



September 12, 2016

We at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, strongly recommend that the SOC classifications which pertain to the early childhood workforce (specifically 39-9010 Childcare Workers and 25-2011 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education) be revised, in accordance with recent and refined scientific evidence on child development during the early years. The current classifications of “child care worker” and “preschool teacher” do not reflect the science of early learning and development or the context in which it occurs, and consequently cannot reliably distinguish occupations in the early childhood field. We recommend that these categories be combined into an occupational classification of “early childhood teacher”.

In an extensive overview of recent developments in neuroscience as it pertains to the development of young children, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council of the National Academies demonstrated that education and learning exist on a continuum from birth onward, with a distinct period of learning for younger children which occurs simultaneously with their experiences and care: spontaneous interactions with adults, play with peers, and participation in daily routines, facilitated by the intentional efforts of a skilled early childhood workforce.<sup>1</sup>

The current SOC classifications reflect a twentieth century understanding, in which care and learning were thought to be separate and distinct activities. Furthermore, the current classifications do not reflect more accurate distinctions among the early childhood workforce by job role (teacher assistant/aide, teacher, and administrator) and auspice. Skills, experience, and classroom practices may well be identical for the “preschool teacher” behind the door of one facility, and the “child care worker” behind the door in another facility.

As a result, the existing classifications present significant challenges to our ability to describe and analyze occupations in the early childhood field. As researchers who specialize in the early childhood workforce, we face a constant struggle to make use of data based on the SOC classifications and to communicate findings based on these data such that they may be of use to inform policy, public investment and planning.

Instead, researchers, policymakers and advocates wishing to understand this workforce even at a very basic level have been forced to collect data specific to the early childhood field at the national and state levels, at considerable taxpayer expense in an already under-resourced, yet critical, economic sector. This data collection includes, for example, the 2012 National Survey of

Care and Education, which notably does not use the terms child care workers or preschool teachers to refer to the workforce,<sup>2</sup> and also includes state-level workforce registries and surveys.<sup>3</sup> The disconnect between the classifications in these data sources as compared with the current SOC classifications poses severe challenges for making use of the full array of data available in order to paint a clear and accurate picture of the early childhood workforce.

We recommend that the SOC classifications be revised as follows:

- 39-9010 Childcare Workers and 25-2011 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education should be combined into one Early Childhood Teacher classification and placed in the Education, Training and Library Occupations Group rather than the Personal Care and Services Occupations Group. An additional classification of Early Childhood Teacher Assistant/Aide should also be added to clarify distinctions by job role.
- Current distinctions between administrators and teachers should be maintained by reclassifying 11-9031 Education Administrators, Preschool and Childcare Center/Program as Early Childhood Administrators.
- The potential for further disaggregation by age group should be considered.<sup>4</sup>

Without revisions to the current occupational classifications for the early childhood workforce, data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau will misinform, rather than illuminate and enhance our understanding of the millions of (largely) women who educate *and* care for our nation's youngest children. While such a substantial change to the classifications will pose challenges for historical comparisons, these challenges are not insurmountable,<sup>5</sup> nor do they justify maintaining occupational distinctions which cannot accurately describe the existing workforce.

Sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC). (2015). *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2015/Birth-To-Eight.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> See National Early Care and Education Survey Project Team (2015). *National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), 2010-2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2014>

<sup>3</sup> Whitebook, M., McLean, C., and Austin L.J.E. (2016). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2016*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, pp. 56-61. Retrieved from: <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2016/Early-Childhood-Workforce-Index-2016.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See Workgroup on the Early Childhood Workforce and Professional Development (2016). *Proposed Revisions to the Definitions for the Early Childhood Workforce in the Standard Occupational Classification: White paper commissioned by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (OPRE Report 2016-45)*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/soc\\_white\\_paper\\_june\\_2014\\_518\\_508.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/soc_white_paper_june_2014_518_508.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> For example, total numbers of “child care workers” and “preschool teachers” combined can be compared with combined totals for the new classifications of “early childhood teacher” and “early childhood teacher assistant/aide” in order to understand historical trends.