The Human Services Workforce Initiative

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Growing the Next Generation of Youth Professionals: Workforce Opportunities and Challenges

Prepared by
Nicole Yohalem, Karen Pittman, and David Moore for Cornerstones for Kids

One Greenway Plaza, Suite 550, Houston, Texas 77046
Ph 713.627.2322 • Fax 713.627.3006 • Email info@cornerstones4kids.org

Growing the Next Generation of Youth Work Professionals: Workforce Opportunities and Challenges

A report of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition

Nicole Yohalem, Karen Pittman, David Moore
The Forum for Youth Investment
July 2006

Prepared by the Forum for Youth Investment for Cornerstones for Kids

The **Next Generation Youth Work Coalition** brings together individuals and organizations dedicated to developing a strong, diverse workforce that is stable, prepared, supported and committed to the well-being and empowerment of young people.

The **Forum for Youth Investment** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are **Ready by 21: Ready for college, work and life**. This goal requires that young people have the supports, opportunities and services needed to prosper and contribute where they live, learn, work, play and make a difference. The Forum provides youth and adult leaders with the information, technical assistance, training, network support and partnership opportunities needed to increase the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement.

This research was funded by Cornerstones for Kids. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Cornerstones for Kids.

Table of Contents

Cornerstones for Kids Introduction

The Human Services Workforce Initiative (HSWI) is focused on the frontline workers serving vulnerable children and families. HSWI's premise is that human services matter. Delivered well, they can, and do, positively impact the lives of vulnerable children and families, often at critical points in their lives.

We believe that the quality of the frontline worker influences the effectiveness of services they deliver to children and families. If workers are well-trained and supported, have access to the resources that they need, possess a reasonable workload, and are valued by their employers, it follows that they will be able to effectively perform their jobs. If, however, they are as vulnerable as the children and families that they serve, they will be ineffective in improving outcomes for children and families.

Unfortunately, all indications today are that our frontline human services workforce is struggling. In some instances poor compensation contributes to excessive turnover; in others an unreasonable workload and endless paperwork render otherwise capable staff ineffective; and keeping morale up is difficult in the human services fields. It is remarkable that so many human services professionals stick to it, year after year.

HSWI's mission is to work with others to raise the visibility of, and sense of urgency about, workforce issues. Through a series of publications and other communications efforts we hope to

- Call greater attention to workforce issues
- Help to describe and define the status of the human services workforce
- Disseminate data on current conditions
- Highlight best and promising practices
- Suggest systemic and policy actions that can make a deep, long-term difference

In this paper, the Forum for Youth Investment reports on its research on behalf of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition. On the basis of a survey developed by the Forum and completed by a large sample of youth workers and program directors in eight cities, as well as in focus groups of youth workers, the Forum provides a detailed and nuanced description of youth work professionals. While the sample does not permit generalizations about the overall national workforce, these data, along with the information from the National Afterschool Association survey of youth workers, provide the most complete description available of this workforce. Based on the results of these information-gathering efforts the Forum suggests policy and practice strategies that will strengthen the field of youth work.

Additional information on the human services workforce, and on HSWI, is available at www.cornerstones4kids.org.

Cornerstones For Kids
2006

Growing the Next Generation of Youth Work Professionals: Workforce Opportunities and Challenges

I. Introduction

Despite estimates that some three to five million individuals work in the youth services field, the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that of the range of human services professions,

> *Youth services is the least documented, least understood, and probably the most varied field we studied. There is no national data set on youth workers, or on youth-serving programs .... Much of the data are unreliable and often inaccurate.…[T]he lack of good information about youth workers and what they do stands in sharp contrast to the documented benefits of youth programs.*[i]

The lack of documentation and knowledge about what we will call in this report the "youth work" profession[1] leaves the field dangerously undefined and has an impact on both the public recognition of the work and on its ability to advance as a profession. These issues and others related to the recruitment, retention, and development of youth work professionals were the focus of a national convening in November 2004 which led to the development of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition (Next Gen) and has helped spark several efforts to develop knowledge and engage the field on these issues.

Over the past year, the Forum for Youth Investment, on behalf of Next Gen, conducted a linked set of information gathering efforts, which are summarized in this report and a series of related research briefs that will be available on the Cornerstones for Kids Web site. The goal was to make a limited but disciplined attempt to answer three core questions about youth work:

1) What does the workforce look like?
2) How and to what extent are professionals supported in the workplace?
3) What could be done to improve the employment experiences of youth work professionals and the stability of the workforce overall?

The project team at the Forum believes it is fair to say that this research and a similar study conducted concurrently by the

Youth Work: A Definition

Youth work professionals or youth workers are *individuals who work with or on behalf of youth to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence.*

Because youth work is so broad, we are working under three assumptions that help define the workforce:

- *Youth work professionals are working with young people in primarily informal and voluntary settings;*
- *Youth work professionals are working with young people primarily between the ages of 8 and 18; and*
- *Youth work professionals, like social workers or nurses, can be employed by a variety of systems and settings.*

From *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Youth Workers for the Next Generation*, B. Stone, P. Garza, L. Borden, Wingspread Conference Proceedings, Washington, DC: National Collaboration for Youth/National Assembly, 2004

[1] We recognize that some consider "youth work" a fuzzy term. We use it here intentionally, knowing that not every sub-group within the field chooses to use this language. As a label, we like it because it is inclusive (see definition in sidebar) and because it communicates the purpose of the profession more clearly than other terms like "youth development," "out-of-school time," "school-age care," "youth services," or "after-school." A purpose-driven definition and label for the profession can also help link it to and distinguish it from related fields such as teaching, counseling, and social work.

National Afterschool Association (NAA) offer the clearest picture to date of what the youth work profession looks like—who youth workers are, where they work, how they are supported on the job, and what their aspirations are. Both efforts used outreach strategies that intentionally reached beyond a single city or state to create a large, broad sample of the workforce. Both attempted to reach staff across the after-school and youth development worlds—in order to hear from those working in school and community settings, with elementary and secondary school students, on a range of issues. And both made special efforts to reach individuals on the front lines—those who spend at least 50 percent of their time interacting directly with young people. Findings from these two efforts, combined with lessons from smaller state and local workforce studies that have been conducted over the past decade (see next page), provide useful new information to guide future planning and action within the youth work field as a whole.

That said, we must issue a caution. The Next Gen and NAA studies provide rich and in some cases surprising information about similarities and differences among those in the youth work profession (e.g., comparisons between full-time and part-time staff or those working with teens vs. younger students). They do not, however, give us a reliable picture of the overall workforce. While we can state, for example, that almost 50 percent of respondents work full time, we cannot conclude that 50 percent of the overall workforce is employed full time. This is not, in other words, a nationally representative sample. This shortfall is not just the result of limited time or money. It reflects a fundamental challenge— one that quickly becomes evident by comparing youth work with the related profession of teaching.

On the job, youth work and teaching have some things in common. As professions, however, they are far apart. Teaching is universally known and understood as a profession. Youth work is virtually unknown and misunderstood—sometimes even by those who do it. Entry into teaching, while increasingly varied, is relatively clear—college course work, certification, induction. Entry into youth work is unclear, inconsistent, and not on the radar for most job seekers. The place and structure of teaching, while also increasingly varied, is consistent in some key ways; these include, for example, schools, classrooms, curricula, standards, assignments, grades. The place and structure of youth work, while beginning to have more uniformity because of increased federal funding for after-school programs, is extremely varied and often unclear. The organization of the teaching workforce through schools, districts, states, and union membership is clear, while youth work is decentralized and largely unorganized.

All of the differences above have implications for conducting workforce research. Teachers self identify and can be found through accessible workforce organizations or places of work. Surveying the youth work profession requires creativity. It requires working in a decentralized way through organizations that train youth workers, support them, or employ them. And it requires reaching out to several fields (e.g., after-school, youth development, school-age care) and looking beyond labels to locate those people who identify with the purpose-driven definition of “youth work” described previously.

These differences make the process of conducting workforce research more challenging, but they make the need to upgrade our efforts even more important. The series of Next Gen workforce studies summarized in this report, combined with those undertaken by the National Afterschool Association and others, are promising responses to a pressing need.

Previous Workforce Studies on Youth Work

Several workforce studies have been conducted over the past decade that together provide important glimpses into the youth work profession. Yet because each was developed using different research questions and tools, captured a different slice (or different slices) of an ill-defined overall population, and included a mixture of frontline and managerial staff, the resulting picture is more of a collage than a snapshot. The study described in this report clearly builds on these efforts, incorporating the questions asked and lessons learned and, in some cases, working directly with the study directors to compare findings.

- In 1999, the Indiana Youth Institute surveyed full-time youth professionals and agency directors across the state of Indiana.[ii] The average worker who responded was female, age 36, had two children, worked approximately 44 hours per week, and earned between $20,000 and $29,000 annually. She also had been in the profession for eight years and spent only 25-50 percent of her time in direct service with youth. While 80 percent of the respondents reported having health insurance, the majority described it as "substandard." Slightly more than half of those surveyed saw themselves continuing in the field, with salary, benefits, length of the workday, and family obligations affecting that decision.

- In 2002-2003, a landscape study of New York City's "Youth Workers in Out-of-School Time" was conducted by CUNY's Workforce Development Initiative.[iii] Staff who participated were predominantly female, under age 30, single, and of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Seventy-three percent of frontline staff had some college experience; 13 percent had a bachelor's degree. While only 22 percent of those surveyed had been employed at their current job for over three years, 80 percent reported the desire to remain a youth worker (and 75 percent of those in college wanted to remain in the field). While their most consistent job responsibility was providing homework help, professional development in this area was rarely available.

- In 2005, Achieve Boston drew on several data sources to create a picture of the school-age care (SAC) and after-school workforce in Massachusetts.[iv] Referred to as "OST staff," the sample did not include those serving ages 14-18. People come to the field from a variety of paths, and many need further training in child and youth development. Forty-one percent of SAC and 38 percent of after-school staff held an associate's degree or higher. Two-thirds of OST staff worked part time, and the average wage for an assistant group leader was $8.45 per hour. Only one-quarter of OST staff received health benefits through their employer (compared with 44 percent of all part-time workers in the state). One-fourth to one-third of staff left their positions annually. While staff reflected significant racial and ethnic diversity, those in managerial positions were predominantly white.

