



Attracting & Retaining Staff

The pandemic induced a national staffing crisis, which has had damaging impacts on the child care sector. This impacts the rendering of critical essential child care services for the community and also places your child care business at risk. Now more than ever, staffing is an integral component of the child care business model. Without the necessary staffing in place, other components of the business's ability to operate are at risk. While there are some external factors that may be out of your control, there are many others that are within your control, with actions that you can consider today to address staffing shortages.

As you read about strategies to attract the best talent for your program and offer increased compensation and staff benefits, it's important to note that a staple feature of the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program is that the funds can be used to meet the pressing challenges that the staffing crisis has presented. There are also ways to stretch your grant funds further by finding other ways to offer incentives to your staff, either through participation in programs such as the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP), or by offering incentives that produce meaningful value for your staff without a high price tag.

Creating a Three-Part Job Announcement

When recruiting new staff, you may want to consider having both a job description and a job announcement for the position you are filling. The **job description** defines the job and the minimum requirements for the position. It functions like your contract with the employee by letting them know the important things that somebody who does this job needs to know or be able to do. The full job description provides a lot of details that, while relevant, may not be necessary to explain upfront. View a [sample child care teacher job description](#).

A **job announcement**, on the other hand, serves a different purpose. The role of the job announcement is to present to prospective applicants, "Here's why you should come work with us." It is more about creating a document that not only tells a person about the job, but also explains to them why they should want to work for you. Think of it like trying to sell the job to an individual. To attract top talent, it is well worth the effort to take time to craft a high-quality job announcement. In his book, *Lean Recruitment*, Gary Romano of Civitas Strategies recommends a three-part job announcement comprised of three main sections called the "why, what, and how."

Part 1: The “Why”

In the first section of your job announcement, you will want to explain the “why” – why an individual should choose your organization as their place of employment. This doesn’t have to be lengthy – maybe five or six sentences – but you want to convey what qualities about your business will make them want to take that step into the unknown and come work for you. How do you stand apart as an employer? Is your workplace a fun environment? Is it an opportunity to help children who need your services the most? What inspires you and your current employees about working at your business? What is exciting about it? What do employees get out of being a part of this organization? Those are the things you want to include in this first section. This is also where you will want to include your basic business information such as where you are located, your neighborhood, and what is nearby.

Part 2: The “What”

In the next section, you want talk about the “what.” This section says what skills and capabilities are most essential for success in the position. However, be sure to keep it brief. Research shows that the more skills and capabilities you include in your job announcement, the less likely somebody is to really assess it and apply. They begin to see all the things that they *can’t* do rather than the ones they *can*. So, keep this section to the seven or eight most critical items that you feel are most important for them to succeed in the position.

Part 3: The “How”

In your final section, you will include the “how.” This section outlines how prospective applicants apply for the position. What information are you going to want to know? Do you need a copy of their license when they apply, or any certifications? Do you need other information upfront, like for them to fill out an official job application? These are the questions that you will want to include in this final section.

As you are drafting your announcement, don’t hesitate to look for inspiration from online job sites. It is often a great idea to see what other announcements for child care providers in your area, or even across the nation, are highlighting as important “whys” and “whats.” This is a great way to understand how things are being discussed or communicated currently in the market.

Download a [sample child care teacher job announcement](#).

Finding Talent

So now that you have your job announcement, how do you get it into the hands of the people that you want to hire? Most people start with posting the job announcement online at sites such as [Indeed](#) or on local job boards such as [Child Care VA's ECE Job Hub](#). Using social media and state-wide and national professional associations is another approach to getting the word out.

There are also active approaches you can take to search for talent, such as reaching out to potential candidates who are in your network, and also those in your network that can help you connect with potential candidates. These are folks like your friends, your current employees, and the families that you currently serve. It can be really important to let them know that you are actively hiring because they can serve as your most effective connectors. Another useful group of connectors can be other professionals in the child care field. Not everyone is extremely competitive and there may be people that you know in the child care field who don't see you as a threat who would be happy to help connect you with anyone who comes to mind.

