



# Early Educators' Virtual Training Experiences and Preferences during the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Findings from the District of Columbia Child Care Policy Research Partnership

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**Staff training is a key ingredient for improving early childhood program quality. Training comes in many forms, but virtual learning opportunities are becoming increasingly common. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the focus and mode of training as early educators employed in child care settings faced unprecedented challenges in protecting the health and safety of young children while managing their own and their families' needs.**

This brief presents findings from a survey of early educators in the District of Columbia on their training needs and experiences during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Data were collected in spring 2020, about one year after the pandemic hit, as part of the larger DC Child Care Policy Research Partnership Study with DC's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (box 1). The survey set out to answer the following key questions on training:

- What were early educators' virtual training experiences in the previous year? What was the level of participation over time? What topics were most common and when?
- On which topics do early educators feel like they need more training and support?
- What are early educators' preferred methods for receiving training?

Key findings show that 75 percent of DC early educators had updated or created a professional development plan during the first year of the pandemic. Nearly 75 percent of staff members indicated that they benefited "a lot" from virtual trainings in that same year. Most would like to continue receiving trainings through recorded videos or live webinars versus in-person options.

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## BOX 1

### DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey Methods

This brief presents highlights from the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey fielded from February 24, 2021, through May 3, 2021. This voluntary, web-based survey was emailed to all lead and assistant teachers in licensed child development centers in the District of Columbia that participate in the Capital Quality rating and improvement system (box 2). The survey was also sent to all home caregivers and associate home caregivers in Capital Quality–participating child development homes and expanded child development homes in the District. Lead home caregivers whose names appear as directors or owners on the child care license were eligible to respond to some, but not all, survey sections, as they receive direct support from Capital Quality and have a different perspective than instructional staff members.

We obtained user account data from the Quorum e-learning database, maintained by the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education, to identify early educators eligible for the survey. Of the 6,865 staff members in the Quorum data, 2,613 met our survey eligibility criteria. We conducted a census, emailing each of these 2,613 educators a study invitation and a unique survey link. Then we removed 94 people on the recruitment list whose email addresses were not active.

The survey asked early educators about their knowledge of and experiences with Capital Quality, their experience with virtual training during the COVID-19 pandemic, training topics they would benefit from and their preferred training format, and more sensitive questions related to the effects of the pandemic on their employment, physical and mental health, and economic well-being.

A total of 417 early educators responded to the survey, either partially or completely, for a total response rate of about 17 percent. Of these 417 educators, 387 (93 percent) worked at child development centers, 17 (4 percent) worked at child development homes, and 13 (3 percent) worked at expanded child development homes. A total of 200 (48 percent) participants were center lead teachers, 188 (45 percent) were center assistant teachers, 13 (3 percent) were associate home caregivers, 10 (2 percent) were lead home caregivers, and 6 (1 percent) were eligible directors from child development homes or expanded child development homes.

Also, of the 417 respondents, 344 consented to have their survey data linked with administrative data variables (e.g., facility quality designation, facility type, and educator position) we obtained from our study partners at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. We used these administrative data to generate estimations for different subgroups.

We developed two survey weights to adjust for survey nonresponse. *Partial response* weights were used when a significant portion of the full sample (two-thirds or more), including partial respondents, responded to the question at hand. *Complete response* weights were used when nonresponse for the question was high and responses were primarily from those who completed the full survey. Neither weight changes estimates of the mean. Instead, we applied the correct weight for more accurate estimation of standard errors and future inferential work.

See the associated technical report<sup>a</sup> for full details on survey motivation and methods; response rates; characteristics of the survey sample; steps taken to weight, clean, and analyze survey data; and a copy of the survey instrument.

<sup>a</sup> Heather Sandstrom, Peter Willenborg, Fernando Hernandez-Lepe, Timothy Triplett, and Erica Greenberg, *District of Columbia Child Care Policy Research Partnership Study: Early Care and Education Workforce Survey* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2022), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/district-columbia-child-care-policy-research-partnership-study-early-care-and-education-workforce-survey>.

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## BOX 2

### The Capital Quality Child Care Rating and Improvement System

Capital Quality offers an example of child care quality improvement spurred by new federal regulations under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. Launched in 2016 and fully implemented by 2018, Capital Quality differs from its predecessor, Going for the Gold, in three important ways: it provides consistent research-based measures of program quality across settings, an enhanced focus on continuous quality improvement, and public-facing profiles with transparent information on the quality of licensed child care. My Child Care DC (<http://mychildcaredc.com/>, accessed April 25, 2022) allows families to search for care based on Capital Quality designation and was designed so families in the District of Columbia could easily identify, review, and compare options to make more informed decisions.

#### *Who Participates?*

Licensed child development facilities are automatically enrolled in Capital Quality if they primarily serve children from birth through age 5 and have an agreement with the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education for subsidized child care. Other licensed child development facilities are encouraged to participate as volunteers. From March 2017 to January 2019, providers could participate in one of five cohorts spaced over two years. Providers not already participating were assigned to one of the groups. One key difference between Capital Quality and Going for the Gold is that Capital Quality exempts providers that receive subsidies but primarily serve school-age children in before- or after-school care. The state superintendent is still considering ways to include these providers.

#### *What Does Capital Quality Offer Early Educators?*

All facilities participating in Capital Quality are observed annually using a validated tool—the Environment Rating Scales® (ERS®) or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System Pre-K® (CLASS Pre-K®), depending on their facility type and ages served. Professional supports are also offered to help child care providers reach higher levels of quality. Quality facilitators are ERS® and CLASS Pre-K®-certified coaches who work with providers, specifically center directors and lead home caregivers, to develop and implement a continuous quality improvement plan. Providers receive ongoing technical assistance, incentives, and resources, and participate in communities of practice. Providers that participate in the child care subsidy program are incentivized by a tiered reimbursement rate based on Capital Quality designation. Center-based classroom teachers and support staff members in child development homes are not the primary recipients of Capital Quality supports, but supports and features are intended to reach them indirectly through program directors.<sup>a</sup>

#### *How Does Capital Quality Determine Designations?*

Two years of ERS® or CLASS Pre-K® data are combined to determine one of five Capital Quality designations: developing, progressing, quality, high quality, and preliminary (for facilities still being observed). Designations are based on the extent of evidence (considerable, good, adequate, or minimal) that “the program provides a nurturing environment with supportive interactions (e.g., responsive scheduling, warm/positive interactions) that promotes children’s cognitive, physical and social-emotional development.”<sup>b</sup> Beginning in fall 2021, newly participating facilities with one year of observation will receive a Capital Quality designation that will remain in place until two years of valid observation data are collected.

<sup>a</sup> OSSE (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education), “Capital Quality Theory of Change” (Washington, DC: OSSE, 2019), [https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page\\_content/attachments/Capital%20Quality%20Theory%20of%20Change%20Infographic\\_English.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/Capital%20Quality%20Theory%20of%20Change%20Infographic_English.pdf).

<sup>b</sup> OSSE, “Tips to Choose Early Care and Education” (Washington, DC: OSSE), <https://mychildcare.dc.gov/MyChildCare/ChooseChildCare/2602/0>, accessed April 21, 2022.

# Early Educators’ Education and Work Experience

Our survey of early educators, coupled with administrative records from the Quorum e-learning system obtained from DC’s Office of the State Superintendent of Education, provides information on educational attainment, credentials, and work experience. These findings provide context for the design and delivery of staff professional development.

## Educational Attainment

Most early educators in DC have an account in Quorum; about 94 percent of Capital Quality-participating facilities have at least one registered user. We analyzed Quorum data spanning January 2020 through September 2021 to capture the educational attainment of more than 2,800 early educators working in Capital Quality-participating facilities. We found wide variation in staff education levels (table 1). Most commonly, early educators held a Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential (37 percent of sample). Another 17 percent held a bachelor’s or graduate degree, 9 percent held an associate degree, and 8 percent had some college credit but no degree and no CDA. One-quarter (24 percent) had earned a high school diploma or equivalent, and very few (2 percent) had not yet earned a high school diploma or equivalent.