- In February 2006 the San Francisco Beacon Workforce Study[v] revealed a workforce with an interesting paradox of high job satisfaction (90 percent) combined with high turnover (65 percent had been in their position two years or less). Staff reflected the diverse ethnic and gender composition of San Francisco, and the average Beacon worker was 23-years-old. Thirty-three percent said they plan to stay in the field for a total of five years or less, which may be associated with stress (72 percent found their work stressful) and other extrinsic factors, such as pay and working conditions. Forty-three percent were offered no benefits at all, and less than half felt they had access to adequate working space. Among the 63 percent who felt they had opportunities for promotion, a majority intended to stay in their jobs.

- Forthcoming this summer, the Illinois After-School Partnership Workforce Survey report[vi] summarizes findings from nearly 300 surveys completed by out-of-school time workers across the state. The study finds a demographically diverse set of workers. Roughly half of the sample worked part time, and the majority of part-time workers did not want full-time work. While a third of workers intended to stay in the field for at least six years, another third weren't sure, and another third planed to stay fewer than six years. The study also found an overall lack of career planning among OST workers; two-thirds of those surveyed also were unaware of formal higher educational opportunities related to OST. Personal interest in the field and increased wages were raised as the most important factors influencing workers consideration of their future in the field.

II. Project Design and Methods

Cornerstones for Kids supported this decentralized effort, not just financially but also by creating strategic linkages across organizations within the field and encouraging collaborative work. The work was guided by an advisory group of Next Gen members that helped shape the overall strategy and design the main survey instrument associated with the project.[2]

Advisory Group During the summer of 2005, the Forum convened the advisory group to review our scan of existing workforce survey instruments and identify key questions for this project. Through that group process, we identified questions that would allow us to intentionally compare our results with those of previous studies and developed new questions where we found none or where existing questions or scales needed work. As a result, we created two survey instruments that, while further refinement is important, reflect some of the best thinking in the field and are relatively comprehensive.

Field Research Partners The Advisory Group also helped us identify our survey and focus group partners, whose combined efforts have generated a rich range of quantitative and qualitative data.

In partnership with the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work's BEST network, we surveyed 1,053 frontline youth workers and 195 organization directors and conducted focus groups with over 70 youth workers. In addition to this core study, we were also able to support four additional research efforts through this project.

In identifying additional research sites, we looked opportunistically for places where a small sub-grant could leverage local funding and momentum to generate interesting, actionable data. We also sought a diversity of perspectives—local, state, and national. In the Bay Area, we supported individual in-depth interviews to supplement and expand upon the Beacon Workforce Study. We worked with the national office of Girls Inc. to survey 200 of its frontline program staff and with the Boston Medical Foundation and its partners to reach an additional 400 frontline workers. In each of these cases we helped our local partners adapt the core survey instrument for local use.[3] Finally, in partnership with the Illinois After-School Partnership, we conducted a qualitative study consisting of nine focus groups with over 80 youth workers across the state, designed to complement a survey the Partnership conducted last year. Lessons from these four projects will be available in a series of briefs on the Cornerstones for Kids Web site.

Field Research Partner Organizations

National Training Institute for Community Youth Work/AED (NTI) BEST Network members (survey and focus groups):

- YouthNet of Greater Kansas City
- Alternatives, Inc. (Hampton)
- DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation
- The After-School Institute (Baltimore)
- Youth Development Training & Resource Center (New Haven)
- Chicago Area Project
- Jacksonville Children's Commission
- San Diego City College

Additional Research Partners

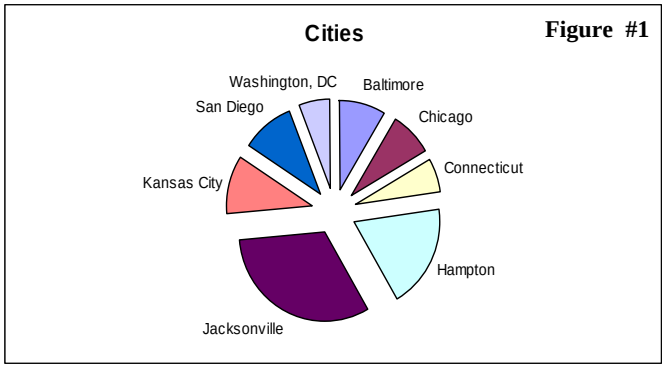
- Boston Medical Foundation/NIOST/Boston and Beyond (modified survey)
- Girls Incorporated (modified national survey)
- San Francisco Beacons (interviews) and Bay Area Youth Development Peer Network (interviews)
- Illinois After-School Partnership (focus groups)

[2] Project advisors included Ellen Gannett, Pam Garza, Judy Nee, Peter Howe, Jason Wyman, Kica Gazmuri, Virginia Witt, Elaine Johnson, and Deborah Craig.

[3] Both the Boston Medical Foundation and Girls Incorporated adapted the Coalition's frontline youth worker survey to ensure the most local utility. However, the adapted versions include many questions identical and similar to those in the survey implemented with the NTI sites, and wherever possible we have looked across studies for similarity and divergence. Actual integration of raw data and further analysis is feasible and may occur this summer.

Methodology The primary survey sample includes 1,053 youth workers from eight different communities across the United States (see figure #1 for geographic distribution of respondents). The analysis was conducted by first creating and comparing basic results across all questions; additional sub-sample analyses were conducted with SPSS to compare variables using cross-tabulations and correlation computations.

In every case sub-sample differences cited were statistically significant at the .10 level or lower (usually .05 or lower). Given the large sample size, some of these statistically significant differences were relatively small—only a few percentage points. To further explore sub-sample differences, some questions which offered five or six response categories were reduced to bi- or trinomial variables to increase the number of respondents within the response categories, making it easier to find differences. In cases where the data yielded interval value responses comparison of means T-tests were used to judge differences among sub-categories.



The secondary survey sample includes 195 program directors from the same eight communities. Also referenced in this report are findings from focus groups held in the eight survey cities. A separate report based on focus group data is forthcoming.

Through this opportunistic collection of projects we are confident about some things and cautious about others. We are confident we have heard from *the people* we wanted to reach: a diverse group of frontline youth work professionals. Those who participated are employed in a range of voluntary settings and spend the majority of their time working directly with children and youth. As noted in the introduction, however, we are not confident that we engaged a representative sample of *the population* we wanted to reach. Nor did we expect to, given no national data exist to tell us what the overall population looks like, how many work full or part time, have advanced degrees, etc.

There are other possible biases that should be kept in mind when reviewing the findings:

- Self-selection bias We expect that the sample, as is the case with most voluntary surveys, suffers from self-selection bias. The fact that very few respondents reported being dissatisfied with their jobs is one indication of this potential bias. Our analysis suggests, however, that there are not large differences in satisfaction levels across important sub-groups (e.g., full time/part time), so we are reasonably confident that this bias has not caused an under-representation of key groups of workers.

- Urban bias As noted, the survey was conducted in large and mid-size cities. The National After-school Association survey reached a more geographically diverse workforce; our findings will be discussed with theirs in a forthcoming research brief.

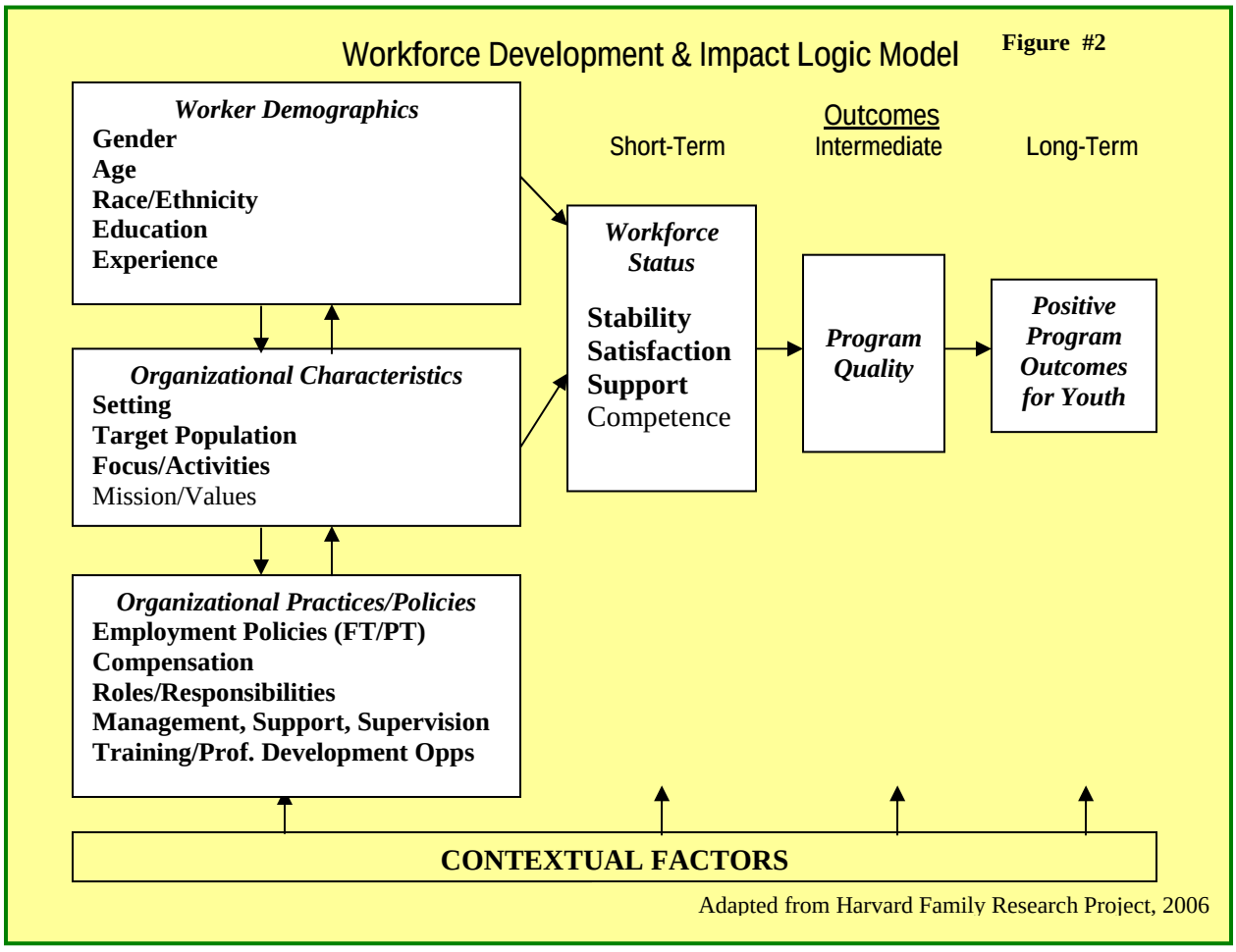
- Racial/ethnic differences in geographic sub-samples The local samples from the cities where NTI intermediaries collected surveys generated very different racial and ethnic profiles. These organizations were well-positioned to and adept at reaching frontline workers, and after reviewing the data, all felt the preliminary findings generally squared with their sense of the overall local workforce. There is no way to know, however, whether the differences represent response biases, differences in the reach of the intermediary organizations, or real differences in the composition of the workforce in those communities.

