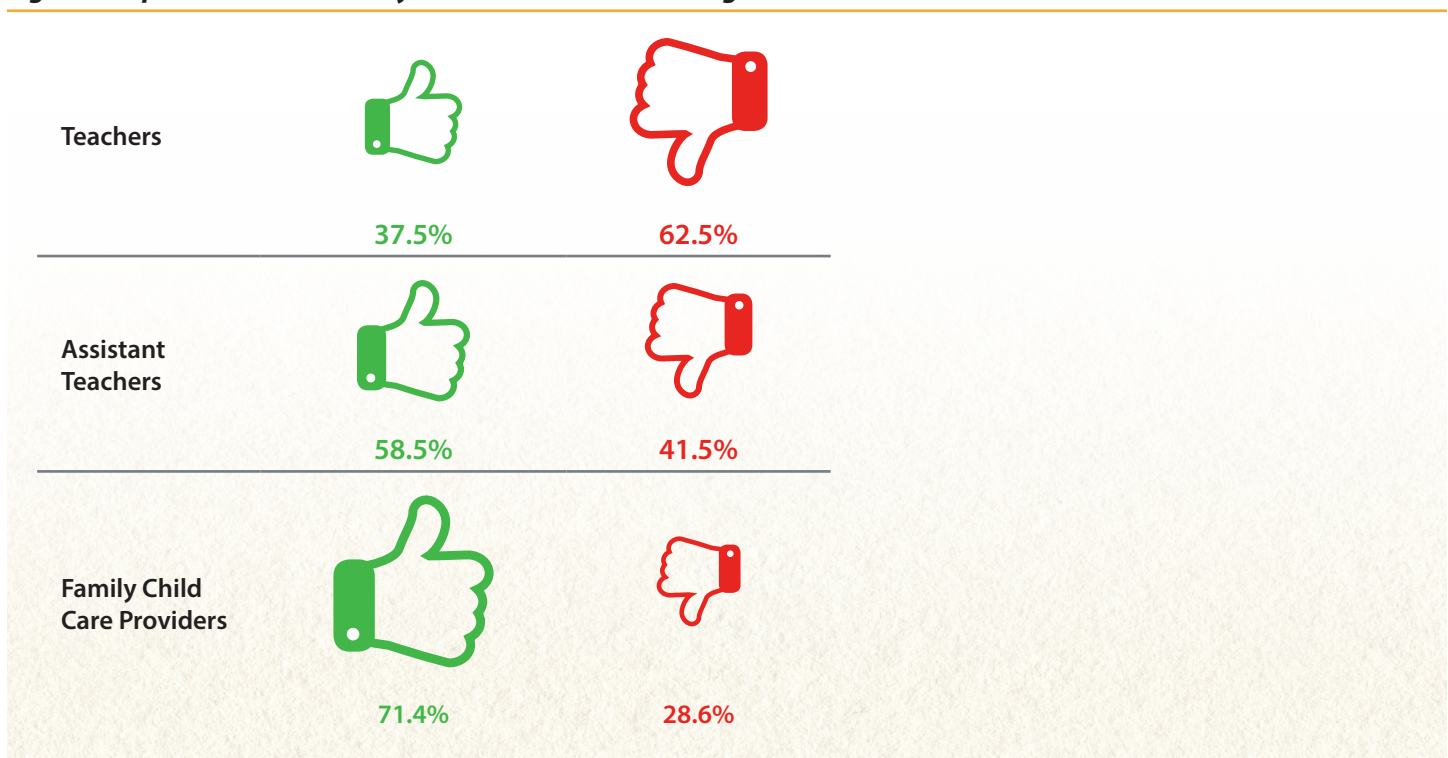
Survey respondents were asked how many hours of training focused specifically on infants and toddlers they participated in during the previous 12 months. While they reported an average of just over one-third of training hours were focused specifically on infants and toddlers, nearly 15% stated that they did not take any training specific to infants and toddlers in the past year.

**Table 6: Percent of Training Hours Focused Specifically on Infants and Toddlers in Last 12 Months**

Role	Respondents	Mean	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile	Range
Teacher	108	37.1%	14.9%	32.8%	50.0%	0%-100%
Assistant Teacher	31	34.3%	0.0%	26.1%	60.0%	0%-100%
Family Child Care Provider	15	29.8%	6.7%	23.1%	60.0%	0%-72.7%
Across All Roles	154	35.8%	12.5%	30.9%	50.5%	0%-100%

Individuals were then asked to indicate whether they felt there are enough training opportunities that focus specifically on infants and toddlers. Overall, 54.9 percent did not feel that there were sufficient opportunities for infant/toddler-focused training. Teachers especially felt there are not enough opportunities (62.5 percent) compared to 41.5 percent of assistant teachers and 28.6 percent of family child care providers.

**Figure 7: Opinion on Availability of Infant Toddler Training**



Many times there are not sufficient training opportunities in my area and traveling out of town on an evening is not an option when I am at work until 6:00 PM.