TABLE 1

### Highest Level of Education Completed and Staff Positions for Target Sample of Early Educators

Number and percentage in Capital Quality-participating facilities who have a Quorum account

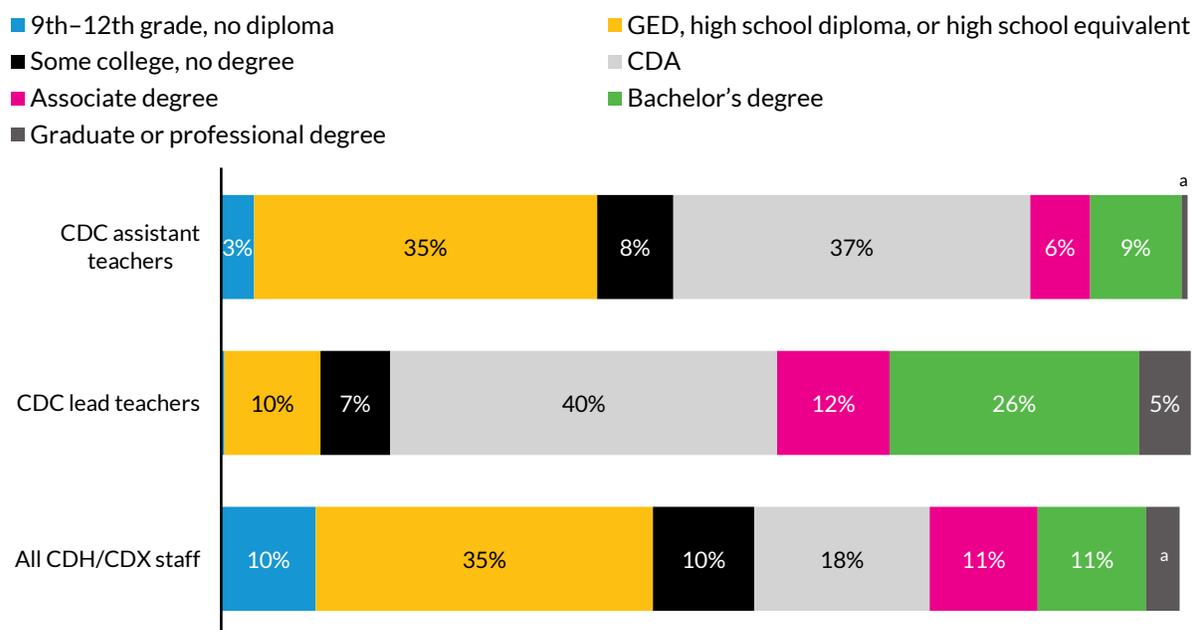
	N	Percent
<b>Highest level of education completed</b>		
Less than a high school diploma	66	2
GED, high school diploma, or high school equivalent	681	24
Some college; no degree or CDA credential	219	8
CDA credential	1,060	37
Associate degree	252	9
Bachelor’s degree	479	17
Graduate or professional degree	82	3
Missing educational attainment data	13	-
<b>Position</b>		
Eligible director from child development home or expanded home	48	2
Lead home caregiver	47	2
Associate home caregiver	49	2
Center lead teacher	1,281	45
Center assistant teacher	1,427	50
<b>Total staff members</b>	<b>2,852</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This table contains information on Quorum users who created an account by September 2021 and were eligible to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey in spring 2021 or would have been eligible based on their job title. We include the CDA credential as an education level because it was listed for many individuals in the Quorum data. We sort the CDA credential as a higher educational attainment than some college but no degree and a lower educational attainment than associate degree. CDA = child development associate.

Across position types represented in Quorum records, lead teachers in centers had higher educational attainment than both assistant teachers in centers and staff members working in child development homes (CDHs) or expanded homes (CDXs).<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 reflects that, as of September 2021, more than 80 percent of lead teachers had a CDA credential or postsecondary degree. About half of assistant teachers in centers and half of staff members working in CDHs or CDXs had a CDA or postsecondary degree. A CDA was more common among center-based staff members (40 percent of lead teachers and 37 percent of assistants) than home-based staff members (18 percent). The largest share of home-based staff members (35 percent) had a high school education.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Early Educators’ Highest Level of Education Completed, by Staff Position**



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**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This figure presents data on 2,839 Quorum users who created an account by September 2021 and were eligible to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey in spring 2021 or would have been eligible based on their job title. We include the CDA credential as an education level because many early educators listed it in the Quorum data as their highest education level. We sort the CDA credential as a higher educational attainment than “some college but no degree” and a lower educational attainment than an associate degree. Thirteen individuals in the survey sample had missing educational data and are not included in this figure. CDA = child development associate, CDH = child development home, CDX = expanded child development home.

<sup>a</sup> Value not shown because of sample size limitations.

DC’s new child care licensing requirements require assistant teachers and associate home caregivers to have a CDA credential or an associate degree (or higher) by December 2023.<sup>3</sup> Out of the 1,427 assistant teachers in centers and associate home caregivers who use Quorum and work in a Capital Quality–rated facility, 770 (52 percent) had a CDA credential or postsecondary degree. Survey findings suggest a portion of other staff members in these roles are currently pursuing their CDAs.

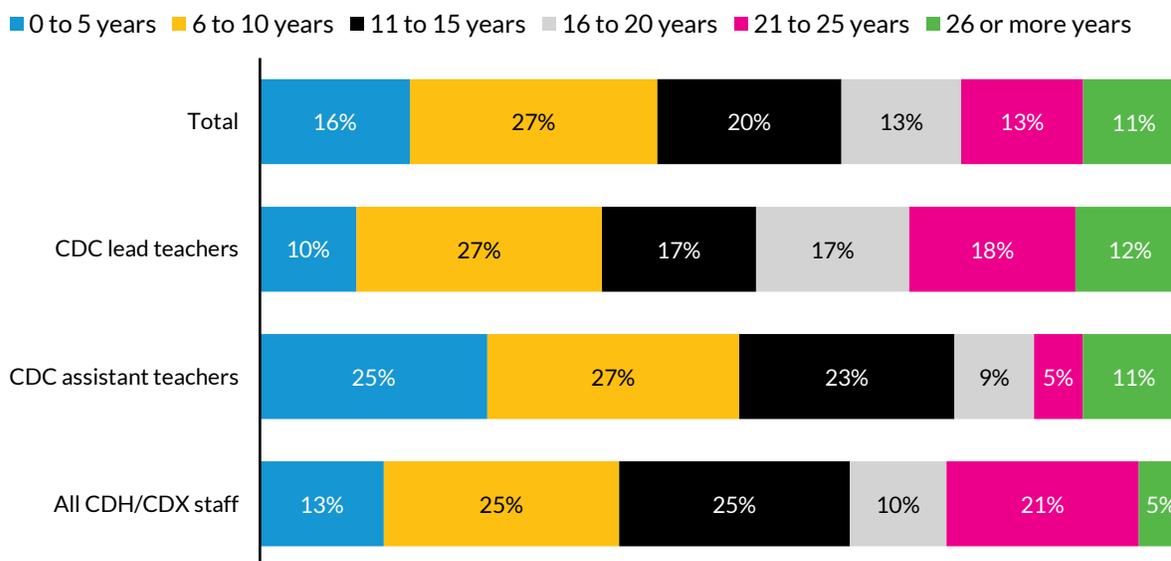
## Relevant Work Experience

The work experience of early educators also varies, but on average survey respondents had 14 years of relevant paid work experience. Across staff positions, CDC lead teachers had more paid work experience (47 percent indicated having 16 or more years of experience), followed by CDH and CDX staff members and CDC assistant teachers, of which 36 percent and 25 percent, respectively, indicated 16 or more years of experience (figure 2). Only one in six early educators (16 percent) had less than 6 years of experience, highlighting the vast experience of this workforce and their retention in the field.