Do these caveats make the survey invalid? Certainly not. But they do make certain kinds of statements invalid. These data do not allow us to say with precision that X percent of the nation's youth workers work part time or that Y percent feel underpaid. The large sample size does allow us to reflect with some confidence on sub-group comparisons, including, for example, differences between part-time and full-time professionals, workers in different settings, with different educational backgrounds. By and large, the different patterns that emerge are consistent enough to give us a good sense of the data ranges in which the answers to many questions probably lie. At a minimum, these data give the field an informed starting point for further inquiry and analysis.

III. Theoretical Framework

This survey and our subsequent analyses are grounded in our belief that a high-performing workforce (stable, satisfied, supported, and competent), influences program effectiveness, and that there is a link between effective programming and positive outcomes for youth. While empirical evidence supports this general logic, the linkages are complex and few studies in the human services sector have demonstrated a causal link between workforce supports and youth outcomes.[vii]

The work of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition is grounded in an assumption that strengthening and supporting workers is important both for workers' sake and because it is critical to improving outcomes for youth. The basic logic behind our thinking is portrayed in the model below. Workers themselves represent a wealth of human capital. Organizational inputs are also critical—included below are those characteristics, policies, and practices that we believe most directly affect workforce issues. Who workers are and what organizations do have an influence on what we call here "workforce status"—the extent to which workers are stable, satisfied, competent, and supported.[4] The performance or status of



[4] Effectively measuring the quality of staff practice or otherwise assessing worker performance is difficult and requires a different design and methodology than those used in this study. This project does provide some insights, however, into what we refer to as "workforce status" in the theoretical framework. Assessing satisfaction levels is one window into understanding the extent to which workers feel supported, as is their assessment of the adequacy of the supervision and feedback they receive. Length of service and projections of how long people plan to remain in the field offer some insight into the stability issue, as do workers' perspectives on what factors would influence them to stay in or leave the profession.

the workforce has an influence on program quality, which in turn influences program outcomes. Knowing more about who workers are and their performance or status can help surface potential levers for change at the organizational and system levels.

In this study we learned a great deal about the "inputs" column—who workers are and the characteristics of and supports they receive from their organizations—and we were able to explore relationships between variables within and between the three input categories (worker demographics, organizational characteristics and practices). We also gathered some useful information about the workforce status column and its relationship to inputs. We can also begin to make some light links between columns. We know, for example, that people in both full- and part-time positions are highly satisfied, and we know that pay appears linked to stability. (None of the survey or focus group questions attempted to measure organizational values/mission or worker competence; therefore, these parts of the model are minimized above and left blank in the version of the model that includes results following page 31.)

While it is possible to build complex models to test this logic and determine which factors matter and how much they matter, doing so is beyond the scope of this project and the limitations of this dataset. We do hope that this work and the work of others will inspire future researchers to take those steps. We feel what we have learned here could inform such efforts, from both a theoretical and a practical standpoint.

IV. Basic Findings

The survey provided data on many of the specific inputs and short-term outcome variables identified in the logic model. We present the basic findings in this section and discuss how they interrelate in the section that follows. Below, a brief summary of these findings is followed by more detailed findings for each input category.

Worker Demographics

- **Age and Gender** – The survey population is predominantly female (seven out of ten) and relatively young. Half are under age 30, and half are about age 30; 13 percent are 21 or younger.
- **Race/Ethnicity** – The survey population is predominantly minority. In fact, it is predominantly African American (59 percent); only 27 percent of workers are white, and 7 percent are Hispanic/Latino.
- **Personal Similarity** – Three-quarters of youth workers describe themselves as either very or somewhat similar to the participants in their program.
- **Education** – The education levels of youth work professionals surveyed are reasonably high, especially given their youthfulness; 60 percent have a two-year college degree or higher.
- **Experience** – Most of those surveyed come to youth work from related fields. Two-thirds have a relevant credential.

Organizational Characteristics

- **Settings** – Youth work settings vary. Only one in four youth work professionals works in a school-based program.
- **Incomes Served** – Most of those surveyed work with low-income children and youth.
- **Ages (and Age Ranges) Served** – Coverage across the age groups is quite broad. Responsibility for children and youth of all ages is relatively common—one in four reports working with all grades.
- **Program Activities** – The majority of youth workers surveyed identified academics and educational enrichment as the most common activities offered in their programs.

Organizational Practices/Policies

- **Full-time/Part-time Employment** – One in two surveyed works part time. One in three works only during the school year.
- **Roles and Responsibilities** – Three-quarters of those surveyed spend 75 percent or more of their time with youth.
- **Compensation** – The median range for salaried youth workers surveyed is $25,000 - $25,999; the median range for hourly employees is $9.00 - $10.99. Forty percent of those surveyed have a second job.
- **Professional Development, Recognition and Achievement** – Training opportunities are plentiful, but formal support or compensatory recognition for training is more elusive.

Workforce Status

- **Stability** – Job mobility in this workforce appears to be very high—4 in 10 surveyed have been in their job less than one year.
- **Job Satisfaction** – The youth work professionals in our sample report high levels of job satisfaction compared to other occupations.
- **Satisfaction Drivers** – Workers identify compensation as the top factor (by far) in influencing their decisions to stay in or leave the field, but there are important intrinsic rewards and challenges as well.

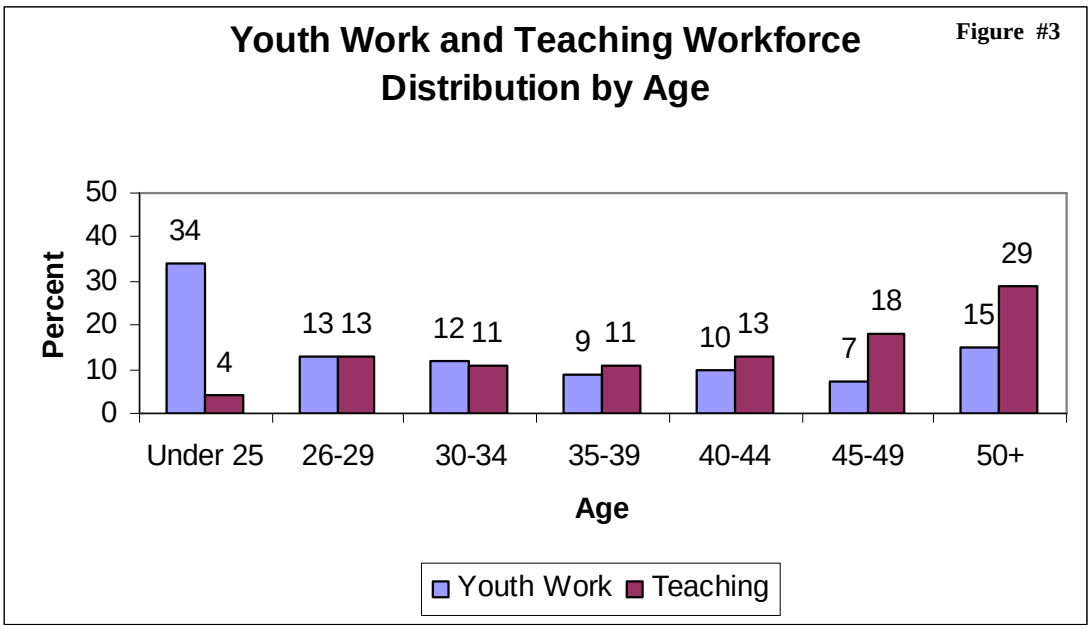
Worker Demographics – **Age and Gender**

The survey population is female (seven out of ten), and relatively young. Half are under age 30, and half are above age 30; 13 percent are 21 or younger.

- The median age of those working in other child and youth serving professions is considerably older than the age of those in youth work—the median age of teachers is 43, child care workers is 37. The youthfulness of the workforce more closely resembles occupations like waiting tables (median age 24) than it does other social services professions.

- Nonetheless, the workforce as reflected in this survey (and NAA's survey) is also surprisingly diverse in age given that this was a survey of frontline workers. Almost one-quarter (22 percent) are age 45 and over.

- In contrast, the teaching workforce includes some young adults but overall is considerably older; nearly half of all teachers are age 45 and older.[viii]



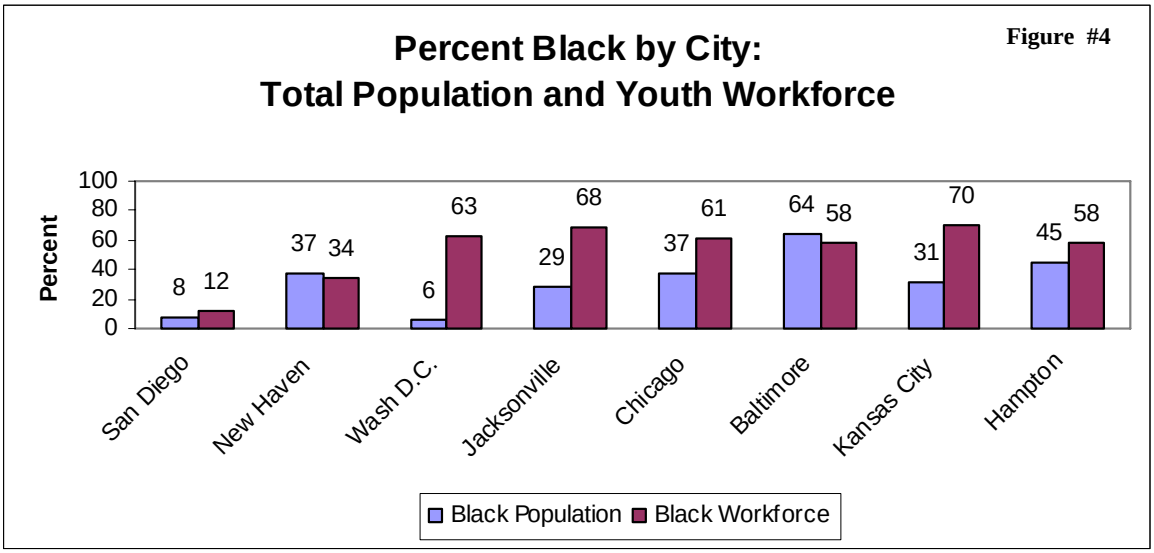
Worker Demographics – **Race/Ethnicity**

The survey population is predominantly minority. In fact, it is predominantly African American (59 percent); only 27 percent of workers are white, and 7 percent are Hispanic/Latino.

