



2025 WORKFORCE REPORT

Combining Workforce Data with Educator Perspectives



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Introduction

The child care workforce is holding together a system that depends on them, but rarely works for them.

Early Childhood Educators:

- Keep classrooms open and in ratio
- Create stability for young children during critical years of development
- Support families and working parents



Yet Many Face:

- Limited flexibility
- Administrative compliance and friction
- Inconsistent pay and scheduling
- Few clear pathways to grow and stay in the field

Why this report exists

This report brings together:

- What the data shows about how the child care workforce works
- What educators say about what they need to keep showing up
- Tandem's 2025 platform data, as well as direct insights from child care educators working in the field

Lasting workforce solutions start with understanding both educator behavior and educator voice.

Who We Are

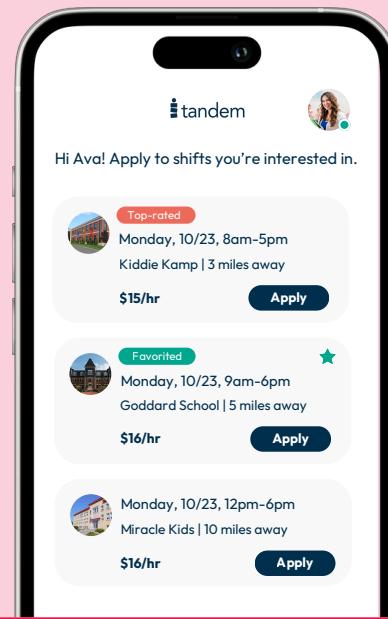


We created Tandem to keep child care programs staffed by supporting the educators who make high-quality care and education possible.

Tandem connects educators with flexible work opportunities in licensed child care programs while removing the barriers that make it hard to stay in the field.

We work alongside the child care workforce every day by:

- Giving educators flexibility and choice in how they work
- Supporting fast, consistent pay
- Reducing friction around onboarding, documentation, and compliance



When educators are supported:

Classrooms stay open

Families can access care

Burnout decreases

Centers stay in ratio

Teachers get breaks

Care is consistent

Impact Snapshot

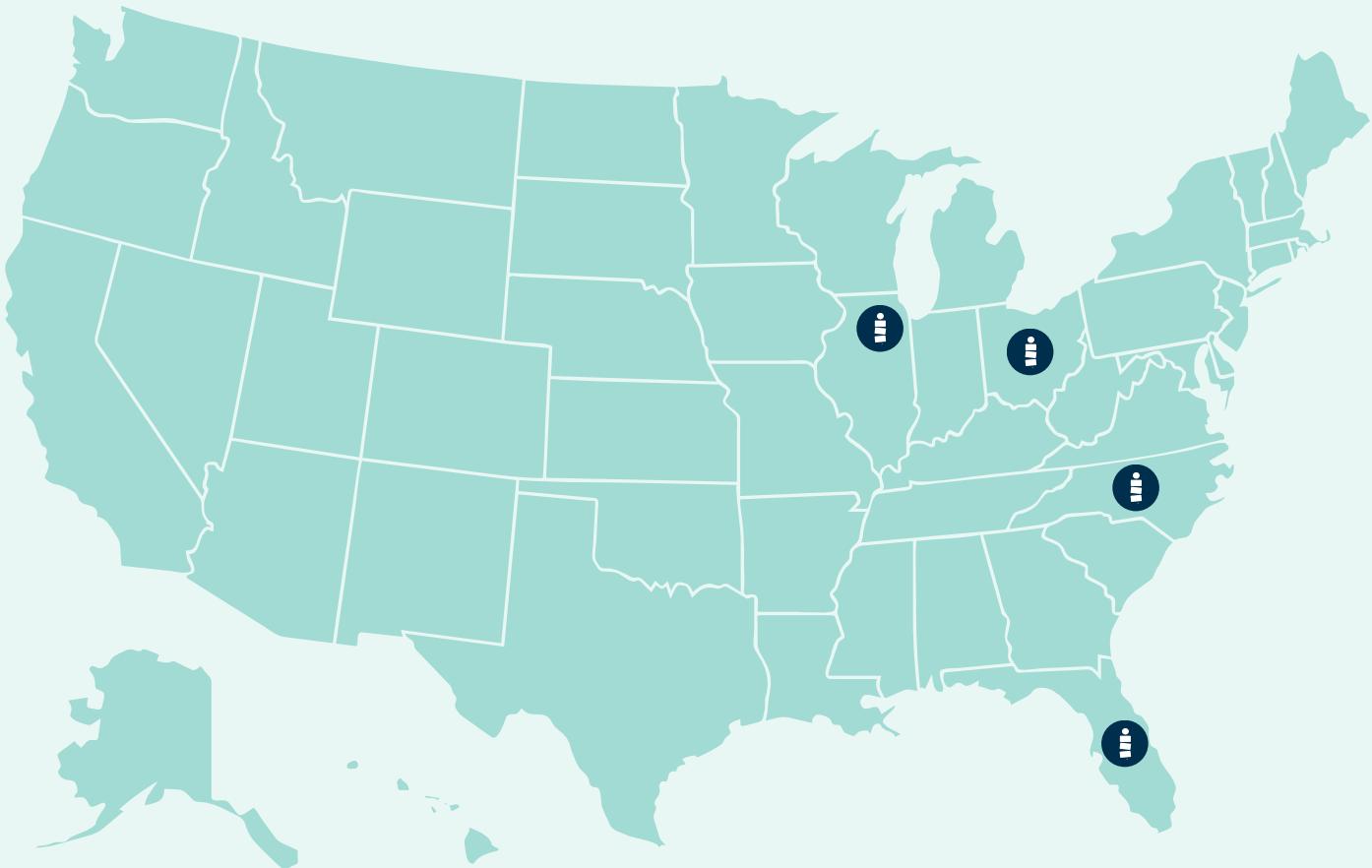
Behind every number is an educator who showed up.