FIGURE 2

### Early Educators' Years of Related Work Experience, by Staff Position

How many years of paid experience do you have working with children (other than your own) who are younger than age 13?



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Source: 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.

Notes: Of 417 survey respondents, 229 answered this question. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis.

## Early Educators' Training Experiences

### Professional Development Plans

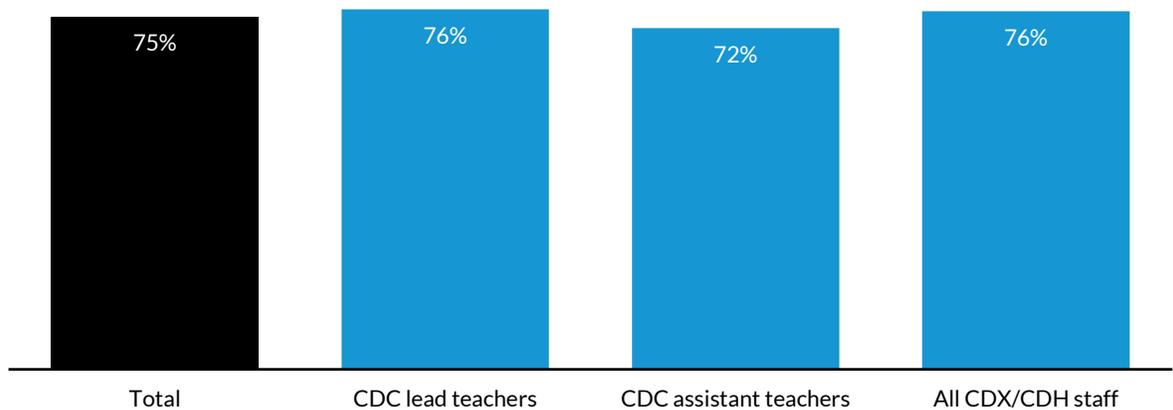
The survey asked respondents various questions related to professional development. One question was whether respondents had created or updated a professional development plan in the past year, since the pandemic began in March 2020. We see that most respondents (75 percent) did, with slight differences based on staff position (figure 3) and program quality (figure 4). Lead teachers in centers and staff members in home-based programs created or updated their professional development plans at a slightly higher rate (76 percent for both groups) than assistant teachers in centers (72 percent).

Facilities with a preliminary designation (box 2) had the highest share of respondents creating or updating their professional development plans, at 86 percent. However, only a small group of facilities that recently joined Capital Quality have this designation. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, high rates of DC early educators across staff positions and quality designations remained engaged in professional development during the pandemic by updating their professional development plan or creating a new one.

**FIGURE 3**

**Share of Early Educators Who Developed or Updated a Professional Development Plan, by Staff Position**

*In the past 12 months, did you develop or update a plan for your professional development?*



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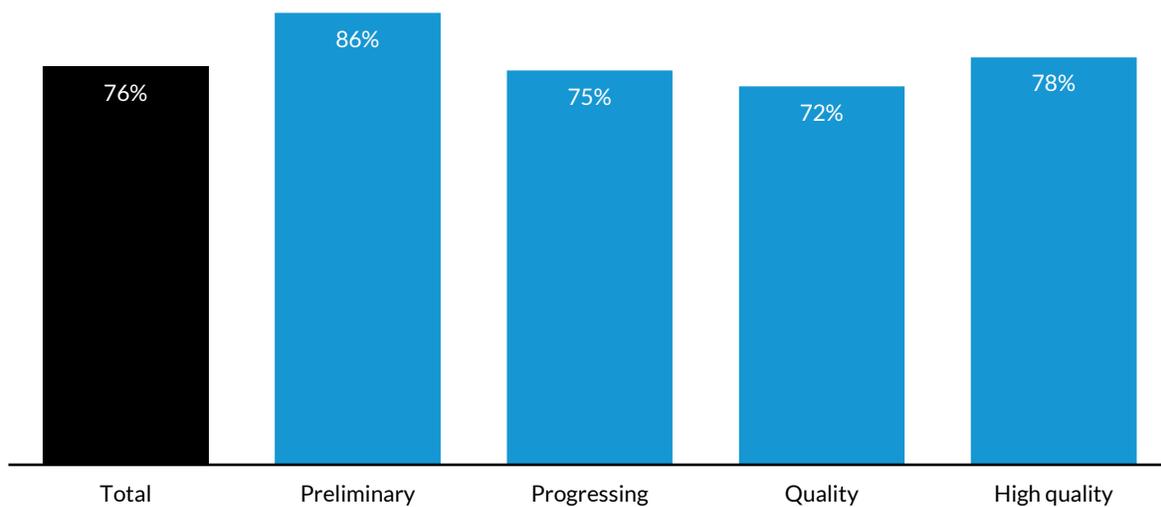
**Sources:** 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey and Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This question was asked to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. Of these 406 respondents, 336 consented to have their survey data linked with administrative data, which provided information on facility type and staff position. We used administrative data to supplement missing survey data. There were 242 educators who responded to this question and had data available on their facility type and staff position, comprising 226 staff members in centers and 16 staff members in homes or expanded homes. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis. CDC = child development center, CDH = child development home, CDX = expanded child development home.

FIGURE 4

### Share of Early Educators Who Developed or Updated a Professional Development Plan, by Capital Quality Designation

*In the past 12 months, did you develop or update a plan for your professional development?*



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**Sources:** 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey and Capital Quality designation data from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This question was asked to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. Of these 406 respondents, 336 consented to have their survey data linked with administrative data, which provided information on their facility quality designation (box 2) and staff position. We used administrative data to supplement missing survey data. There were 225 educators who responded to this question and had data available on their facility quality and staff position, comprising 10 in preliminary facilities, 1 in a developing facility (which was too small to display as a subgroup in the figure), 46 in progressing facilities, 83 in quality facilities, and 85 in high-quality facilities. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis.

### Virtual Training Participation by Staff Position and Program Quality

DC early educators engaged in various virtual trainings during the first year of the pandemic while many facilities faced temporary closures. Free trainings on a variety of topics are available to registered staff members through Quorum, an online training platform. We analyzed administrative records obtained from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education for Quorum members eligible for our workforce survey—specifically early educators employed in Capital Quality–participating child care facilities—and examined trends in participation over time. From January 2020 through December 2020, 72 percent of early educators with a Quorum account completed at least one training.