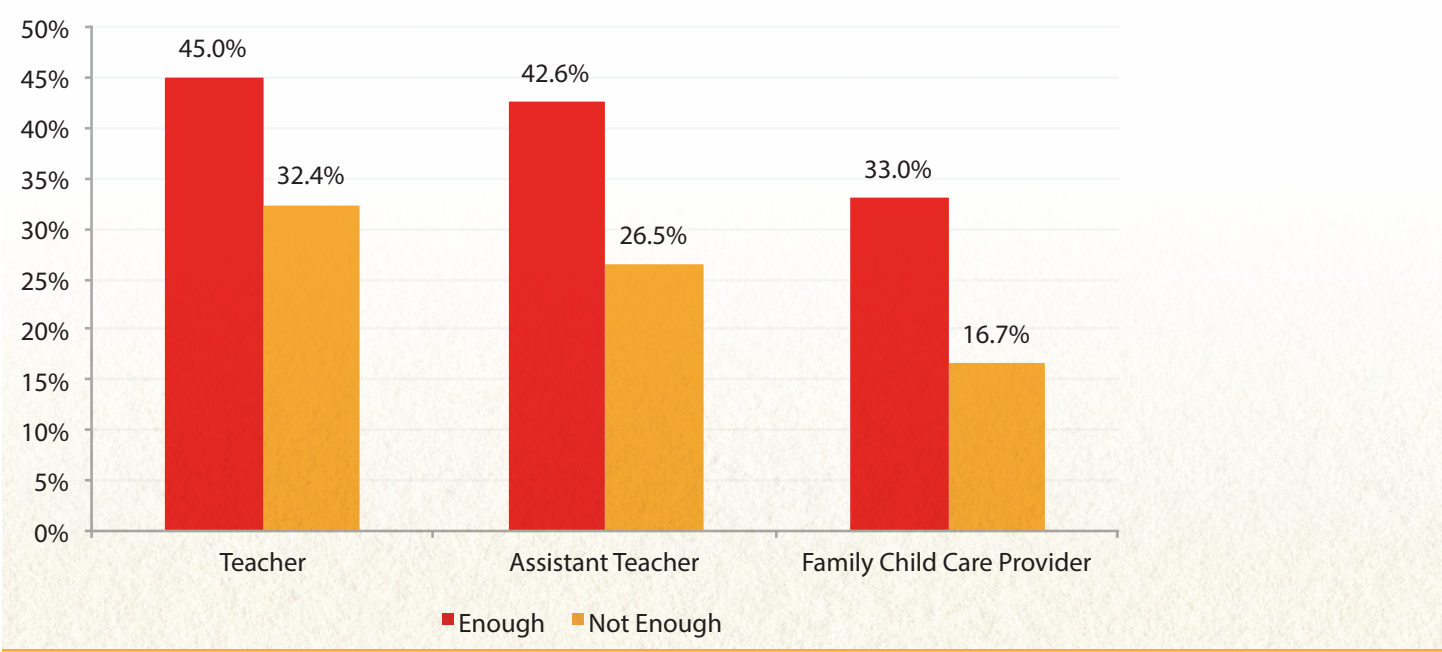
- Center Director, Central Illinois





There was a statistically significant difference in the mean number of training hours taken specific to infants/toddlers; those who felt there was enough infant/toddler training offered took 4.6 more hours of training than those who felt there was not enough specific training offered. Moreover, there were notable differences in the proportion of all training hours caregivers and teachers took that were specific to caring for children under age three. Teachers who reported sufficient birth to three training opportunities spent close to half of their professional development hours in infant/toddler specific training compared to the 32.4 percent of training hours dedicated to infants and toddlers taken by colleagues who did not find enough opportunities. Figure 8 shows additional comparisons by role.

**Figure 8: Percent of Training Hours Specific to Infants/Toddlers by Opinion on Availability of Training**



I feel that the focus is beginning to shift towards the importance of quality infant/toddler care. However, I feel that programs are trying to take environments and curriculum for 3-5 year-olds and make them fit in infant/toddler classrooms where it is not necessarily appropriate. I think program directors, supervisors, and teachers all need more information and guidance on quality care for infants and toddlers, especially if that age group is not where the bulk of their experiences lie.

- Infant/Toddler Teacher, Northern Illinois



## Availability of Training by Level and Content Area

The last section of the survey dealing with the content of professional development asked individuals to select whether they felt there were enough training opportunities specific to infants and toddlers available by Gateways Content Area and by Gateways Level of Learning.<sup>3</sup> In general, respondents felt that there were enough trainings available at the introductory and intermediate levels, but not enough available at the advanced level.

**Table 6: Respondents Stating “There Are Enough” Infant/Toddler Training by Gateways Content Area and Level of Learning**

	Introductory Training	Intermediate Training	Advanced Training
Human Growth and Development	83.6%	59.8%	41.2%
Health, Safety, and Well-Being	84.1%	65.5%	47.9%
Observation and Assessment	79.4%	57.5%	43.0%
Curriculum or Program Design	76.3%	54.4%	43.5%
Interactions, Relationships, and Environments	80.9%	59.1%	45.1%
Family and Community Relationships	75.3%	58.5%	48.2%
Personal and Professional Development	75.8%	57.5%	46.6%

While there were few significant relationships between role and availability of training by content area and level, there was a trend across all content areas that fewer teachers indicated there were ample trainings available at a given level of learning than did assistant teachers and family child care providers. For example, 18.7 percent of teachers felt there is not enough training content specific to infants/toddlers in the Human Growth and Development content area, compared to only 7.3 percent of assistant teachers and 4.8 percent of family child care providers who felt the same.