- As noted earlier, these findings have to be interpreted with caution since the surveys were done in cities with very different demographics. What is interesting to note, however, is that in almost every city, African Americans are more represented in the youth work workforce than they are in the general population, sometimes significantly so. In Kansas City and Jacksonville, for example, the proportion of those surveyed who are African Americans is more than twice that found in the general population.

- Hispanics are less than five percent of the total population in four of the eight cities. In San Diego, they represent 25 percent of the population but 38 percent of the workforce sample. In contrast, in Chicago, they represent 26 percent of the population but only 8 percent of the workforce sample. Again, these differences may reflect differences in the reach of the local intermediaries distributing the surveys, rather than real differences in the workforce.

Figure #4

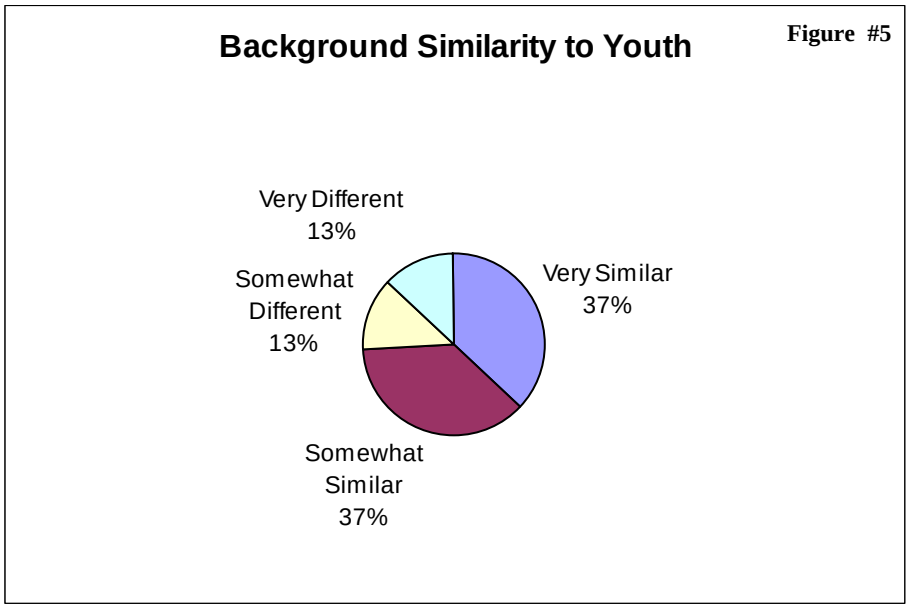


Worker Demographics – **Perceived Similarity to Participating Youth**

Three-quarters of youth workers describe themselves as either very or somewhat similar to the participants in their program.

- Most in the field consider common staff-youth backgrounds to be a plus. These findings suggest that organizations, intentionally or not, are successfully recruiting staff who share some important characteristics with the young people they serve.

Figure #5



Worker Demographics - **Education**

The educational levels of youth work professionals surveyed are reasonably high, especially given their youthfulness; 60 percent have a two-year college degree or higher.

- Eighty-five percent of those surveyed have some type of higher education; 60 percent have a two-year degree or more, and 23 percent have at least some graduate or professional school.
- While we did not ask for majors, professional background data (and survey data from Boston[ix]) suggest that while many people have degrees in education or related fields, staff bring a wide variety of educational backgrounds to their work with young people.

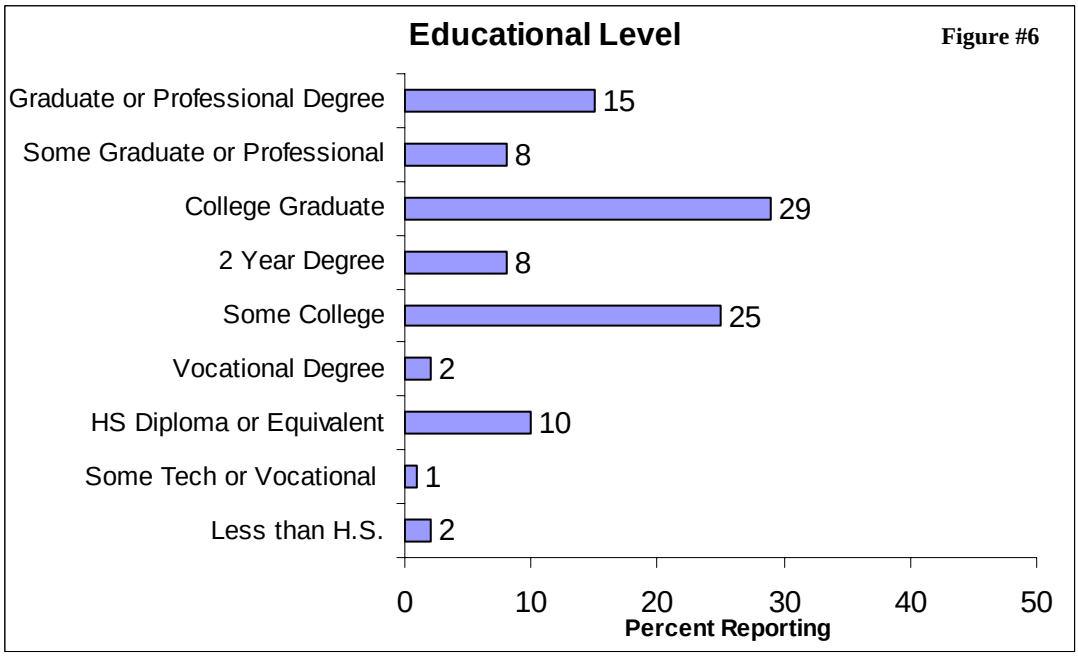


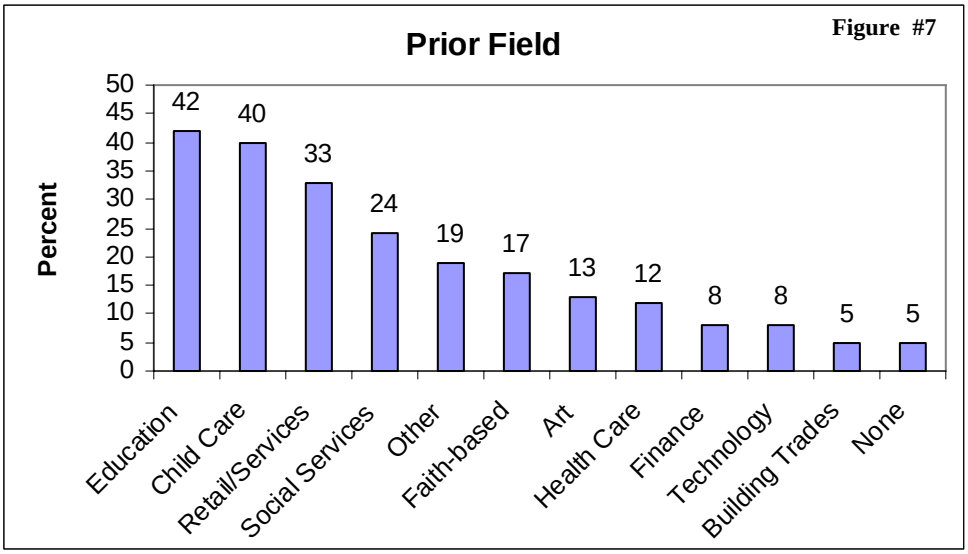
Figure #6

Worker Demographics – **Relevant Credentials/Experience**

Most of those surveyed come to youth work from related fields. Two-thirds have a relevant credential.

- The relationship among the youth work, teaching, and child care workforces is very strong. Forty-two percent of those surveyed had prior experience in education; 40 percent in child care, 24 percent in social services.. (Respondents could select more than one response.)

- Two-thirds of the respondents have specific credentials or certificates related to their work: 21 percent have been trained in the Advancing Youth Development curriculum; 15 percent have a teaching certificate; and a combined 20 percent have either a school-age care certificate, a youth work certificate, or a youth development associate's degree. A full third, however, have no relevant certificate or credential. (Respondents could select more than one response.)

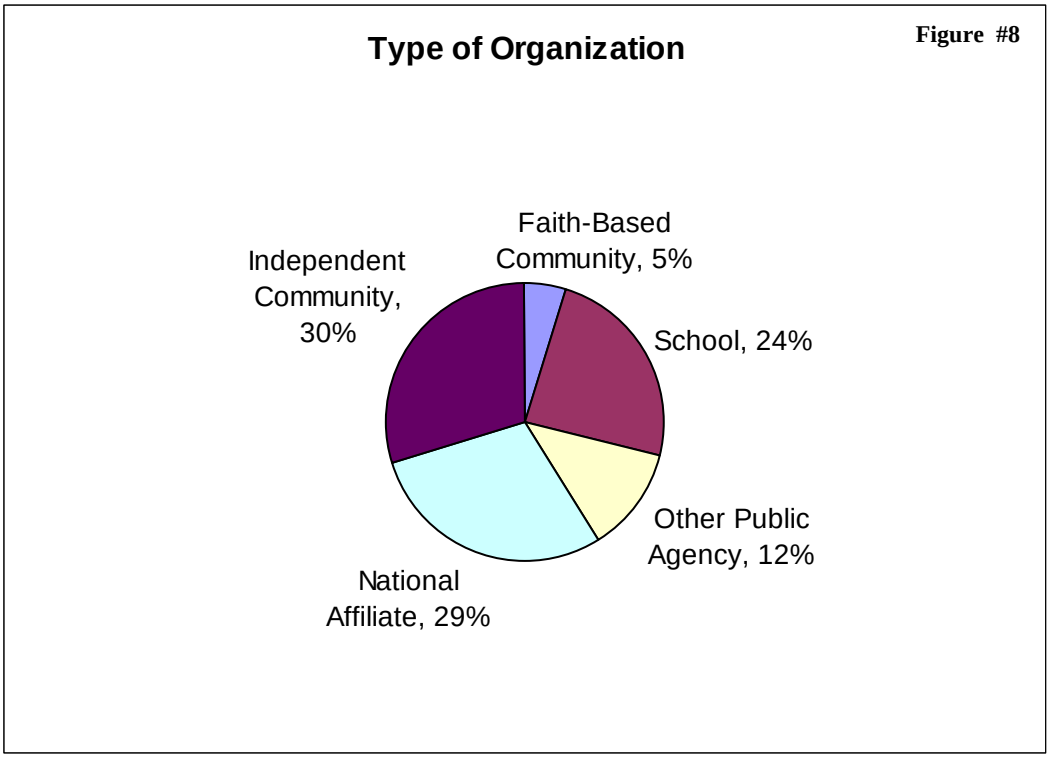


Organizational Characteristics – **Settings**

Youth work settings vary. Only one in four youth work professionals works in a school-based program.