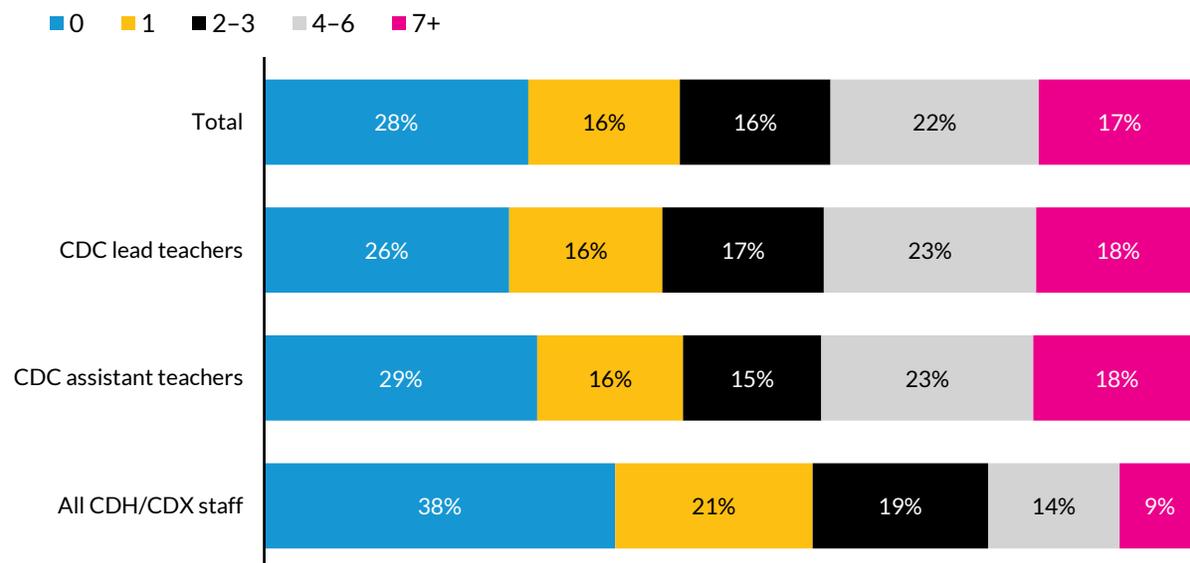
Across position types and survey-eligible staff members, center assistant teachers and center lead teachers (72 percent and 74 percent, respectively) were more likely than staff members in CDHs and CDXs (63 percent) to have completed at least one training in 2020 (figure 5). Center assistant and lead teachers were also more likely to complete more trainings, with 41 percent in each position completing

four or more trainings in 2020, whereas 23 percent of CDH and CDX staff members completed four or more trainings in 2020.

**FIGURE 5**

**Frequency of Early Educators’ Participation in Quorum Online Trainings, by Staff Position**

*Percentage of educators completing trainings, January–December 2020*



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**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

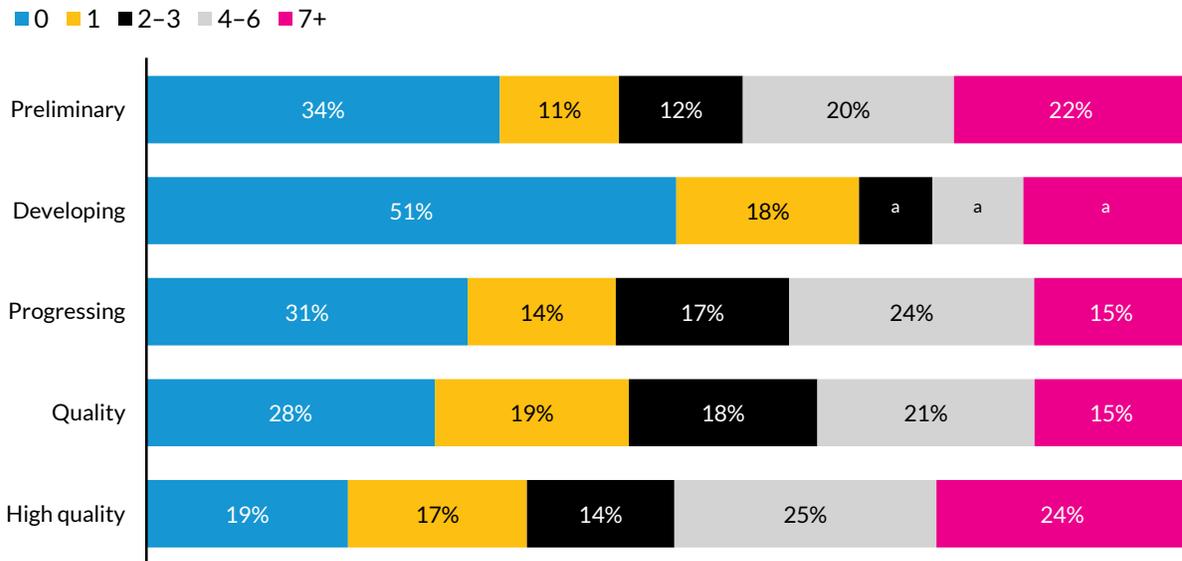
**Notes:** This figure presents data on 2,636 early educators who had Quorum e-learning accounts between January 2020 and December 2020 and were eligible, or would have been eligible, to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey based on their employment in a Capital Quality–rated facility and their job title. “All CDH/CDX positions” includes associate home caregivers, lead home caregivers, and eligible directors of child development homes or expanded homes whose names did not appear on child care license. CDH = child development home, CDX = expanded child development home.

Across quality designations, survey-eligible staff members in facilities with lower quality designations were less likely to have completed any trainings in 2020 (51 percent in developing facilities; 31 percent in progressing facilities) than staff members in facilities with higher quality designations (28 percent in quality facilities; 19 percent in high-quality facilities) (figure 6). Staff members in high-quality facilities were most likely to complete more trainings, with 49 percent completing four or more in 2020, followed by staff members in preliminary-rated facilities, with 42 percent completing four or more.

FIGURE 6

**Frequency of Early Educators’ Participation in Quorum Online Trainings, by Capital Quality Designation**

Percentage of educators completing trainings, January–December 2020



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**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This figure presents data on 2,636 early educators who had Quorum e-learning accounts between January 2020 and December 2020 and were eligible, or would have been eligible, to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey based on their employment in a Capital Quality–rated facility and their job title.

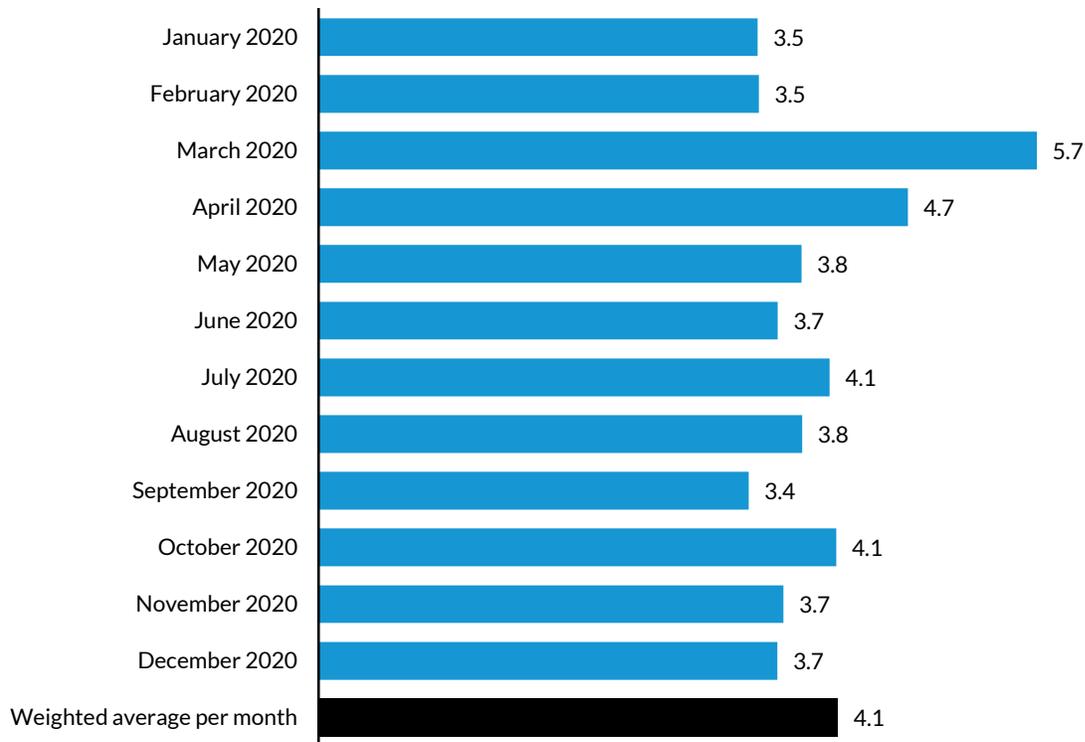
<sup>a</sup> Value not shown because of sample size limitations.