The issue that I have found with infant and toddler training opportunities is that they are never topic specific. There are many trainings dealing with many facets of administration and preschool, but normally the few infant/toddler topics are all lumped together. Behavior, health, parent relationships, and communication are all together in one 2-hour session and that's just not enough."

-Infant/Toddler Teacher, South Chicago



<sup>3</sup>The Gateways Registry Levels of Learning are the result of a statewide, cross-sector collaboration to create consistent definitions for early childhood trainings in Illinois. Introductory trainings focus on basic content, understanding, and demonstration of developing skills. Intermediate trainings focus on expanding knowledge, application, and refining skills. Advanced trainings focus on a deep knowledge and mastery of skills and ability to apply knowledge and skills across multiple contexts.

# Profile of Training Opportunities in Illinois

The Gateways to Opportunity Registry was established in July 2009 and includes a trainer and training approval process. Through Registry-approved trainers and approved professional development entities<sup>4</sup>, nearly 5,000 approved training events and over 24,850 contact hours of training were available to early childhood professionals in State Fiscal Year 2015<sup>5</sup>. The majority of those events were stand-alone workshops (84.6 percent) and training series (11.7 percent) as shown in Table 7. More than ninety percent of training events were in-person.

**Table 7: Characteristics of Training Events Held in FY15**

Type of Event	Number of Events	Contact Hours		Total Hours Offered
		Mean	Median	
Stand-Alone Workshop	4,137	3.2	3.0	13,309.0
Multi-Session Training Series	572	19.7	15.0	11,268.0
Conference	34	8.1	5.5	275.5
Self-Paced	147	3.8	2.0	564.0

## Training Specific to Working with Infants and Toddlers

There were 630 trainings held in FY15 that had content specific to infants/toddlers “only”; three-quarters were stand-alone workshops. An additional 21.1 percent were training series and 4.1 percent were self-paced. The majority (94.8 percent) of trainings were in-person and another 3.8 percent were offered online.

**Table 8: Characteristics of Infant/Toddler Specific Training Events Held in FY15**

Type of Event <sup>6</sup>	Number of Events	Contact Hours		Total Hours Offered
		Mean	Median	
Stand-Alone Workshop	471	3.4	3.0	1,587.4
Multi-Session Training Series	133	10.7	8.8	1,420.5
Self-Paced	26	1.8	1.0	48.0

## Levels of Learning

The Gateways Registry Levels of Learning are the result of a statewide, cross-sector collaboration to create consistent definitions for early childhood trainings in Illinois. There are three levels of learning: introductory, intermediate, and advanced.

- **Introductory** trainings focus on basic content, understanding, and demonstration of developing skills.
- **Intermediate** trainings focus on expanding knowledge, application, and refining skills.
- **Advanced** trainings focus on a deep knowledge and mastery of skills and ability to apply knowledge and skills across multiple contexts.

<sup>4</sup>Gateways Registry Authorized Entities are organizations that provide professional development for early care and education professionals. Each authorized entity voluntarily aligns their trainer and training approval criteria with those established by the Gateways Registry and once validated, all trainings offered by that entity are considered to be Registry-approved.

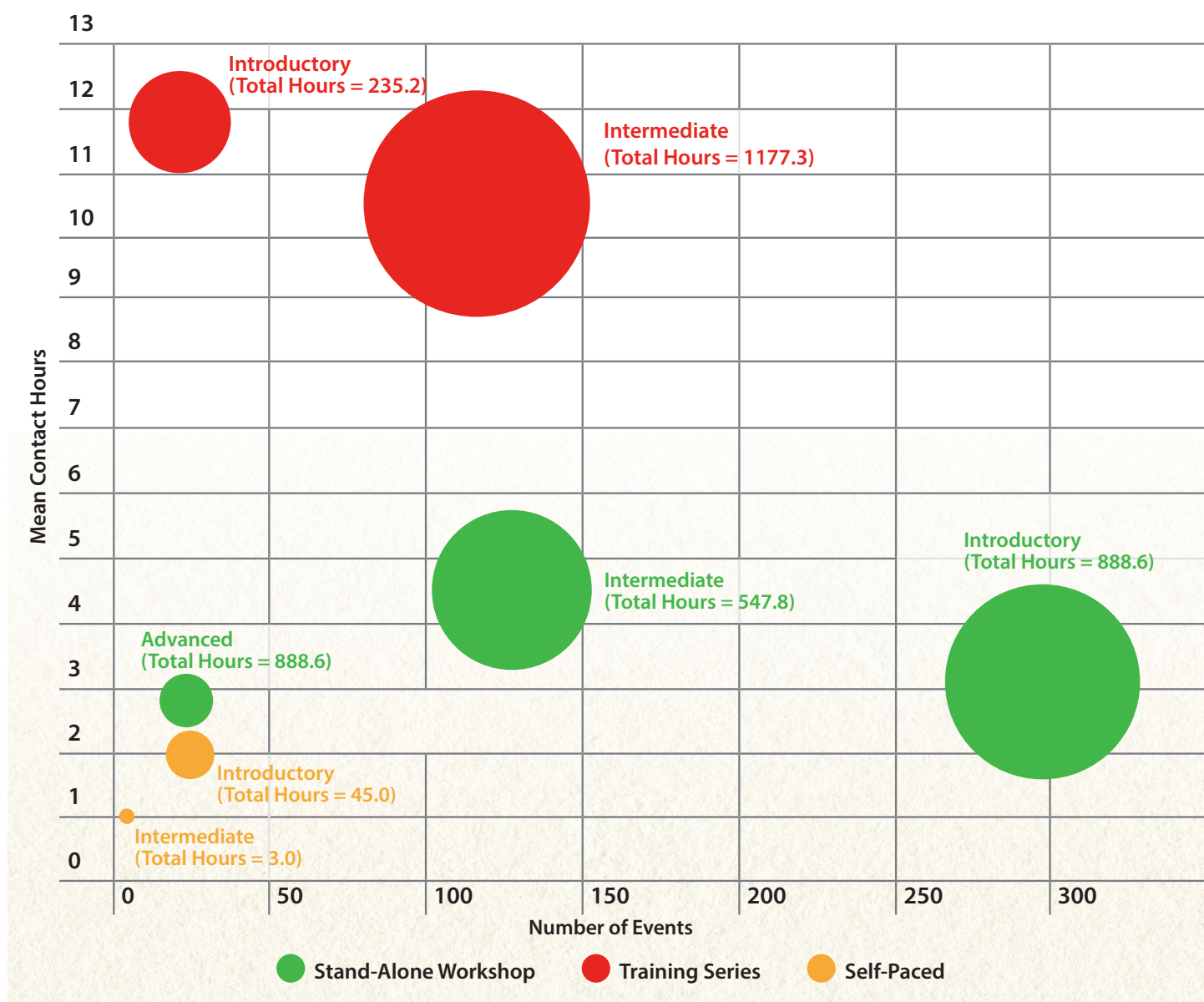
<sup>5</sup>State Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) was from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Conferences are not assigned a target audience in the Gateways Registry, as they typically encompass multiple audiences and age levels. As such, they are excluded from the remainder of analyses related to infant/toddler specific training events.