- Survey respondents are employed primarily in three different organizational settings—school-based programs, independent community-based organizations, and local affiliates of national organizations.
- In addition, smaller numbers work in faith-based settings and other public agencies besides schools (e.g., libraries, recreation departments, etc.).

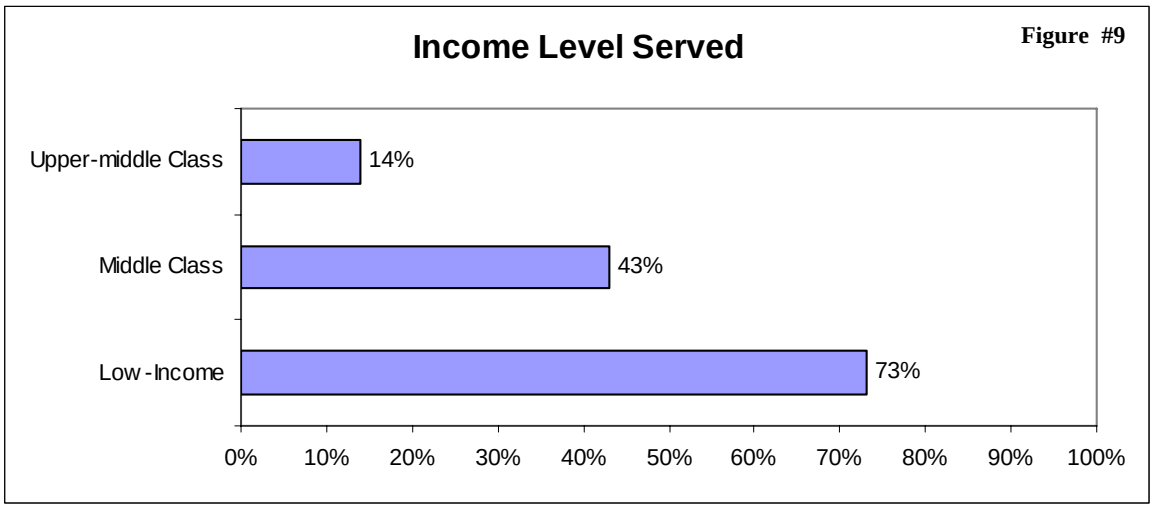
Figure #8



Organizational Characteristics – **Incomes Served**

Most of those surveyed work with low-income children and youth.

- While 73 percent of the sample said they work with low-income children and youth, 43 percent said they work with middle class and 14 percent said upper-middle class children and youth (multiple responses were allowed). The fact that our sample is primarily urban likely has a strong influence here.

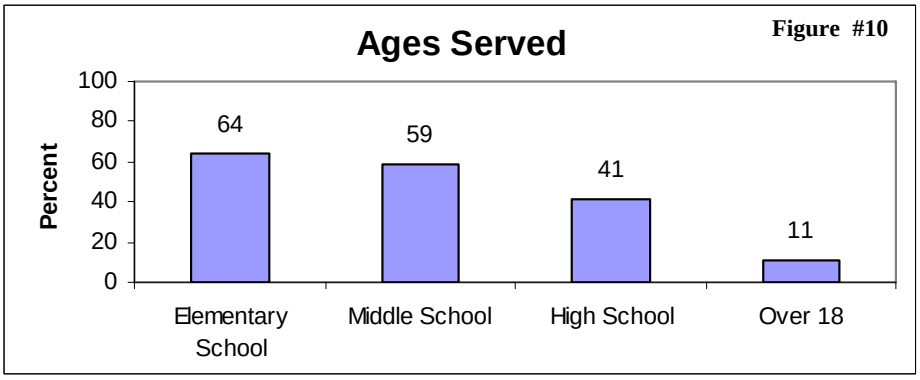


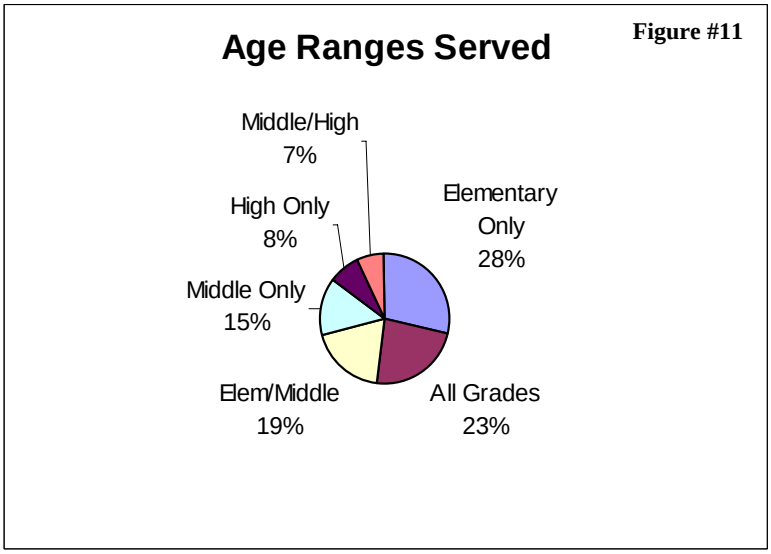
Organizational Characteristics – **Ages Served**

Coverage across the age groups is quite broad. Responsibility for children and youth of all ages is relatively common—one in four surveyed reports working with all grades.

- Overall, 64 percent of respondents reported working with elementary students, 59 percent with middle school students, and 41 percent with high school students. These findings stand in contrast with participation reports from some after-school programs that show sharper drop-off rates for high school students[x] and reinforce the complementary participation patterns of after-school and community youth programs. (Respondents could select more than one response.)

- Surprising, and perhaps of some concern, is the breadth of the age-ranges served. Nearly a quarter of those surveyed actually work directly with youth across that entire age spread, from elementary to high school age. While the importance (and manageability) of age-appropriate programming is well-known, only a little over one-quarter of youth workers say they work with elementary students only, and just under a third work with secondary only (middle and high school). The remaining group (approximately 19 percent) report working with both elementary and middle school students. (Respondents could select more than one response.)





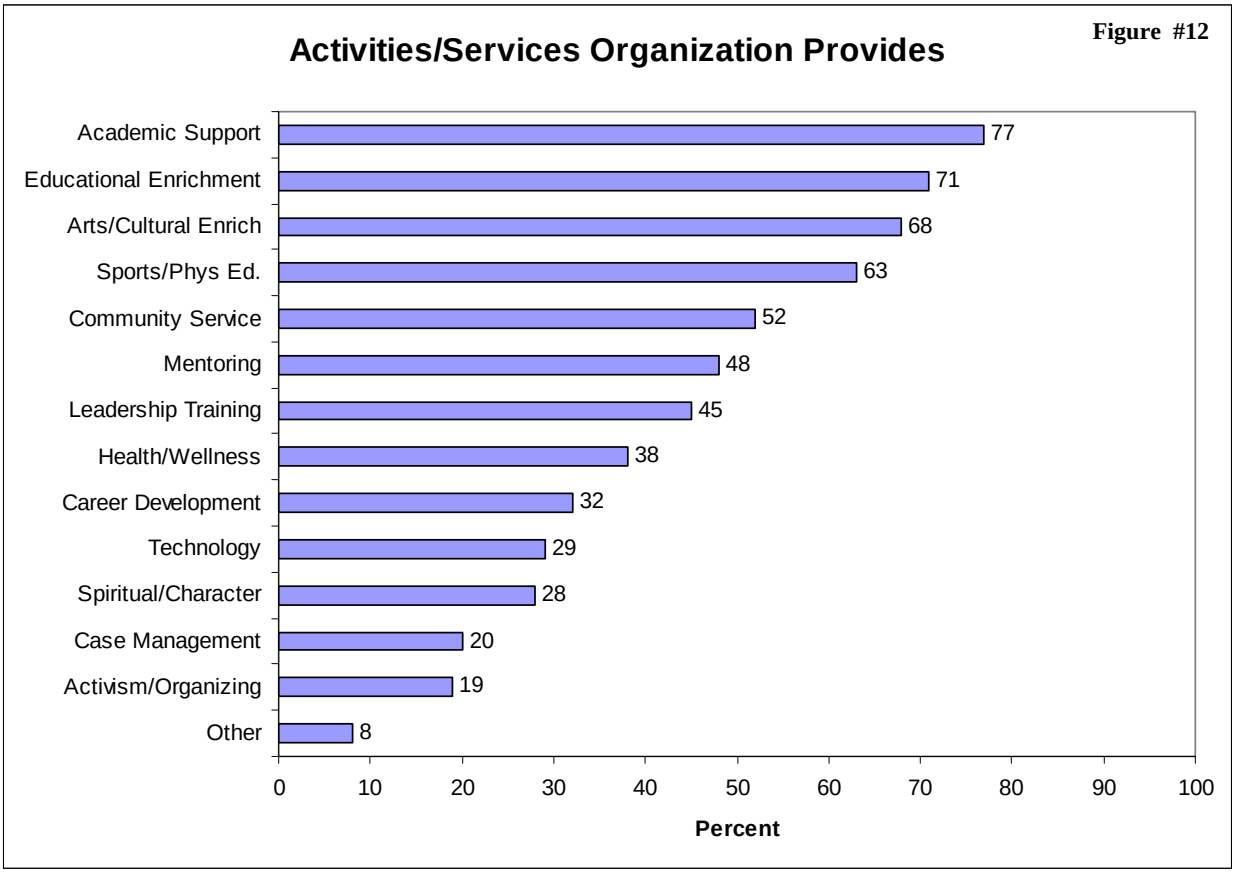
Organizational Characteristics – **Program Activities**

The majority of youth workers surveyed identified academics and educational enrichment as the most common activities offered in their programs.

- While academics and educational enrichment topped the list of activities offered, there is significant variation within organizations; the average respondent said her organization provides six different activity offerings. (Respondents could select more than one response.)

- After academics and educational enrichment, the next most commonly cited activities were arts/cultural enrichment and sports/physical fitness.