As shown in figure 7, among staff members who completed at least one training during the observation year, the average number of completed trainings in the months leading up to the pandemic was 3.5 trainings per month. Participation spiked in March 2020, with an average of 5.7 trainings in that month, dropped to an average of 4.7 trainings in April, and then declined to prepandemic levels. With more than 400 (85 percent) of DC’s 471 licensed child care facilities closing in mid-to-late March 2020 because of COVID-19, this spike in March and April 2020 suggests that educators spent more time engaged in targeted professional development following facility closures.<sup>4</sup> Across all of 2020, among staff members who completed at least one training, staff members completed an average of 4.1 trainings per month.

FIGURE 7

**Early Educators' Online Training Participation, by Month, January–December 2020**

*Average number of trainings per person per month (for those who completed trainings)*



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**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

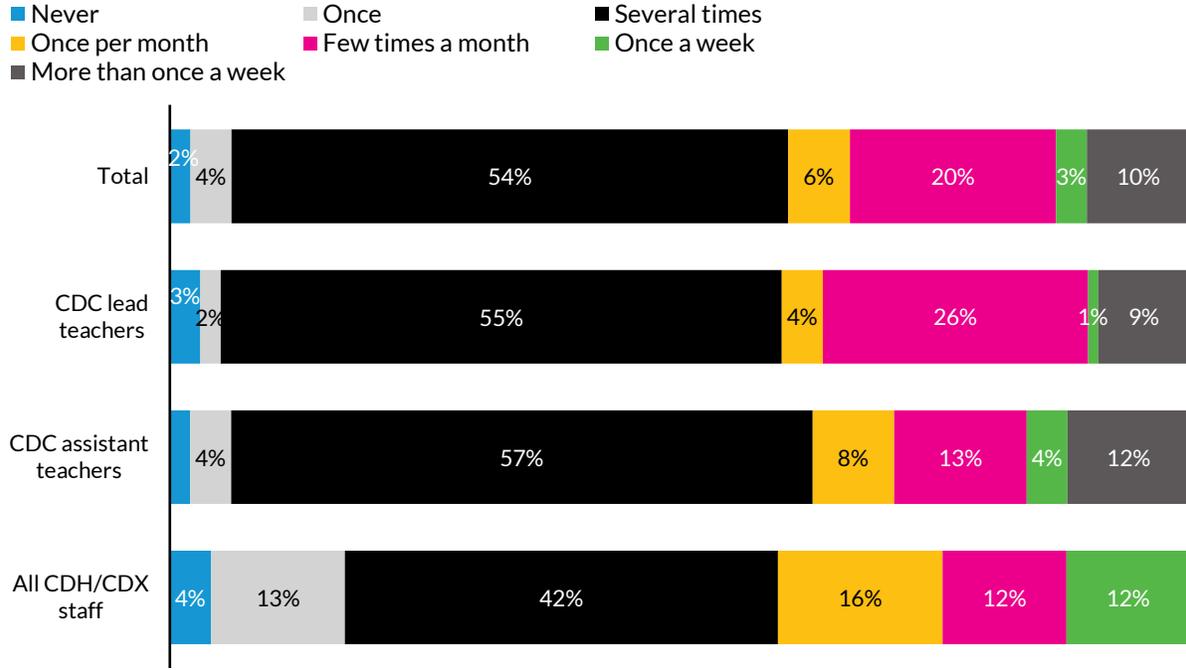
**Notes:** This figure presents data on 1,892 early educators who completed at least one training in the Quorum e-learning system in 2020 and were eligible, or would have been eligible, to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey based on their employment in a Capital Quality–rated facility and their job title. This figure captures 25,527 training sessions completed from January to December 2020.

These findings based on administrative data reinforce our survey findings about the frequency of engaging in virtual training. More than half (54 percent) of survey respondents reported accessing Quorum trainings or online resources in the Professional Development Information System “several times” in the past 12 months (figure 8). Patterns are similar for CDC lead and assistant teachers. A slightly higher percentage of CDC assistant teachers (16 percent) indicated that they accessed virtual trainings at the highest frequencies, “once a week” or “more than once a week” than CDC lead teachers (10 percent). However, a higher share (26 percent) of CDC lead teachers accessed virtual trainings a “few times a month” than CDC assistant teachers. Responses for CDH and CDX caregivers were more varied. Notably, CDH and CDX staff members had the highest percentage of teachers access trainings “once a week” (12 percent), but also the highest percentage access virtual trainings “never” or “once” in the past year (17 percent).

**FIGURE 8**

**Share of Early Educators Accessing Virtual Trainings, by Staff Position**

*In the past 12 months, how often did you access virtual trainings through Quorum or the Professional Development Information System online resources for early childhood educators?*



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**Sources:** 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey and Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education to identify staff position.

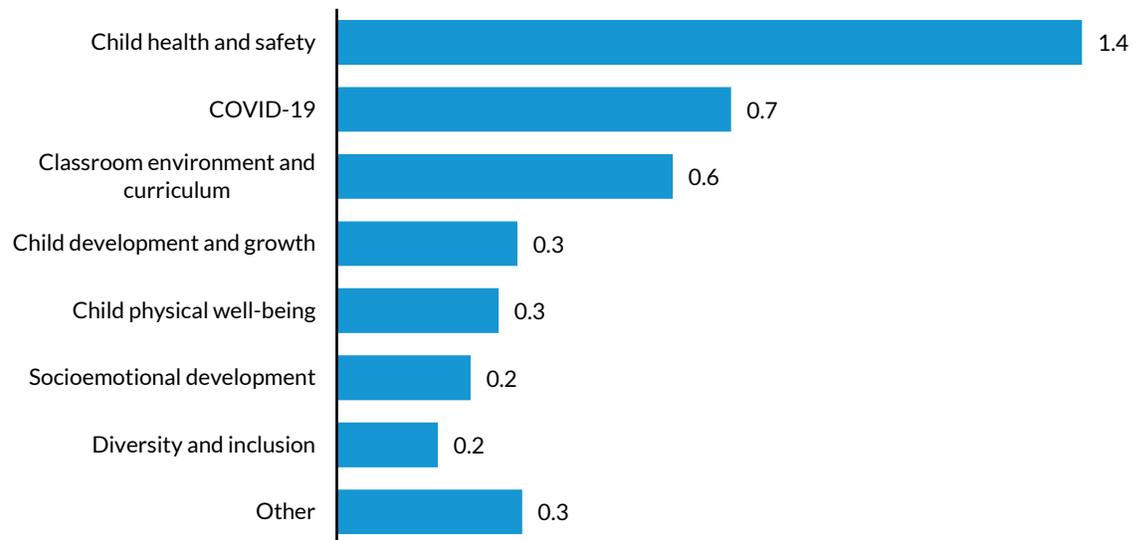
**Notes:** This question was asked to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. Of these, 336 consented to have their survey data linked with administrative data, which provided information on their staff position. Staff position data were available for 240 educators, comprising 224 staff members in centers and 16 staff members in homes or expanded homes. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis. CDC = child development center, CDH = child development home, CDX = expanded child development home.

Quorum administrative data also show the type of training completed. Figure 9 reflects the average number of monthly trainings per person, by training topic, for all staff members eligible for the survey who completed at least one training in 2020. (Reminder: survey eligibility was limited to early educators working in a Capital Quality-participating facility.) Trainings related to health and safety were most commonly taken by educators in 2020, with an average completion of 1.4 trainings per month. This was followed by COVID-19 and classroom environment and curriculum trainings, which had an average monthly completion of 0.7 and 0.6 trainings per month, respectively.