As shown in Figure 9, the greatest number of training events offered was introductory stand-alone workshops, followed by intermediate. The most total contact hours of training available, however, were in intermediate multi-session training series. Another interesting finding was that advanced stand-alone workshops were shorter on average (2.8 hours) than both introductory (3.1 hours) and intermediate (4.5 hours) stand-alone workshops.

**Figure 9: Infant/Toddler Training Events Characteristics**



I just don't think there are enough intermediate or advanced trainings available. If they are offered, they are often unaffordable.

-Center Director, Southeastern Illinois

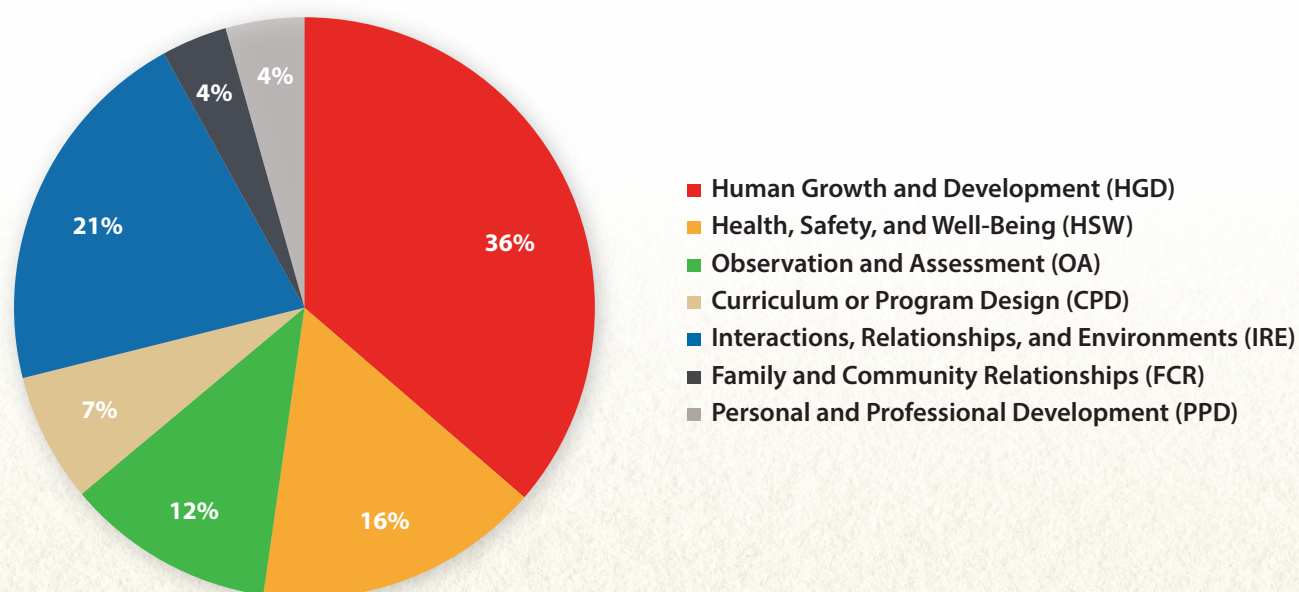
## Content Areas

The Gateways to Opportunity Content Areas represent a classification of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that ensure all early childhood professionals are highly qualified to educate, nurture, and meet the needs of children and families in Illinois. They are built on a foundation of multiple professional standards from various associations, agencies, and organizations that influence all levels of training, education, and role responsibilities in Illinois. They are continually revised based on the most current standards available.