Figure #12



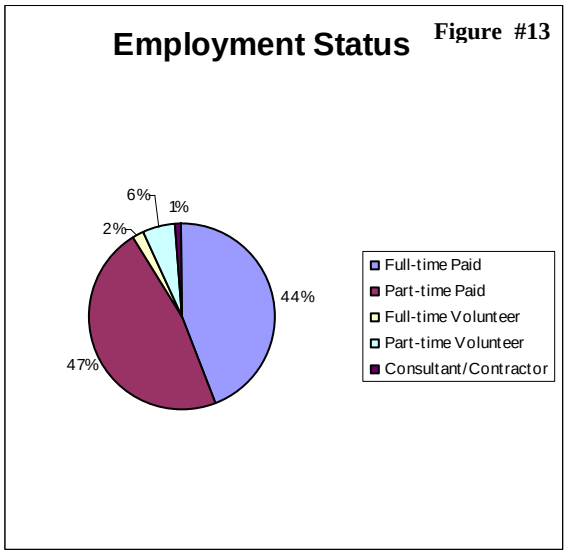
Organizational Practices and Policies – **Full-time/Part-time Employment**

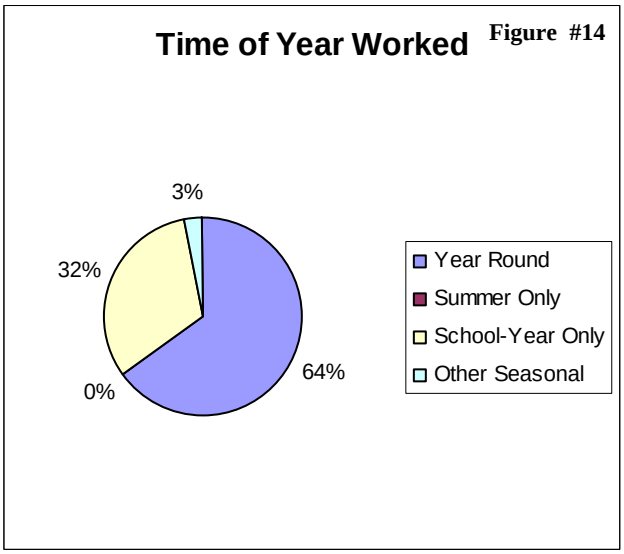
One in two surveyed works part time. One in three works only during the school year.

- Almost two-thirds of those surveyed work year-round, and just under a third work during the school-year only. Only a small fraction of those surveyed (three percent) consider themselves "seasonal" employees (which we assume reflects the fact that the survey was fielded in late winter/early spring).

- The sample is composed of roughly half part-time and half full-time employees.[5] This rate of part-time employment is high relative to other fields; just over one-quarter of the child care workforce is part time and about 40 percent of food services employees work part time. The average percentage of part-time employment across industries is 20 percent.[xi]

- Of the consultant/contract and part-time workers surveyed, 63 percent are interested in full-time employment at their organization were it available; 37 percent are not.





[5] Part time meant less than 30 hours per week. The sample also included a small number of unpaid, full-time and part-time volunteers.

Organizational Practices and Policies – **Roles and Responsibilities**

Three-quarters of those surveyed spend 75 percent or more of their time with youth.

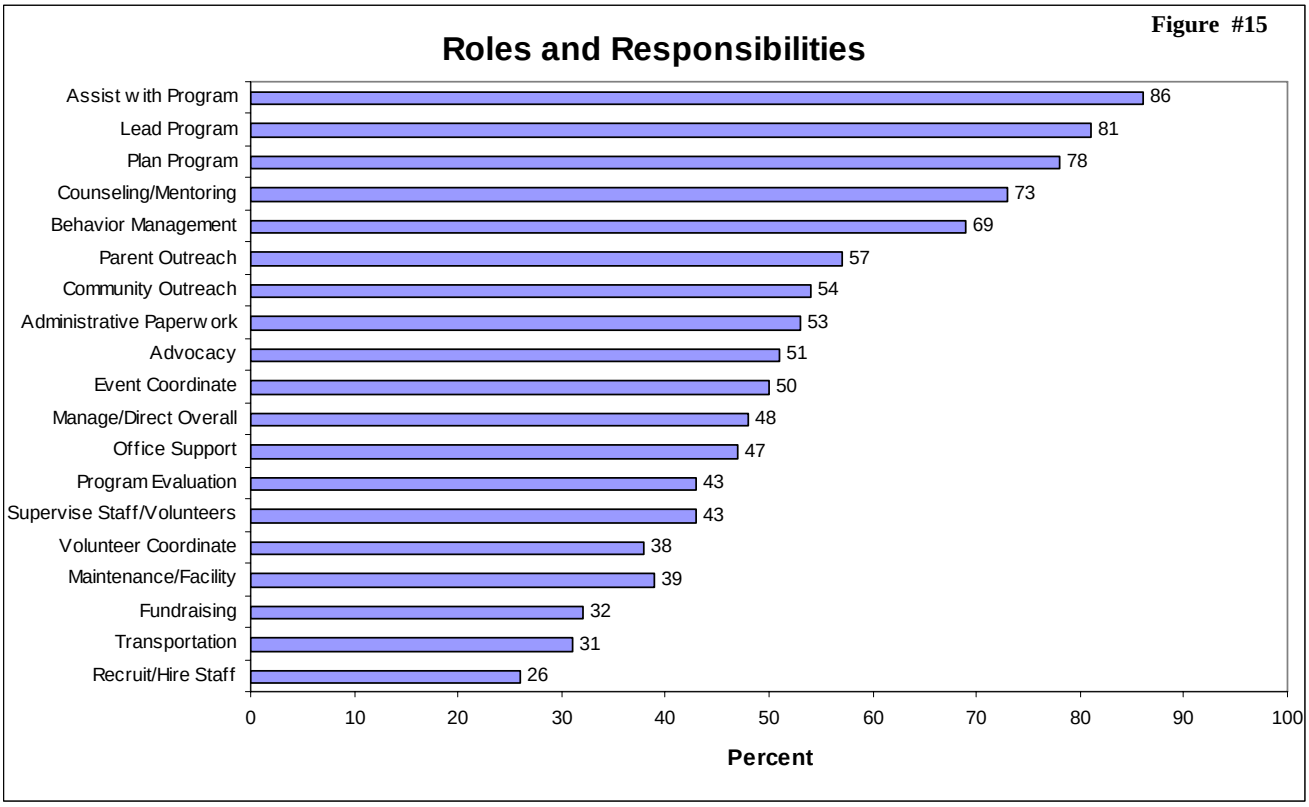
- This sample can indeed be characterized as "frontline," with 76 percent spending at least three-quarters of their time interacting directly with children and youth, and 92 percent spending at least 50 percent of their time doing so. This gross definition of "frontline" squares with respondents more detailed reports on their work roles.

- The most common roles revolve around program planning and delivery. Almost nine out of 10 report assisting in program delivery. More than seven out of 10 report performing more specific duties, such as counseling/mentoring and behavior management.

- A second cluster of roles revolves around paperwork, program management, advocacy, and outreach. Between 50 and 60 percent of those surveyed report performing these roles on the job. Fewer than half supervise staff or coordinate and supervise volunteers. One-third or fewer are responsible for things like transportation, fundraising, and facilities' maintenance, and recruiting/hiring staff.

- Perhaps even more notable than the nature of the roles youth workers play is the sheer volume of roles they juggle. Half of all respondents report playing ten or more roles overall within their programs and five different "primary" roles.

Figure #15



Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could select all that apply.

Organizational Practices and Policies – **Compensation**

The median range for salaried youth workers surveyed is $25,000 - $25,999; the median range for hourly employees is $9.00 - $10.99. Forty percent of those surveyed have a second job.

- Salaries and wages are low compared to related fields. In 2005 the average social worker earned $42,700, and the average secondary school teacher earned $49,400.[xii]

- Hour-for-hour, part-time hourly workers are particularly poorly paid. Roughly half of the sample receive an hourly wage, and half are salaried (this mirrors very closely employment status, as most full-time workers are salaried and most part-time workers are hourly).

- Fewer than half of the total sample report having access to health insurance, and 39 percent report having no benefits at all—including insurance, paid vacation, sick leave, and retirement savings. Access to benefits varies significantly by employment status. For example, 80 percent of full-time workers, compared with only five percent of part-time workers, report having access to health insurance.

- Second jobs are a common solution to help make ends meet for part-time and full-time workers. Twenty-seven percent of full-time and 53 percent of part-time workers have second jobs. Interestingly, not all part-time workers hold second jobs; the fact that roughly half do not may be an indication that part-time employment appeals to some workers given family, school, or other responsibilities.