FIGURE 9

**Early Educators' Participation in Quorum Online Trainings, by Topic**

Average number of trainings per person per month (for those who completed trainings), January–December 2020



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**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This figure presents data on 1,892 early educators who completed at least one training in the Quorum e-learning system in 2020 and were eligible, or would have been eligible, to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey based on their employment in a Capital Quality-rated facility and their job title. This figure captures 25,527 training sessions completed from January to December 2020. The research team assigned individual training courses to a category based on the course name and description. The “other” category includes less commonly completed trainings related to family and community engagement, children with disabilities, child assessment, dual language learners, technology, teacher health, and program administration.

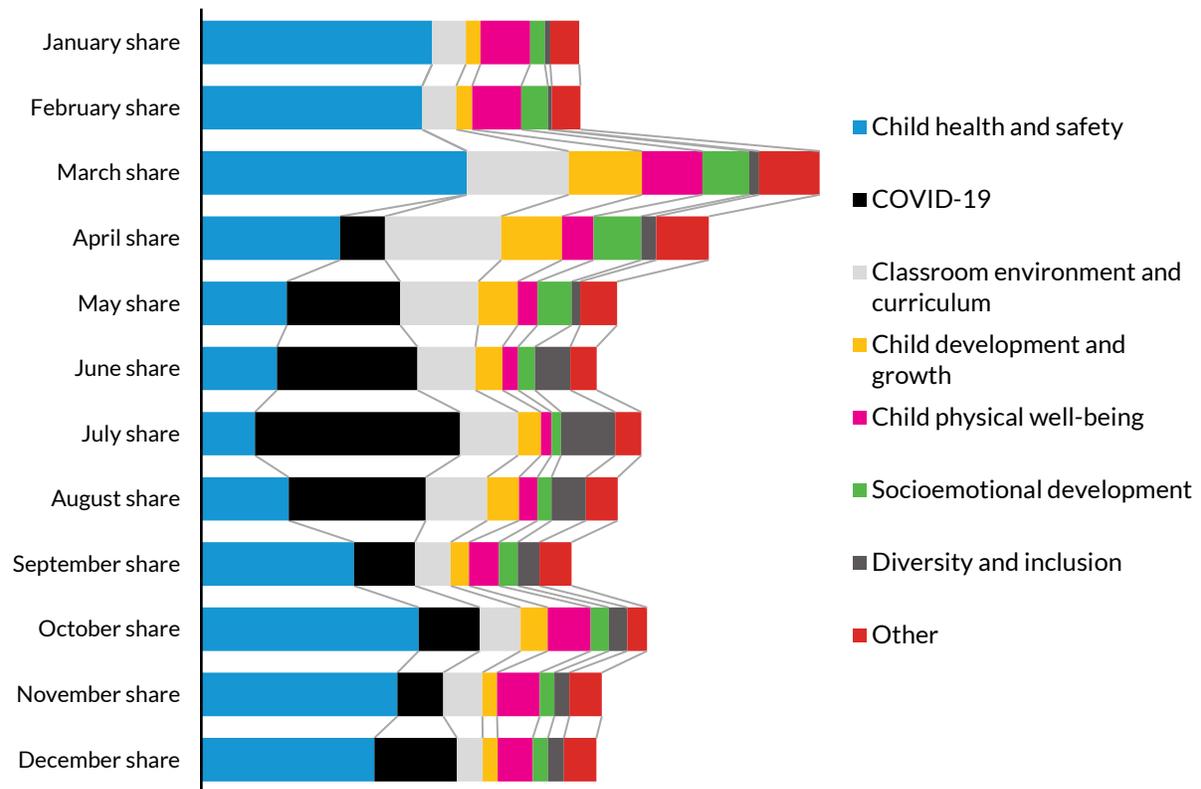
Figure 10 shows a more detailed picture of trainings completed over time in 2020 and variation in demand for training on certain topics. Before the pandemic, most completed trainings were related to child health and safety (about 2 trainings per month). When COVID-19 forced many DC child care facilities to close in March 2020, average training completion per person spiked across most training topics. In this month, individuals completed an average of 2.5 trainings on child health and safety—this topic’s highest average across all 12 months. Average completion of trainings on classroom environment and child development and growth also saw increases from February to March, of 0.4 and 0.5 more trainings per month, respectively.

Moving from April into July, more early educators started to complete trainings related to COVID-19, increasing from an average of 0.4 trainings per month in April to an average of 1.9 trainings per month in July—the highest average for that topic across the 12 months observed. Educators may have completed COVID-19 trainings at the expense of other topics, with average monthly completion declining for most other training types from April to July. For instance, trainings related to classroom environment declined from a personal average of 1.1 trainings in April (its highest monthly average) to 0.5 trainings in July. Trainings related to diversity and inclusion jumped from 0.1 trainings per month to 0.5 trainings per month from May to July, which correlates with peak demonstrations for racial justice during summer 2020.

**FIGURE 10**

**Early Educators’ Participation in Quorum Online Training Topics, by Month**

*Average number of trainings per person per month (for those who completed trainings), 2020*



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**Source:** Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

**Notes:** This figure presents data on 1,892 early educators who completed at least one training in the Quorum e-learning system in 2020 and were eligible, or would have been eligible, to take the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey based on their employment in a Capital Quality-rated facility and their job title. This figure captures 25,527 training sessions completed from January to December 2020. The research team assigned individual training courses to a category based on the course name and description. The “other” category includes less commonly completed trainings related to family and community engagement, children with disabilities, child assessment, dual language learners, technology, teacher health, and program administration.

From July to October, COVID-19 trainings declined by an average of about 1.3 trainings completed per person per month, swapping frequency with trainings related to child health and safety, which increased by 1.5 trainings per month. Completion of trainings related to diversity and inclusion declined after July for the rest of 2020. Monthly training completion of classroom environment-related topics also declined continually after April 2020, which correlates with environmental observations for Capital Quality being on pause during the pandemic. Moving into December 2020, COVID-19 trainings began to pick up again, which is possibly related to the introduction of the Delta variant, while child health and safety trainings started to decline again.

## Perceived Benefits of Virtual Trainings

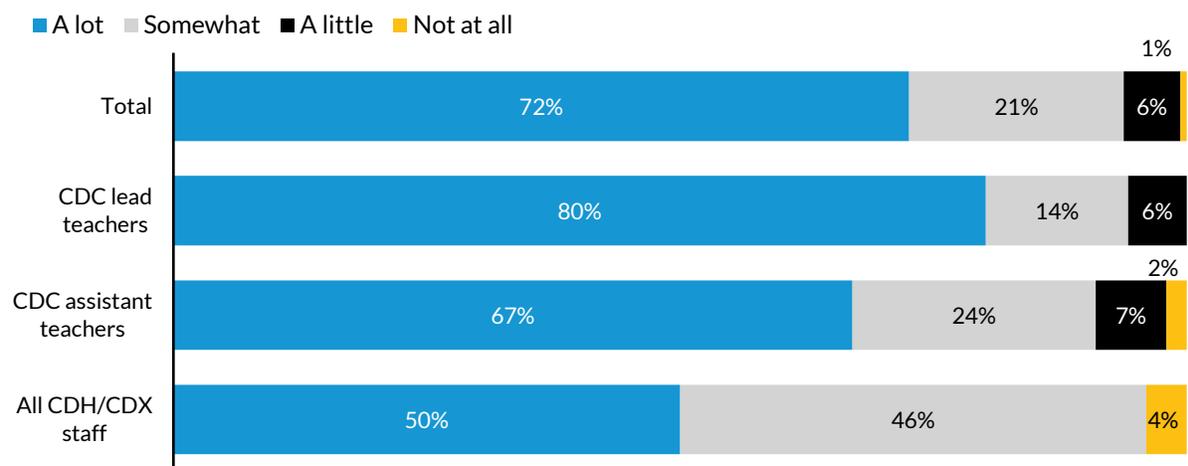
Professional development is important for early educators because it enhances their knowledge, skills, and practice for working with young children and families, and it helps them provide quality educational experiences that will promote children’s learning outcomes. Early educators’ perceptions of the benefits of training are also important for determining their motivations for engaging in such activities.