The content of Registry-approved trainings is classified as falling into one or more content areas. A personal summary of training hours completed by Gateways Content Area is available to all Gateways Registry members through their Professional Development Record (PDR) and is a valuable resource for individual professional development planning.

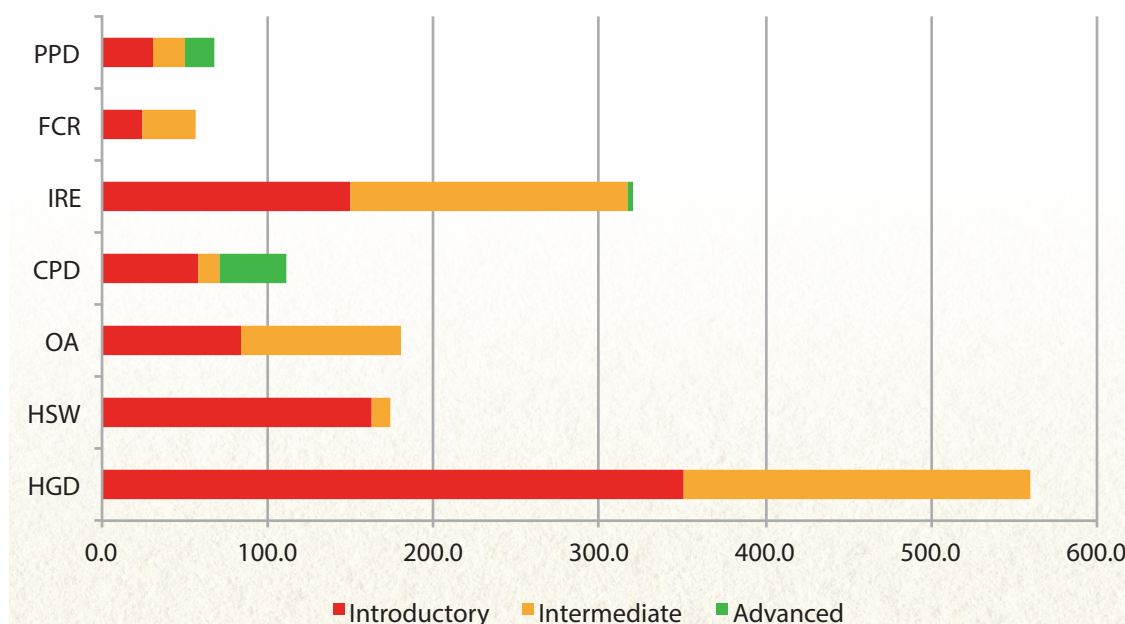
In FY15, more than half of the trainings held included content in Human Growth and Development or Interactions, Relationships, and Environments. Nearly forty-three percent included content related to Observation and Assessment. The content area with the fewest stand-alone workshops was Family and Community Relationships, at just eight percent. The distribution of contact hours followed a similar pattern; however, it is notable that the mean length of time spent in the Family and Community Relationships area was 4.4 hours – the highest of all content areas.

**Figure 10: Percent of Contact Hours in All Training Events by Gateways Content Area**



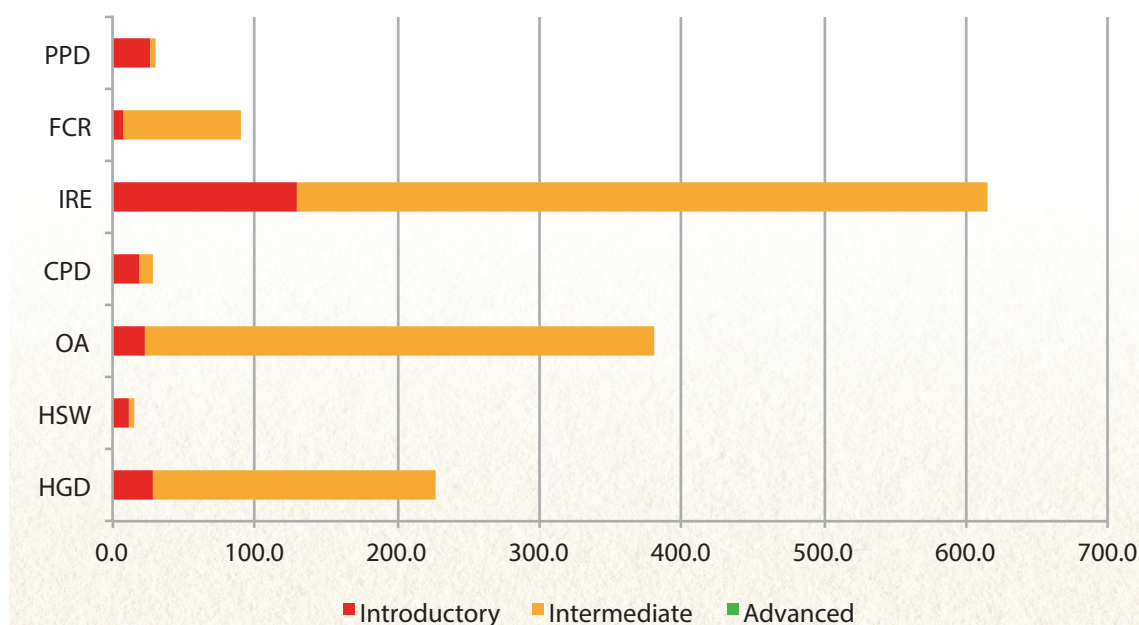
The amount of time spent in each content area varied based on the type of training and the level of learning. More than one-third of all contact hours in stand-alone workshops were spent on Human Growth and Development and close to one-quarter were focused on Interactions, Relationships, and Environments. In addition, almost all content areas had a greater proportion of contact hours at the introductory level of learning. It is interesting to note that in advanced stand-alone workshops, two-thirds of the content was spent in Curriculum or Program Design as shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Total Contact Hours in Stand-Alone Workshops by Level of Learning and Gateways Content Area**