In 2025, child care educators working through Tandem supported classrooms across four states, helping programs stay open and children experience consistent care.

2,466 ↘ 862 ↘

teachers worked

centers served



Data from the Field

Tandem's platform captures how the child care workforce actually works in real time.

Pay and Earnings

- **Pay rate averages:**
 - High school diploma: \$15.60/hr
 - Higher-education: \$18/hr

Work Patterns

- **Average shift length:** 7.5 hours
- **Preferred start time:** between 7am-9am
- **Average scheduling notice:** 1 week
- **Average hours worked:** 22.5 hours per week, 58.9 per month

Demographics

- **Gender:** 96% female
- **Age:** 32.5

Geographic Preferences

- **Average distance from shifts:** <10 miles

How Educators Participate in the Workforce

There is no single way educators use Tandem - but flexibility is the constant that makes participation possible.

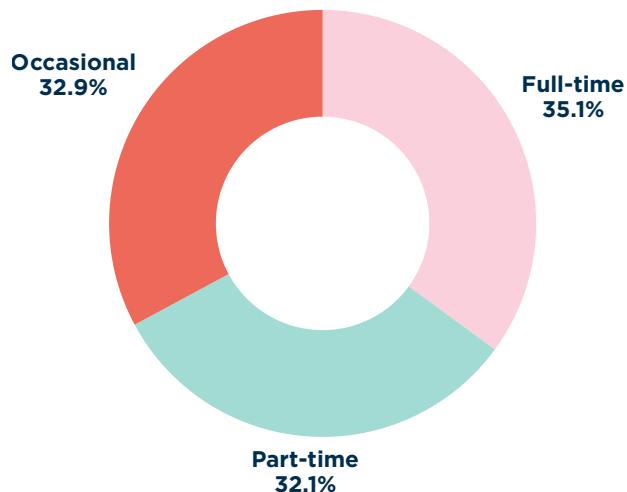
Why Flexibility Matters:

- Control over weekly and monthly schedules
- Freedom to avoid burnout
- Easier balance of personal responsibilities, parenting, and school