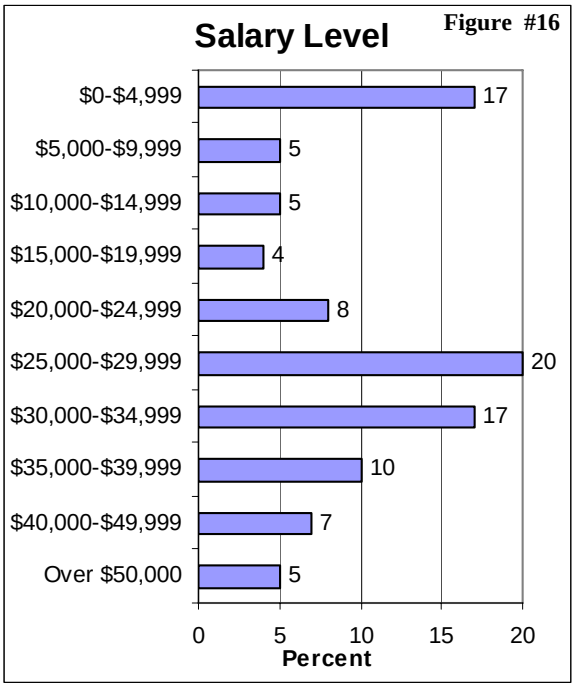


Figure #16

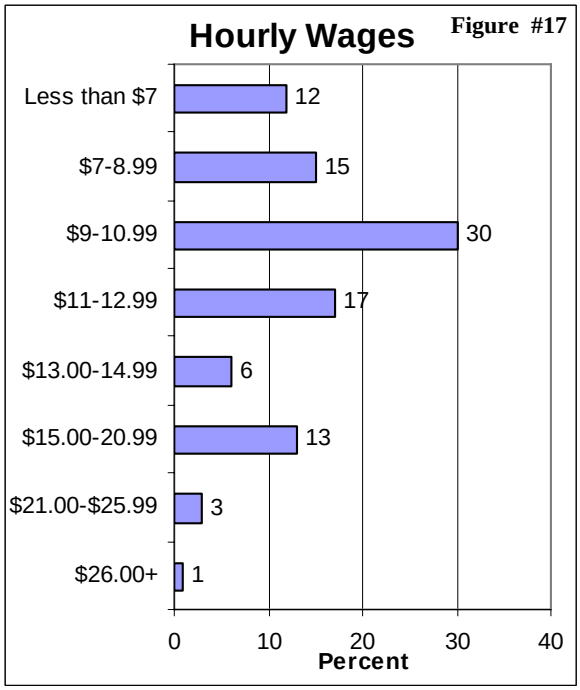
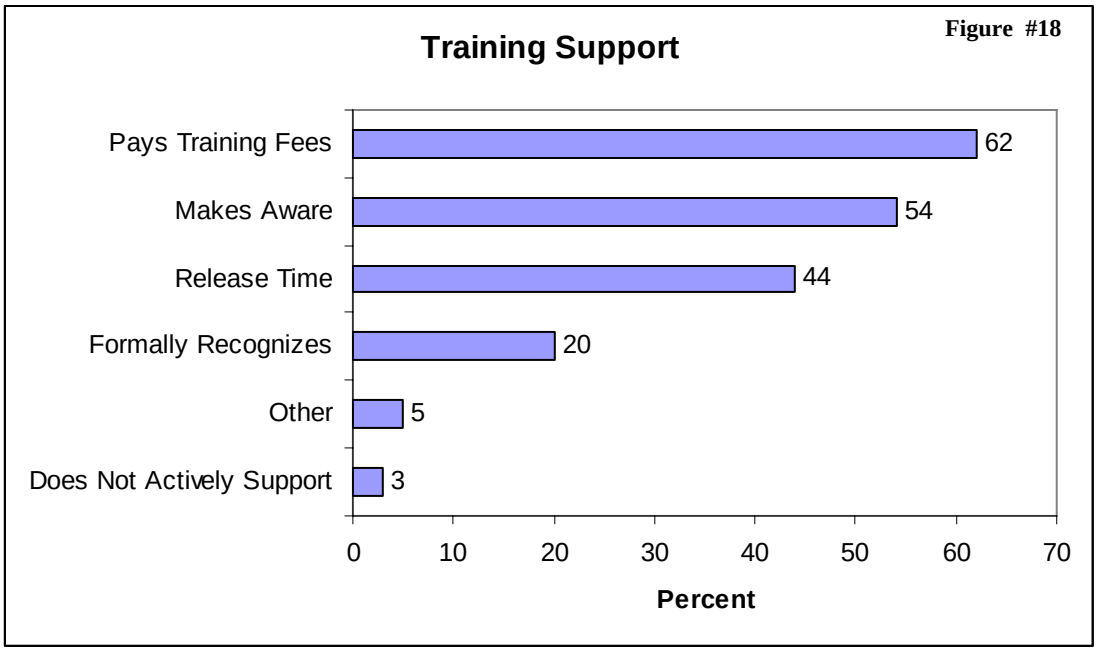


Figure #17

Organizational Practices and Policies – **Professional Development, Recognition and Advancement**

Training opportunities are plentiful, but formal support or compensatory recognition for training is more elusive.

- Almost eight in 10 have attended training in the last six months, nine in 10 in the last year. Only five percent report never having attended training.
- Eighty-five percent of workers surveyed report that their organization has identified specific staff competencies or skills necessary to work with youth.
- While only one-fifth say their organization "formally recognizes or rewards participation" in training, 62 percent say their organization pays training fees, and 44 percent say they get release time to participate.
- Over half of those surveyed say there are no clearly defined opportunities for promotion within their organizations. When it comes to hiring incentives or promotions, 35 percent of respondents say their organization formally recognizes or rewards higher education and years of experience, while only 14 percent say certification is formally recognized or rewarded.



Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could select all that apply

Workforce Status – **Stability**

Job mobility in this workforce appears to be very high—four in 10 surveyed have been in their job less than one year.

- More than half the sample have been in the field for five years or more, suggesting the workforce is at least somewhat experienced. But there is significant movement within and between organizations. Many are quite new to their specific positions—41 percent have been in their job less than one year, 60 percent less than two years. Data from program directors point to an annual turnover rate of roughly 30 percent. By comparison, the rate of turnover in teaching has been about 15 percent annually since the late 1980s.[xiii]

- Forty-one percent of youth workers surveyed anticipate remaining in the field for five years or more. While only three percent plan to stay less than a year and 18 percent plan to stay between one and four years, a full 37 percent say they are "not sure."

- As noted above, fewer than half of those surveyed say there are "clear opportunities for promotion" within their organization. This finding combined with the length of service pattern suggests that workers may be forced to create their own career ladders, moving around within the field in order to increase earnings or take on new roles.

Figure #19

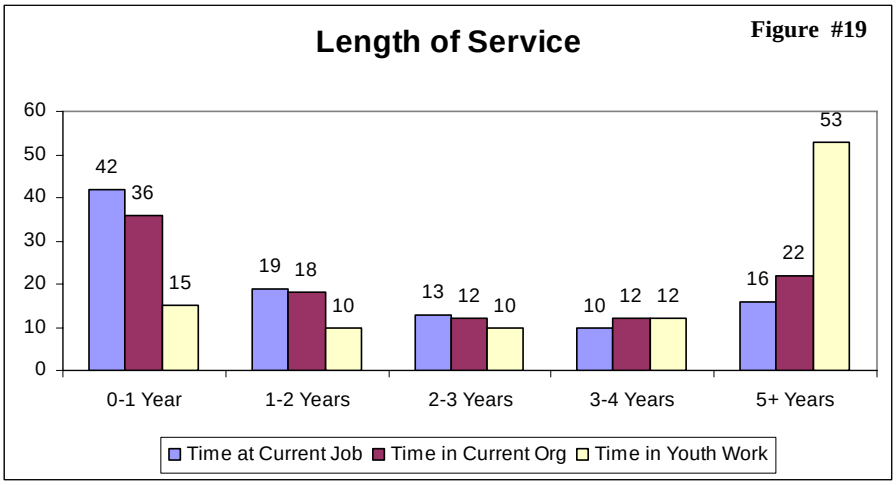
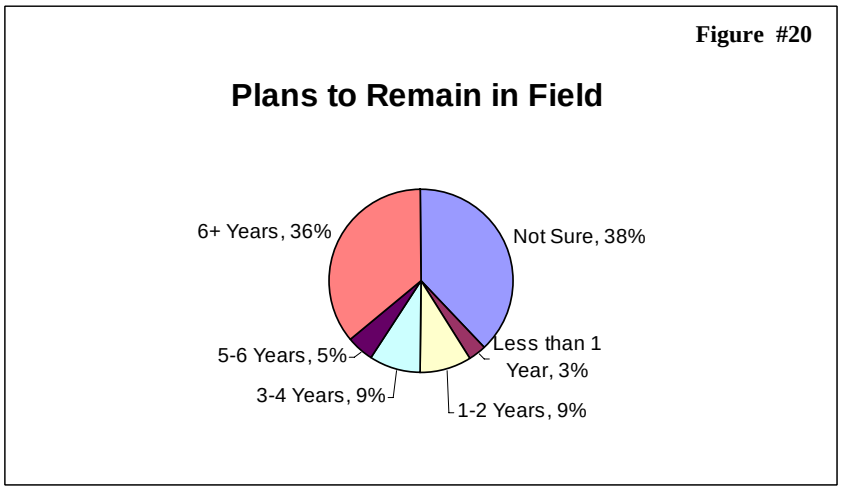


Figure #20



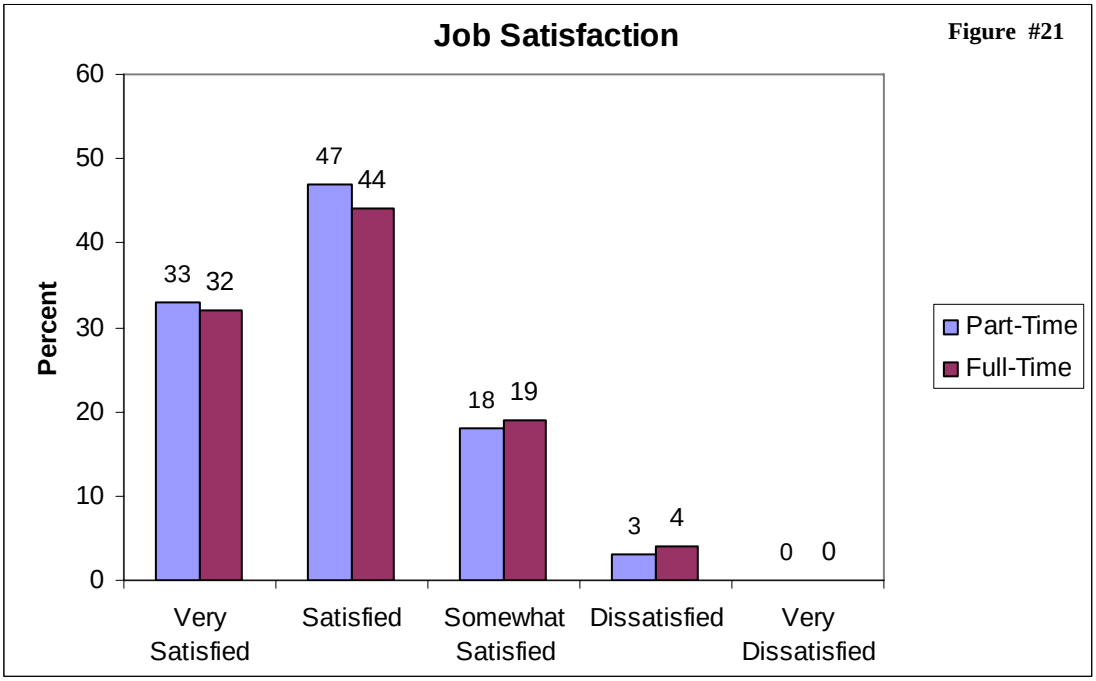
Workforce Status – **Job Satisfaction**

The youth work professionals in our sample report high levels of job satisfaction compared to workers in other occupations.

- Nearly 80 percent say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their current job. These satisfaction levels seem high, even after acknowledging the obvious bias—that disgruntled workers may not complete surveys. Only three percent of those surveyed consider themselves dissatisfied. The remaining group all fall in the "somewhat satisfied" category.

- Compared with other fields, this is quite high: according to the Conference Board, 50 percent of Americans are satisfied with their jobs, and only 14 percent are very satisfied.[xiv] Survey and focus group data suggest these workers enjoy their work a great deal and are committed to the mission. Full- and part-time workers are equally satisfied.