By contrast, in multi-session training series almost every content area had the greatest proportion of hours at the intermediate level of learning. Overall, close to half of the content in training series was focused on Interactions, Relationships, and Environments and another quarter on Observation and Assessment.

**Figure 12: Total Contact Hours in Training Series by Level of Learning and Gateways Content Area**



**Key:**  
HGD - Human Growth and Development  
HSW - Health, Safety, and Well-Being  
OA - Observation and Assessment  
CPD - Curriculum or Program Design  
IRE - Interactions, Relationships, and Environments  
FCR - Family and Community Relationships  
PPD - Personal and Professional Development

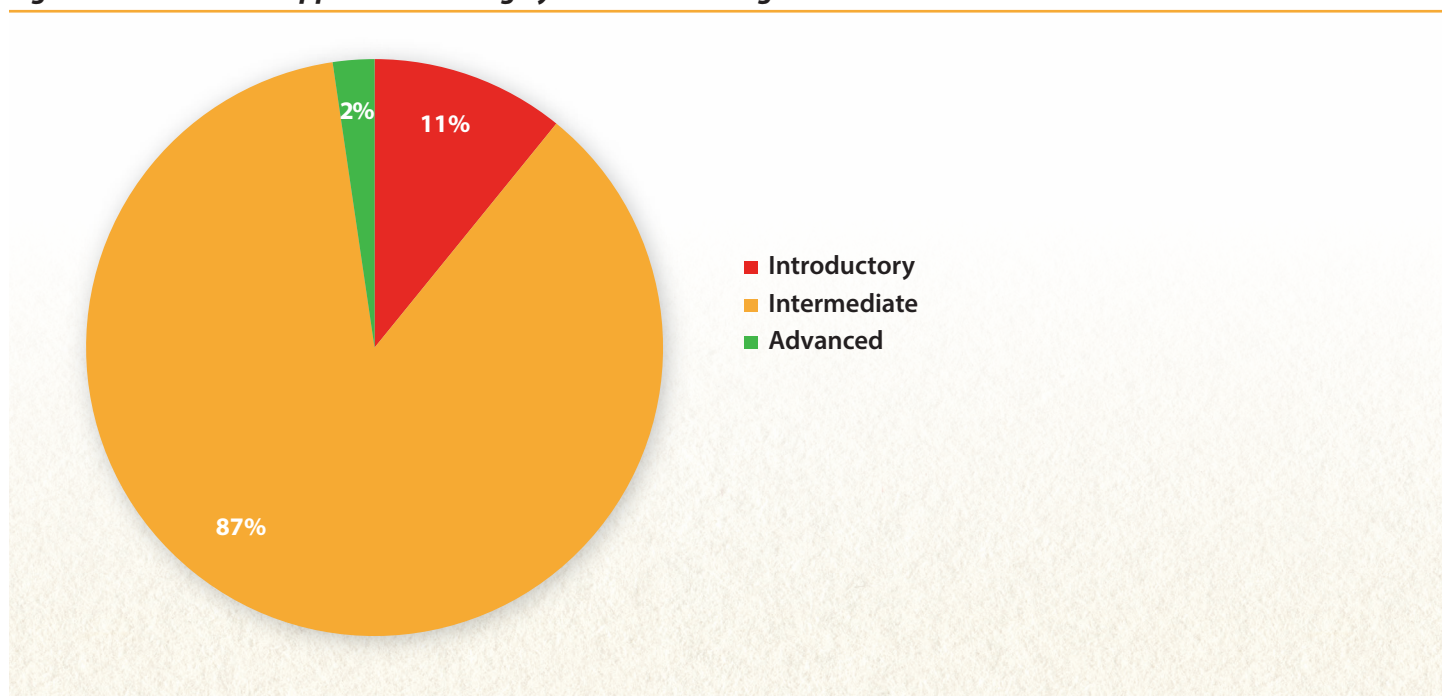


## Trainings Counting for Credential

An important role that community-based training plays within a professional development system is helping to move professionals along a pathway for learning. In Illinois, training events that meet a high level of rigor and depth of content can be approved for use by individuals seeking a Gateways to Opportunity Credential. Teachers and caregivers working toward a Gateways Infant Toddler Credential especially use credential-approved training to fill gaps and complete requirements for the credential.

In FY15, one-quarter of the stand-alone workshops and multi-session training series focused on infants and toddlers met the requirements to be credential-approved<sup>7</sup>. Not surprisingly, given the depth of content required, the majority of these were training series. While just 5.1 percent of stand-alone workshops were credential-approved, 78.9 percent of multi-session series were approved. In addition, the majority of credential-approved trainings were at the intermediate level of learning.