Our survey asked respondents how much they benefited from Quorum trainings and the Professional Development Information System in the past year. Most respondents indicated that they benefited “a lot” (72 percent), with some variation by staff position (figure 11). CDC lead teachers were more likely to report benefiting from virtual trainings than CDC assistant teachers and CDH/CDX caregivers. Whereas 80 percent of CDC lead teachers said they benefited “a lot,” only 67 percent of CDC assistant teachers and 50 percent of CDH/CDX staff members had this response. The variation in responses suggests the content covered or virtual mode may not have been a good fit for some early educators, especially home-based caregivers.

FIGURE 11

### Share of Early Educators Perceiving Benefit from Virtual Trainings, by Staff Position

Overall, how much would you say you benefited from virtual trainings in the past year?



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**Sources:** 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey and Quorum administrative data obtained from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education to identify staff position.

**Notes:** This question was asked to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. Of these, 336 consented to have their survey data linked with administrative data, which provided information on their staff position. Staff position data were available for 239 educators, comprising 223 staff members in centers and 16 staff members in homes or expanded homes. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis. CDC = child development center, CDH = child development home, CDX = expanded child development home.

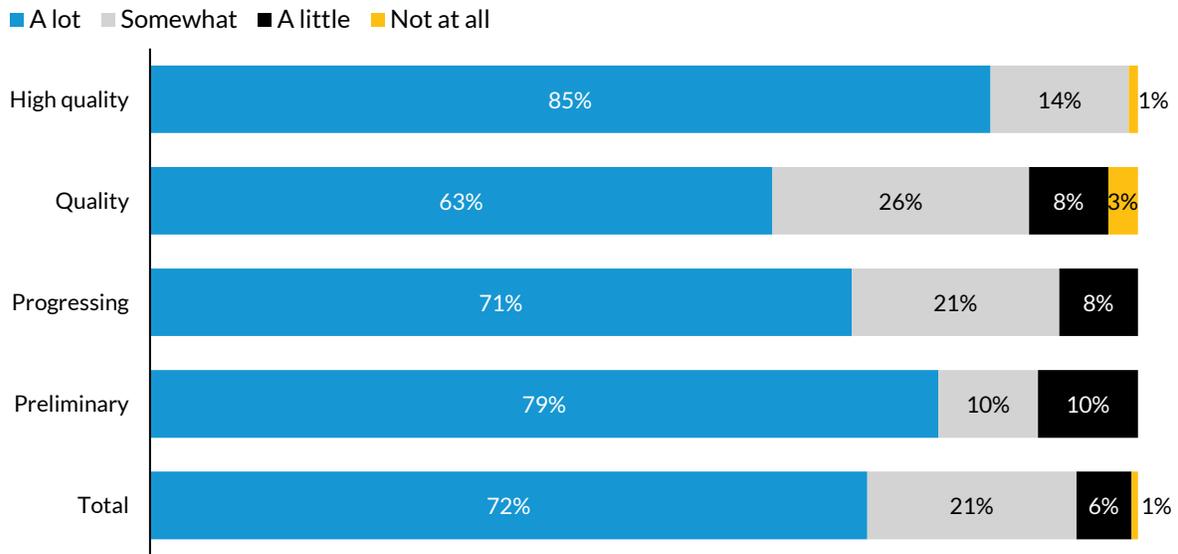
Figure 12 shows the benefits of training indicated by early educators, broken down by quality designation. Facilities with a high-quality designation had the largest share of respondents indicate they benefited a lot (85 percent), followed by respondents in preliminary (79 percent), progressing (71

percent), and quality (63 percent) facilities. Across all quality designations, few respondents reported benefiting a little or not at all. However, the observed variation suggests the virtual trainings available may benefit staff members in high-quality facilities and preliminary facilities new to Capital Quality but may not be perceived as useful to staff members in facilities with other (and lower) quality designations.

FIGURE 12

**Share of Early Educators Perceiving Benefit from Virtual Trainings, by Capital Quality Designation**

Overall, how much would you say you benefited from virtual trainings in the past year?



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**Sources:** 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey and Quorum administrative data obtained from DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education to identify staff position.

**Notes:** This question was asked to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. Of these, 336 consented to have their survey data linked with administrative data, which provided information on their facility quality designation (box 2) and staff position. Such data were available for 222 educators, comprising 10 in preliminary facilities, 1 in a developing facility (which is too small to display as a subgroup in the figure), 45 in progressing facilities, 82 in quality facilities, and 84 in high-quality facilities. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis.

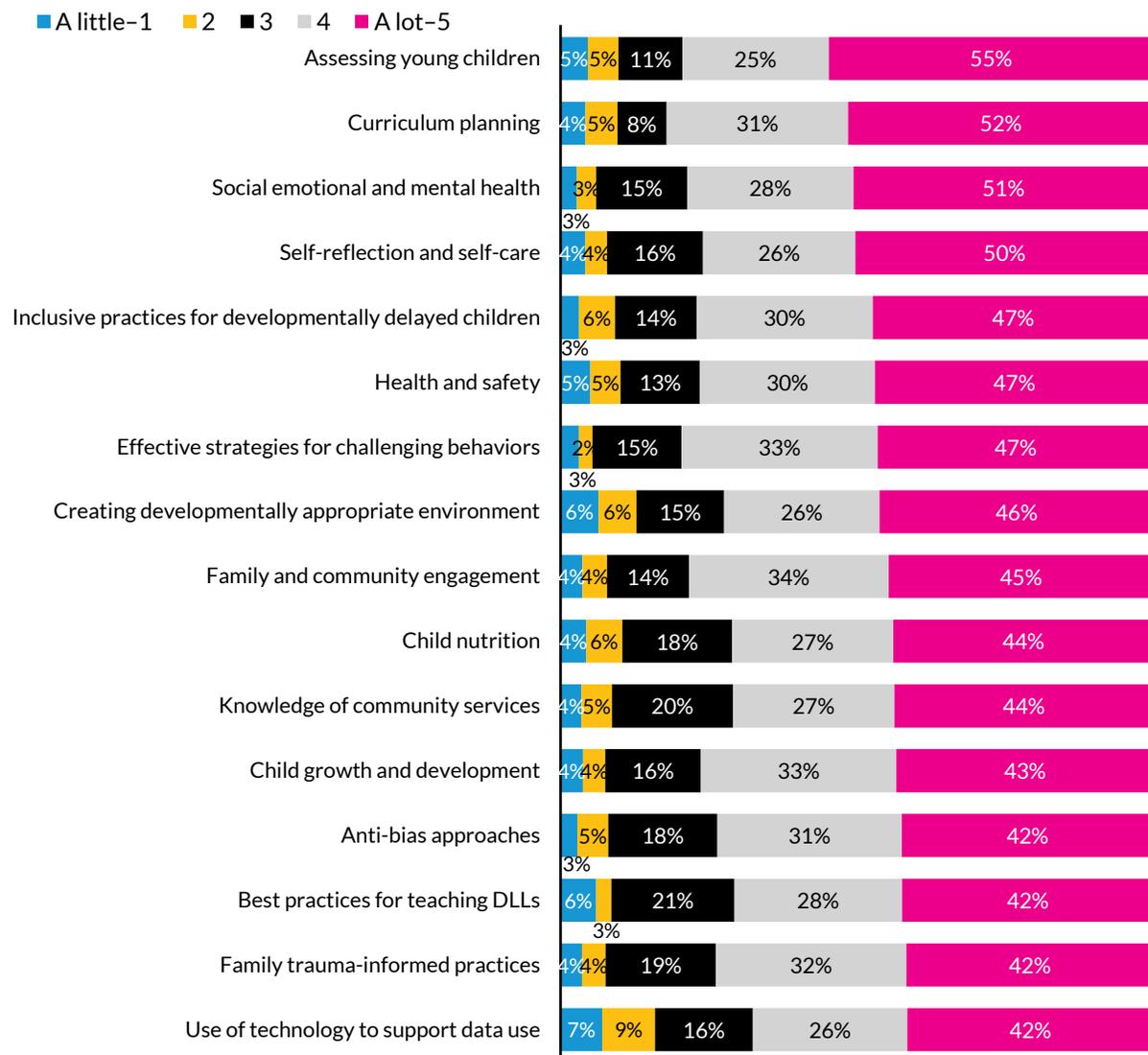
Our survey also asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether they would benefit from additional training on 16 topics, with 1 indicating they would benefit a little and 5 indicating they would benefit a lot (figure 13). A large share of respondents indicated that they would benefit from additional training on every topic (a rating of 4 or 5). The five most highly rated topics (ratings of 4 or 5) were curriculum planning (83 percent), effective strategies to handle challenging behavior (80 percent), socioemotional development and mental health (79 percent), family and community engagement (79 percent), and inclusive practices for children with developmental delays and disabilities (77 percent). While most respondents said training on the use of technology to support data use and management would be beneficial, this topic was rated the lowest (68 percent rated it a 4 or 5; 16 percent rated it a 1 or 2).

