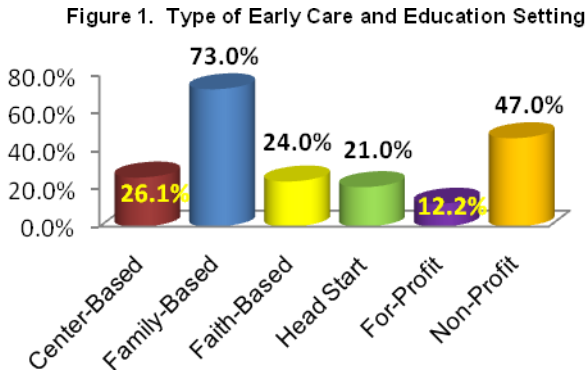


Survey of Children’s Challenging Behaviors and Mental Health Issues in Early Care and Education Settings

In January, The University of Utah Social Research Institute in collaboration with Utah’s ECCS project completed a statewide study of challenging behaviors in early care and education settings. The following is an excerpt from the Executive Summary:

Overview of Study:

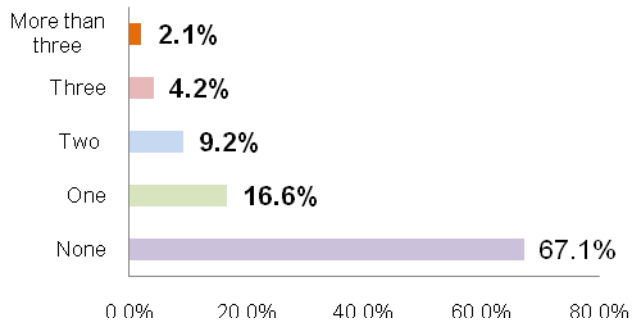
Participant Overview - Of the 1,650 surveys that were mailed, 338 surveys were received, representing a 21% response rate. Of these responses, the majority of respondents were from family-based facilities (73%; see Figure 1).



Overall, within the past 12 months, 203 children were expelled, representing a rate of approximately 18 per 1,000 children, with center-based facilities expelling 10.56 per 1,000

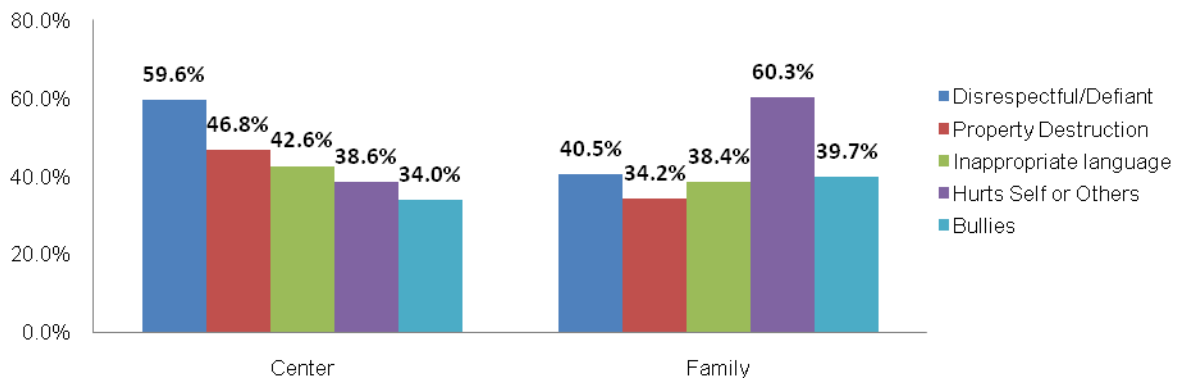
children, and family-based facilities expelling 43.75 per 1,000 children. Although 67% of respondents have not expelled any children over the past 12 months, the remaining 33%, or 1 out of every 3, facilities have expelled at least one child from their facility (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentages of Children Being Expelled from Early Care and Education Settings



Among these facilities, the top 5 challenging behaviors among expelled children include: disrespectfulness/defiance; property destruction; inappropriate language; hurts self or others; and bullies (see figure 2). As indicated in Figure 3, center-based facilities are struggling with disrespectful/defiant behavior, while family-based facilities are struggling primary with children who hurt themselves or others.

Figure 3. Top 5 Challenging Behaviors Among Expelled Children by Facility Type



The presence of challenging behaviors in the early care and education settings are having a direct impact on staff. Specifically, 1 in 5 facilities reported that these challenging behaviors are having a negative impact on the wellbeing of their staff, and there are high levels of turnover in their facilities. Despite the direct impact on their facilities, only 58% of respondents reportedly have a policy in place to manage children with challenging behaviors.

Fortunately, just over 81% are utilizing training opportunities on a regular basis to help with children exhibiting challenging behaviors, and 70% are contacting their regional childcare resource and referral director for assistance.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it is clear that early care and education providers are struggling with children exhibiting challenging behaviors. The Bureau of Maternal and Child Health at the Utah Department of Health has solicited proposals for a mental health consultation model that will provide both programmatic and child and family focused consultation. Rates of expulsion among both center and family-based facilities are very high and facilities could benefit from direct consultation related to education and/or intervention for specific children and/or group dynamics.