**Figure 13: Credential-Approved Training by Level of Learning**

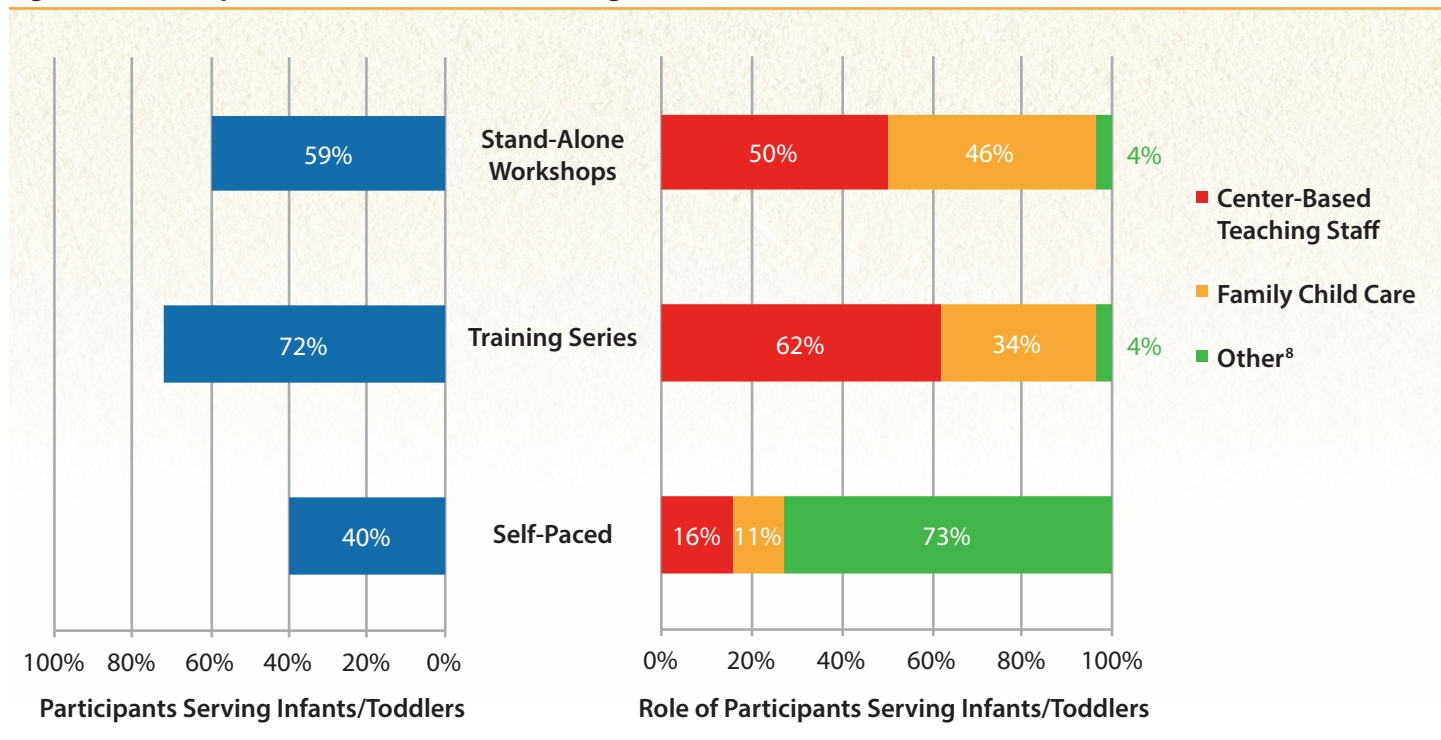


## Participants in Infant/Toddler Training Events

While there were 630 training events specifically related to infants and toddlers offered in FY15, not all of the participants in those trainings worked with that age group of children. Nearly three-quarters of participants in multi-session training series reported that they worked with children birth to 3, but just sixty percent of those attending stand-alone workshops and even fewer attending self-paced training worked with children in that age range. A possible explanation for this finding may be that teachers and caregivers are more intentional in selecting training opportunities specific to their roles when it comes to training events that are more in-depth (like training series) and less so for other opportunities like stand-alone workshops and self-paced training that require less time investment.

<sup>7</sup>Self-paced trainings were not included for this analysis as taken individually they do not typically meet the requirements to be credential-approved.