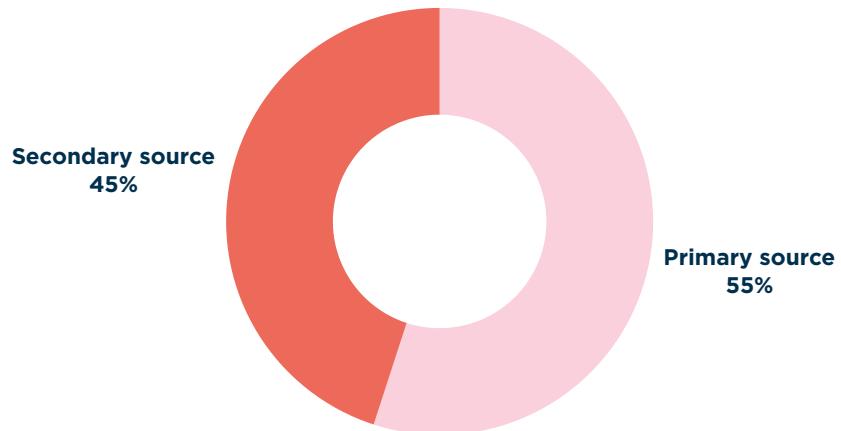
”

I can set my own schedule. This makes it easier to earn as a stay at home mom.

How educators use Tandem to work:



How educators rely on Tandem for income:



What Makes This Work Possible



Survey responses make it clear: **flexibility and fast pay are the foundations that make child care work sustainable.**

74%

say flexibility made balancing work and personal life easier

66%

say fast pay has helped them pay bills they wouldn't have otherwise made

52%

say flexibility is the aspect of Tandem that has helped them most

Why Educators Stay in Child Care

For many educators, staying in child care is a choice rooted in purpose - and then shaped by the conditions around them.



76% of surveyed teachers responded that they continue working in child care because they **love helping children learn and grow.**

“

“There are many powerful reasons people stay in childcare even when the work is exhausting, emotional, and often undervalued. Despite the challenges, I stay in childcare because I see the powerful impact I have on children as they grow, learn, and feel safe in my care.”

-Tiffany H., Cincinnati, OH

While purpose shapes the passion behind the field, it is not the only factor that determines whether educators can continue working in child care.

- Clear expectations before entering a classroom
- Respect and dignity equal to permanent staff
- Pay that reflects their experience and effort
- Flexibility to balance work and personal responsibilities

73%

say schedule flexibility factors into their decision to continue work in child care

How Educators Choose and Commit to Programs

The in-center experience determines whether educators return, commit, or move on.

Educators return when they experience:

1	2	3
Respect and professionalism (39.5%)	Supportive staff and leadership (37.4%)	Positive classroom or child fit (24.7%)

Percentages = portion of survey respondents that noted each reason as most important

“The biggest reasons I choose to return to a center after my first shift are the way the environment feels and how supported I am. If the staff is warm, helpful, and genuinely cares about the children, **it makes me feel like I belong.**”

-Carina P., Chicago, IL

Educators are selective - not disengaged. They commit to programs that respect their role and set them up to succeed.

Top 3 reasons why educators don't return to a center:

- Poor communication
- Disorganized environment
- Disrespectful staff

When Temporary Work Becomes Long-Term Commitment

The strongest commitments in child care are built through experience.

Continuity of care does not only come from permanent staffing. It also comes from **familiar educators returning, building relationships, and showing up again.**

“

“I remember a child at one of the centers where I worked twice. The second time, when he saw me enter the classroom, he ran toward me calling my name.”

For many educators, substitute work provides a low-pressure way to:

- Build relationships with children
- Experience a center’s culture and leadership
- Decide whether a long-term role feels right

”

If I were to work permanently at a center, it would be important to have a **positive work environment** with supportive leadership. **Consistent communication** and **clear expectations** would help me feel confident in my role. **Fair pay, benefits, and opportunities for growth** would also matter. Most of all, I’d want a center that values teamwork and puts children’s well-being first.

What Educators Need from Centers

When centers get the fundamentals right, educators come back - and stay.



Recipe for Educator Commitment & Success

Respect and Professional Treatment

Respect is often the deciding factor in whether an educator comes back. 60.4% cite disrespect or unprofessional treatment as the reason they would not return.

Organization, Communication, and Support

Prepared, supportive environments build confidence and trust quickly. Disorganization was the top reason for educators not returning to a center, with over 75% of survey respondents citing this.