Based on these responses, it appears that educators would benefit most from additional trainings on curriculum planning and assessment, as well as on supporting their students' and their own mental health and socioemotional well-being. These topics may have become a higher priority to early educators, given the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on mental health.

**FIGURE 13**

**Share of Early Educators Perceiving Benefit from Additional Training, by Training Topic**

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether you could benefit from additional training on any of the following topics.



**Source:** 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.

**Notes:** This survey item was given to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. A range of 232 to 237 educators responded to 16 survey items. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis. DLL = dual language learner.

## Preference for Training Format

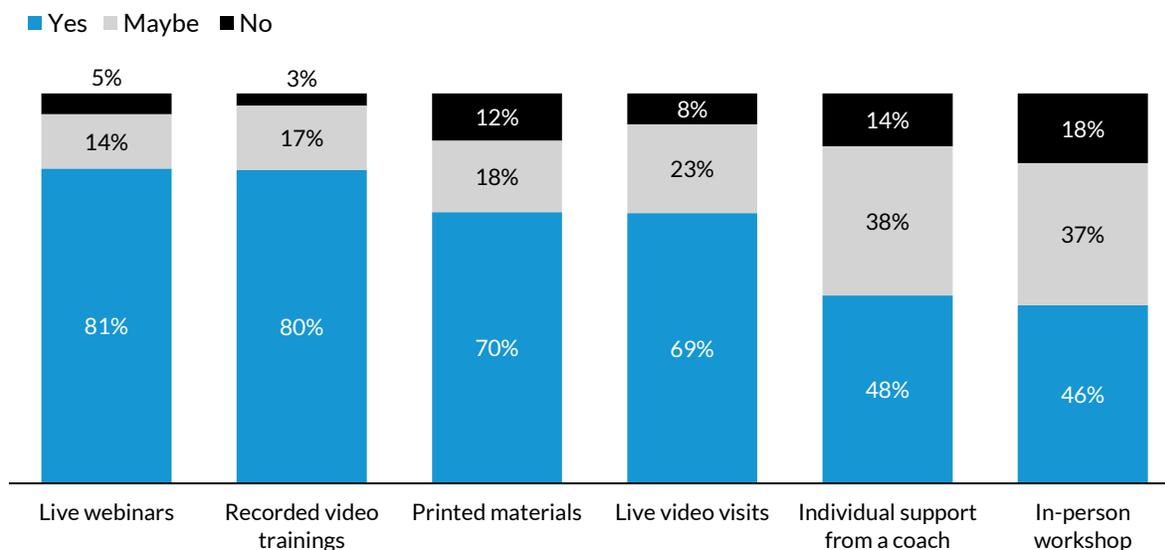
For professional development to be effective and accessible, early educators should be consulted on how they prefer to learn. Our survey presented respondents with six formats for delivering trainings. For each format, respondents could indicate “yes” they would like to receive trainings this way, “no” they would not like to receive trainings this way, or “maybe” they would like to receive trainings this way. Findings are shown in figure 14.

A live webinar was the most highly preferred format, with 81 percent of respondents indicating they would like to receive trainings in this manner, followed by recorded video trainings (80 percent). Other formats with high shares of responses included printed materials (70 percent) and live video visits (e.g., Zoom meetings) with a consultant (69 percent). The least preferred methods were individual support from a trained coach (48 percent) and in-person workshops (46 percent). These patterns suggest a preference for virtual trainings and a mix of recorded videos that staff members can watch at their convenience, live interactive webinars, and one-on-one virtual meetings with an expert trainer. Given the survey’s timing, these responses likely reflect ongoing anxiety and concerns about COVID-19 and a preference for socially distanced activities.

FIGURE 14

### Share of Training Formats Preferred by Early Educators, by Level of Preference

How would you like to receive training?



Source: 2021 DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.

Notes: This question was asked to respondents who indicated they are currently working or plan to return to work, resulting in 406 potential respondents. A range of 226 to 230 educators replied to the six survey items. Complete response weights (box 1) were used in this analysis.

## Conclusion

The District of Columbia features a diverse early educator workforce, boasting extensive work experience and high engagement in educational activities and training. Most DC early educators in Capital Quality-participating programs maintained a commitment to improving their skills and knowledge during the pandemic by engaging in various professional development activities. Most had updated or created a professional development plan and completed multiple online trainings each month in the first year of the pandemic. Virtual trainings were perceived as beneficial to most early educators, especially lead teachers and those in high-quality facilities. Additional training on curriculum and assessment, supporting children’s mental health, and self-care were high priorities. Unsurprisingly, given health and safety concerns at the time of survey administration, early educators had a stronger preference for virtual and asynchronous training opportunities than in-person formats.

These results suggest that many DC early educators have made their professional development a priority despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. As the pandemic evolves, we may see a shift in the preferred mode and desired topics for trainings; however, findings point to the overall perceived benefits of e-learning for early educators.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This brief is part of a series sharing findings from the DC Early Care and Education Workforce Survey. The series covers topics related to early educators’ perspectives on quality improvement (Willenborg, Sandstrom, and Greenberg 2022), the COVID-19 pandemic’s effects on early educators’ employment and well-being (Hernandez-Lepe et al. 2022), and job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Sandstrom et al. 2022).
- <sup>2</sup> There were 2,636 individuals eligible to take the survey. We used data from the Quorum e-learning system, with trainings from July 2020 to February 2021 to determine eligibility at the time of the survey. We received an additional data file with trainings from January 2019 to June 2021 (excluding July 2020 to January 2021) after the survey-fielding period. We combined these two files and created a variable for whether individuals in the January 2019 to June 2021 dataset, who were not in the other dataset, would have been eligible for the survey had they been included in the July 2020 to February 2021 dataset. For the data drawing from Quorum e-learning records in this brief, we also limited that population to only those who were in the system between January 2020 and December 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> OSSE (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education), “Assistant Teacher: New Educational Requirements” (Washington, DC: OSSE, 2021), <https://osse.dc.gov/page/assistant-teacher>.
- <sup>4</sup> Perry Stein and Ovetta Wiggins, “D.C. Will Open Emergency Child Care Centers for Children of Health Care Workers,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/dc-will-open-emergency-child-care-centers-thursday-for-kids-of-health-care-workers/2020/03/25/3868b0be-6eb3-11ea-aa80-c2470c6b2034\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/dc-will-open-emergency-child-care-centers-thursday-for-kids-of-health-care-workers/2020/03/25/3868b0be-6eb3-11ea-aa80-c2470c6b2034_story.html).

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