**Figure 14: Participants at Infant/Toddler Training Events That Work With Infants and Toddlers**



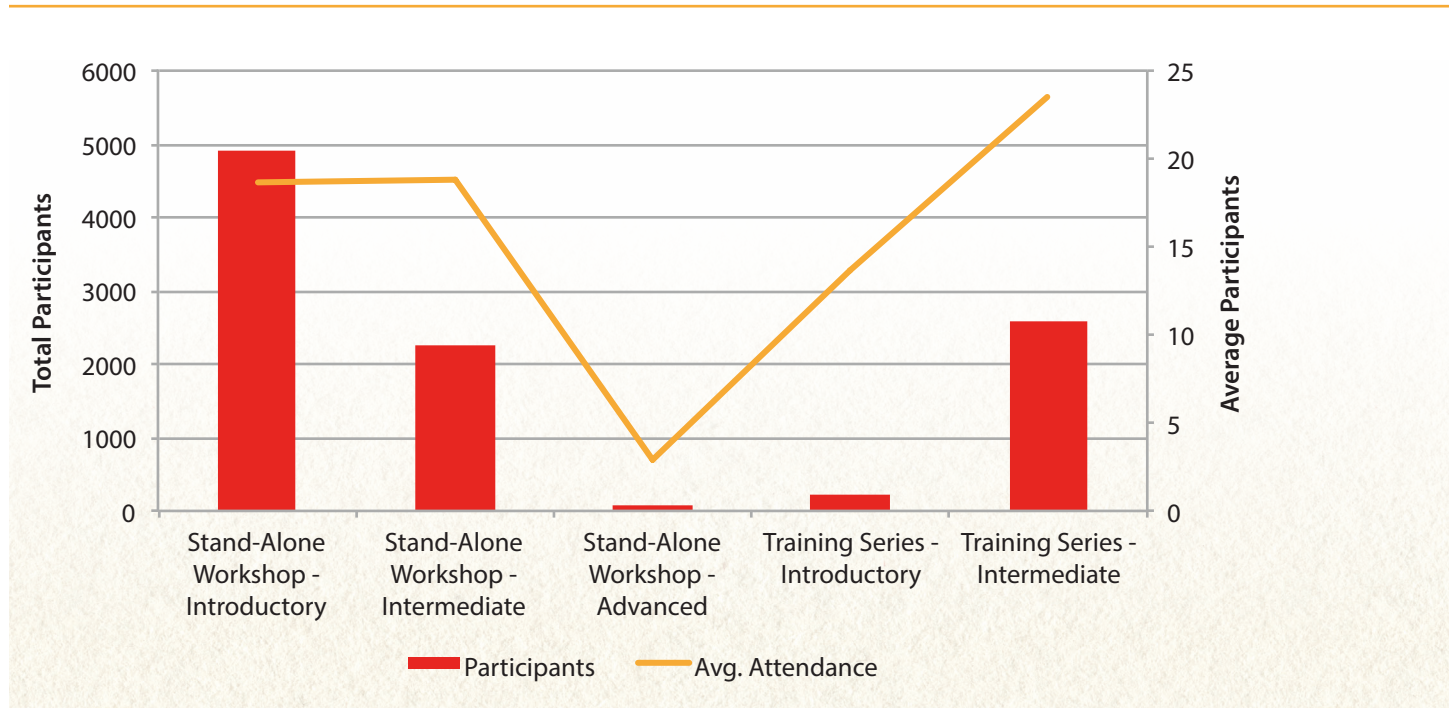
### Participation by Level of Learning

There were over 37,000 participants attending the infant/toddler-focused trainings in FY15. Nearly three-quarters of them were participants in self-paced online training. The remaining participants were in stand-alone workshops and training series, shown by level in Figure 15.

In order to maximize resources, many training entities set minimum attendance targets and will cancel training events if the minimum cannot be reached. Infant/toddler training events in FY15 were well-attended, with an average of 18.8 participants at each event. Multi-session series had slightly higher attendance on average (22.1) compared to stand-alone workshops (17.8). Average participants in each type of training by level are also shown in Figure 15.

<sup>8</sup>Role of participants attending self-paced training was not collected until late FY15. The 74% "Other" participants includes center-based teaching staff and family child care that may not have been identified as such earlier in the fiscal year.

**Figure 15: Total Participants and Average Participants per Training by Type and Level**



## Conclusion

According to the data brief *Characteristics of the Infant Toddler Workforce in Illinois*, there are more than 12,000 center-based teaching staff and approximately 6,600 licensed family child care providers in Illinois that work with children age birth to three. This large workforce has fewer educational qualifications than their peers working with older children and stands to benefit greatly from focused and intentional professional development training that will increase their knowledge and skill for working with our youngest children. Several opportunities exist for agencies that support this workforce in their professional development:

- Promote the importance of individualized professional development planning and educate on the resources and tools available to develop those plans.
- Capitalize on the most frequently used sources of support for professional development planning and learning about available training. For center-based staff, ensure program directors and leadership are well-informed about the process of creating individual professional development plans (IPDP) and how to utilize available resources such as the Gateways Content Areas and Gateways Levels of Learning. For family child care providers, work closely with provider associations and local CCR&Rs to provide the same information.
- Continue to build the supply of infant/toddler specific training, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels, and ensure that it is available at times and locations accessible to the workforce.
- Review the gaps in training content based on the Gateways Content Areas and develop training opportunities to fill those gaps.
- Provide additional pathways toward increased qualifications by increasing the number of trainings that meet the criteria to be approved for a Gateways to Opportunity Credential, especially the ECE Credential and Infant Toddler Credential.

While professional development planning and community-based training are just two components of a comprehensive menu of professional development supports, focused attention on these areas can help to promote the overall quality of early experiences for infants and toddlers by ensuring their teachers and caregivers have the knowledge, skills, and expertise to provide the nurturing, responsive care that will help them thrive.



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## About Us

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) is a statewide organization which – in partnership with its 16 local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies – is a recognized leader, catalyst, and resource for making high quality, affordable early care and education and school-age care options available for children and families in Illinois. INCCRRA administers Gateways to Opportunity – a statewide professional development support system designed to provide guidance, encouragement, and recognition to individuals and programs serving children, youth, and families.

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