Remaining Competitive in Today's Job Market

Staff Bonuses & Temporary Pay Increases

As we enter the post-pandemic job world, we are seeing every indication that securing top talent is going to be highly competitive. This may be a time where you want to consider bonuses and incentives for new hires (to be paid back if they leave your organization in less than six months). You can also offer incentive pay and say that for a period of time, like for the first three months, you will pay a slightly higher rate to get talent into your organization.

The same can be true about your existing employees. What you *don't* want to create is wage compression, which occurs when you start hiring new people at a higher rate of pay because there's so much competition in the labor market. This can leave your existing employees, who have been loyal to you for years, suddenly feeling like they're making much less than incoming employees. You may want to consider employee retention initiatives. You can offer incentives for people to remain with you in your organization, such as temporary bonuses or temporary wage increases.

For more information on structuring and offering these incentives, see [How Can I Financially Reward My Staff?](#)

VDOE is committed to easing staffing shortages and reducing turnover in child care programs.

- Programs that participate in the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) will receive a 20 percent addition to their base ARPA Child Care Stabilization grant.
- Eligible educators in programs participating in the PDG B-5 initiative will receive up to a \$2,000 Teacher Recognition Grant from VDOE.

Staff Benefits

While compensation is likely the number one factor when someone chooses to enter and stay in a job, benefits are also a critical piece of their decision.

There are many reasons why you should offer benefits. Here are a few of them:

- **Benefits improve staff satisfaction which aids in increased staff retention.** Happy and healthy employees are more engaged employees!
- **Benefits makes the employer more competitive in a tight labor market.** This is what could separate you from another program offering similar pay.
- **Benefits let staff know that they are valued and that you're supportive of their needs.** The pandemic has brought on different needs and considerations for employees, and they need a place of work that can meet those needs.

Providing benefits does not have to be an all-or-nothing concept. Different benefits can be offered with varying price points (some may be little- to no-cost, some may be more significant). Even small increases can make a big difference in a tight labor market. Most importantly, you want to be sure that regardless of what is being offered, your employees can 1) see the value in them, 2) easily understand them, and 3) easily access them.

You may be wondering where to start and what your options are. While this is not a complete list, here are some of the common benefits that a company can offer employees:

- Paid Time Off (PTO)
- Health Insurance
- Retirement
- Supplemental Insurance (including Employee Assistance Programs)
- Tuition Assistance and Staff Development
- Child Care

To learn more about these offerings, you can begin by researching traditional insurance providers. You may find that your existing payroll company (or other online payroll service providers like Gusto or Zenefits) can provide you with certain benefits. There are also Professional Employer Organizations, shared services networks, and other platforms for collaboration, such as your local chamber of commerce, that may offer other ways to provide benefits for your staff, or discounts to do so.

Outside of offering company-sponsored health insurance, you can still support your employees on an individual basis in accessing low-cost or free health insurance through the Affordable Care Act marketplace. Ensure that employees are aware of what they may qualify for, and facilitate a connection for them to work with a free Health Care Navigator who can walk them through their options. Learn about more [affordable health care options](#).

Final Thoughts

The information in this guide is offered to empower child care providers to do what is within their power and means to address current staffing shortages. The heightened awareness and importance of staffing for child care businesses has created a number of new opportunities to help owners increase the compensation of child care staff and teachers via the use of grant funds. While the influx of grant funding is temporary, there are ways to structure these offerings to avoid long-term implications, such as those contained within this guide. Additionally, providers can seek out ways to increase compensation and offer benefits for the long term, via business planning, which includes evaluating your rates, budgeting, and other efficiencies.

For more help on addressing staffing shortages, please visit the [Virginia Early Childhood Foundation's ARPA webpage](#) with resources to help strengthen your business. Resources include easy-to-read written guides, webinars, recorded tutorials, and more.

If you would like additional support on this topic or other business topics, please view the [coaching calendar](#) and register to join a small group coaching session.