Conditions that Enable Consistency and Growth

Educators stay where the work fits their lives and their future. Almost half of respondents cited opportunities for professional development as influencing their decision to stay.

Preparation, respect, and support = repeat bookings, stronger relationships, and a stable, committed workforce

Removing Administrative Barriers

Even motivated, qualified educators can be blocked from working when requirements are fragmented, repetitive, or unclear.

The Reality Educators Face



- Multiple systems and portals
- Repeated document uploads
- Confusing or inconsistent requirements
- Delays between being ready to work and being allowed to work

97%

of educators say Tandem has helped them keep their documents and credentials organized and up to date

Why Compliance Support Matters



- Credential tracking enables educators to work more consistently
- Consolidation reduces friction and errors
- Faster onboarding increases available supply

When documents and credentials are consolidated:



Educators activate faster and work more consistently



Programs access a broader, ready-to-work pool



Classrooms experience greater staffing stability

Growth, Learning and the Future Workforce

The child care workforce is not stagnant. Educators want to grow, learn, and build lasting careers in the field.

Educators expressed strong interest in:

- Professional development and training opportunities
- Clear expectations and classroom support
- Tools that help them feel prepared and effective
- Pathways to grow within the field

99%

of educators said they would take advantage of professional development or training opportunities.

“Up to date trainings and maybe workshops to help teachers grow and learn how to help children more.”

“Receiving information on how to get more credentials without getting in debt.”

“Access to ongoing training and professional development would help people grow in the field.”

“Helpful resources on how to further our education.”

“Trainings and more educational opportunities for staff.”

“Classes that were offered, for a minimum fee, that would provide the skill set needed to work with many different types of children.”

The future of child care depends on educators who are supported not just to work, but to grow.

Growth increases confidence and effectiveness



Training reduces burnout and overwhelm



Career pathways make staying in child care feel possible

Voices from the Field

Listening to educators is not optional. It is essential to building a workforce that lasts.

Throughout 2025, educators shared what it feels like to do this work. Their voices reveal a consistent truth: **flexibility enables participation, relationships create continuity, and respect sustains commitment.**

“You get to browse available shifts in your area and choose only the ones that fit your life. This freedom to accept or decline shifts is a game-changer for people juggling school, family, or other commitments.”

-Jalisa, Chicago, IL

“The second time I worked at a center, a child ran toward me calling my name. I was surprised he remembered me. It was such a beautiful moment.”

-Fatima, Columbus, OH

“A center I worked at the teacher I was paired with was very friendly and allowed me to incorporate some of my ideas for art projects with the kids.”

-Shatara, Tampa, FL

“Having strong leadership, classroom management training, and a reliable support system, like floaters or behavioral specialists who can step in when needed would make a big difference.”

-Dynasty, Cleveland, OH

“Occasionally check in with us and make sure that we are getting the support that we need”

-MeChelle, Columbus, OH

“I’m happy to return to centers where I’m treated with respect and there’s open communication about what is expected.”

-Connie, Columbus, OH

“Every classroom is different, and I get to learn new approaches and ideas everywhere I go. It’s flexible, empowering, and really supports those of us who take pride in our work with children.”

-Sydney, Cincinnati, OH

“The biggest reasons I choose to return to a center are the way the environment feels and how supported I am. Feeling welcomed, valued, and part of a team makes a huge difference.”

-Carina, Chicago, IL

“I would feel even more valued with more consistent communication and feedback about my performance. Clear expectations and updates help me stay confident and supported in my role.”

-Latoya, Chicago, IL

“When I was hired by Clearwater Academy International when temporarily working through Tandem, it was a really great day.”

-Twanika, Tampa, FL

Looking Ahead

The future of the child care workforce depends on what we build next.

In 2025, the impact of a supported workforce was felt across classrooms, programs, and communities.

Across four states, Tandem supported programs with reliable staffing when they needed it most:

4.8k

4- OR 5-STAR REVIEWS GIVEN

862

PROVIDERS SERVICED

77%

OF PROVIDER JOBS FILLED



When educators are supported and systems reduce friction, participation increases and programs gain access to reliable staffing that benefits children through continuity of care.

Substitute staffing and permanent hiring are not competing models; they work best together to create pathways for connection, consistency, and long-term commitment.