- The majority of workers (69 percent) say they get the feedback they need on a regular basis



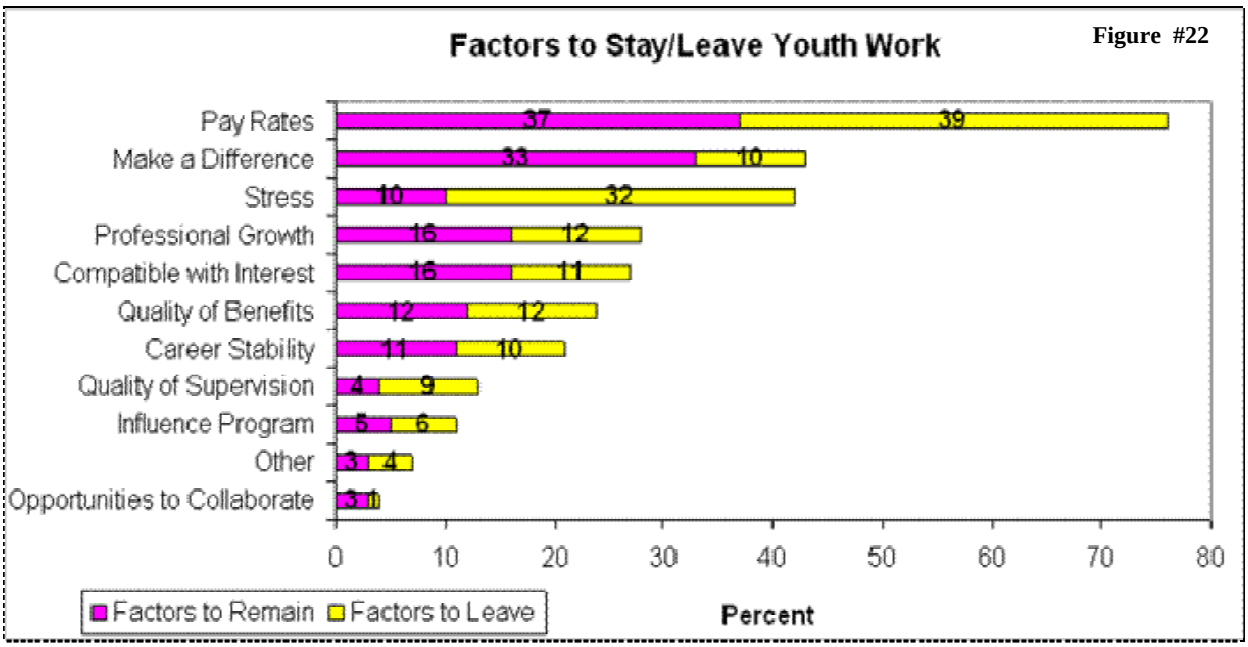
Workforce Status – **Satisfaction Drivers**

Compensation is identified as the top factor (by far) influencing decisions to stay in or leave the field, but there are important intrinsic rewards and challenges as well.

- Compensation is an equally compelling motivator and de-motivator. Three-quarters reported that compensation would be the primary factor in their decision to stay or leave youth work. Slightly more than four in 10 list "a sense that my job is making a difference" or "stress levels associated with work" as reasons to stay or leave. Unlike compensation, however, the stay/leave tallies were not equally weighted. "Making a difference" is primarily considered a reason to stay; stress is cited as a reason most would leave.

- Focus group data suggest that the stress workers experience is less about the nature of the work and more about the realities of the workplace—difficult hours, wide-ranging responsibilities, tight budgets, and general instability. This may explain why program resources rose to the top of the list (following pay increases) of key factors youth workers feel would advance the profession, over things like professional development and minimum credentials.

- When asked what they think would most help advance the profession, both youth workers and program directors say raising wages and increasing program resources, in that order.



Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could select all that apply

V. Further Analysis

As with any large data set, there are an almost infinite number of questions that could be asked about the interrelationships between variables within and especially between the four broad categories of information collected: worker demographics, organizational characteristics, organizational practices and policies, and workforce status. What follows are the results of some of the additional analyses run, presented in question and answer format. These findings are intended to start a discussion about what we know and do not know about youth workers. Reactions and new questions are welcome.

- ***Who are the young workers?***

  Younger workers (under age 25) are more likely part-time and consequently have lower pay and fewer benefits. They are less educated and less likely to be certified. They are more likely to work with elementary students only and more likely to have come from child care than from education or social work. They are newer to their positions, organizations, and the field and less likely to say they'll stay more than two years.

  "It's hard to envision having a family while working these hours." (D.C.)

- ***Who are the older workers, given that most are new to their jobs and fairly new to the field?***

  Our survey question did not capture experience beyond five years, limiting our ability to identify life-time youth workers, but our data suggest there may be two waves of people entering youth work—those who enter the profession quite young and stay until roughly age 30, and others who enter the field in their forties or fifties. Focus group data underscore these findings and suggest that many young adults consider youth work a viable profession until developmental milestones like raising a family and owning a home become priorities. Understanding these different entry points and trajectories is particularly important from the perspective of recruitment and retention.

  "I can't be making $25,000 ten years from now." (Kansas City)

- ***Does education matter?***

  Workers with two or more years of post-secondary education are more likely to be white and female and are less likely to have backgrounds that are similar to program participants'. They are more likely to have relevant training in teaching or social work or to have completed the Advancing Youth Development training program, but less likely to have a school-age child care certificate. They are more likely to work in community organizations and with secondary school students. Education does correlate with compensation. Better educated workers are more likely to be employed full time and earn more than those with less education.

  Better educated workers also spend less time interacting directly with young people and are more likely to characterize their background as different from the background of the youth they work with. While they have been in the field longer, they have been in their positions or organizations the same amount of time as their less-educated counterparts. Focus group data underscore this lateral movement within the field and suggest that while some organizations are able to reward educational attainment, many workers may have to move between organizations in order to increase their wages and stay in the field.

- ***Who are the part-time workers? Where do they work?***

  Part-time workers are more likely to be younger, African American, and have less education (two-year degree or less) than full-time workers. They are more likely to report being similar to program

participants. Part-time workers are more likely to be in school-based programs, more likely to work with elementary students, and more likely to spend 100 percent of their time with children and youth.

- ***How different are part-time and full-time employees in terms of satisfaction, mobility, and roles?***

  Full- and part-time employees are equally satisfied, have been in the field for similar numbers of years, and plan to remain in it for similar lengths of time. While just over half of part-time workers surveyed expressed interest in full-time work, just under half did not. Our survey and focus group data, along with similar findings from NAA's study, suggest that the flexibility, hours, and nature of part-time work, in spite of some drawbacks (particularly wages and benefits), may represent important incentives for certain youth workers and potential recruits.

  Part-time, less-educated workers spend more time in direct contact with youth. And as many focus group participants lamented, advancing one's youth work career inevitably means moving further away from direct service. The tendency for full-time workers to have more non-youth-related responsibilities, such as volunteer coordination, fundraising, hiring, and administration, also supports this general trend.

- ***Who are the workers that spend 100 percent of their time with young people?***

  Like the part-time workers, this group is less educated and more likely African American. They are more likely to be working in schools, with elementary school students, and are more likely working part time, with fewer benefits. Half have another job. Interestingly, they are just as satisfied with their work situation as those who have more mixed responsibilities.

- ***How, if at all, do the elementary-only and secondary-only workers differ?***

  Those working only with secondary students are more likely to have college degrees, more likely to have come to youth work from education or social services, and tend to be somewhat older. They are also more likely to report that they work with low-income youth. The elementary-only group is paid less, has less experience and education, is much younger, more minority, and is more likely to have come out of child care.

- ***How does the "highly satisfied" finding square with concerns about compensation?***

  While the intrinsic rewards of youth work are clear, the extrinsic benefits are less so.[xv] Concerns about compensation emerged when youth workers were asked what factors would most influence their decision to stay in or leave youth work, as well as in their assessment of how to advance the field. Pay was the number one factor—by a huge margin—in influencing decisions to both stay and leave. And raising overall compensation—wages and benefits combined—is the strategy youth workers say would most help advance the profession. Again, forty percent of those surveyed have a second job.

  Findings from the directors' survey mirror these perspectives on the importance of compensation. Findings from the focus group reinforced concerns about the particularly low wages and lack of benefits associated with part-time work.

  "Logically it doesn't make sense for me to continue in this work, but I keep doing it. . . ..I keep getting pulled back in and each time it's with different kids." (Baltimore)

  "Where I see a problem is the people who work under me--part-time people--making $6 and $7 an hour in something they have been doing for 3 or 4 years, and haven't gotten a raise in 4 years . . . . They are dealing with our kids every day, and nobody is recognizing them." (Kansas City)

- ***What factors distinguish very satisfied workers from the rest?***

  Very satisfied youth workers are more likely to have a teaching certificate and to have come from a related field like education or child care. They are slightly more likely than the others to be very young or older and slightly more likely to be either recent hires or to have been on the job for several years. Perhaps the highly satisfied group includes two strands of workers—some with newcomers' optimism and some more senior youth workers who have found the supports they need to be successful.

  Very satisfied workers are much more likely to get the feedback they need and less likely to say that improved management would most help the profession. They are less likely to say pay rates would influence their decision to leave and more likely to say that their ability to make a difference would influence their decision to stay.

  "I was bored and miserable going to work and sitting in front of a computer doing stuff I didn't care about. So I went back to school and got a masters in counseling and decided I wanted to work with young people." (San Diego)

- ***What distinguishes those who plan to stay in the field for three or more years?***

  "Stayers" are more satisfied, more likely to have been in the field longer, have better pay, and be full-time, year-round employees. They are similar to the "leavers" in the amount of time they have been in their jobs and organizations, underscoring once again the job mobility issue. They are more likely to be older and white and have some graduate school education. "Leavers" are more likely to be part time, less educated, working in school settings with elementary students, and have been in the field fewer years.

  "Stayers" and "leavers" are equally likely to say raising wages would most help the profession. Leavers and those who are not sure, however, are more likely to say career advancement opportunities would most help the profession.

  "Sometimes, honestly, I want to do something where people see its value… . But at the same time, I feel a passion for the young people and a passion about changing the image of youth work as well." (Kansas City)

- ***How do the experiences and characteristics of youth workers in different settings compare?***

  Workers in school-based programs, community-based organizations, and national affiliates report no significant differences in length of time in their jobs, in their organizations, or in the field. And workers are equally satisfied across these three settings.

  There were differences, however, in the nature of the work and in compensation packages offered. Not surprisingly, workers in national affiliates and community-based organizations are more likely to serve all grades and provide more activities than their school-based counterparts. National affiliates and community organizations are more likely to offer benefits and to have identifiable opportunities for promotion. Workers in community-based organizations, interestingly, were more likely to have a two-year degree or higher and less likely to have similar backgrounds to participants'.

Workforce Development & Impact

Inputs

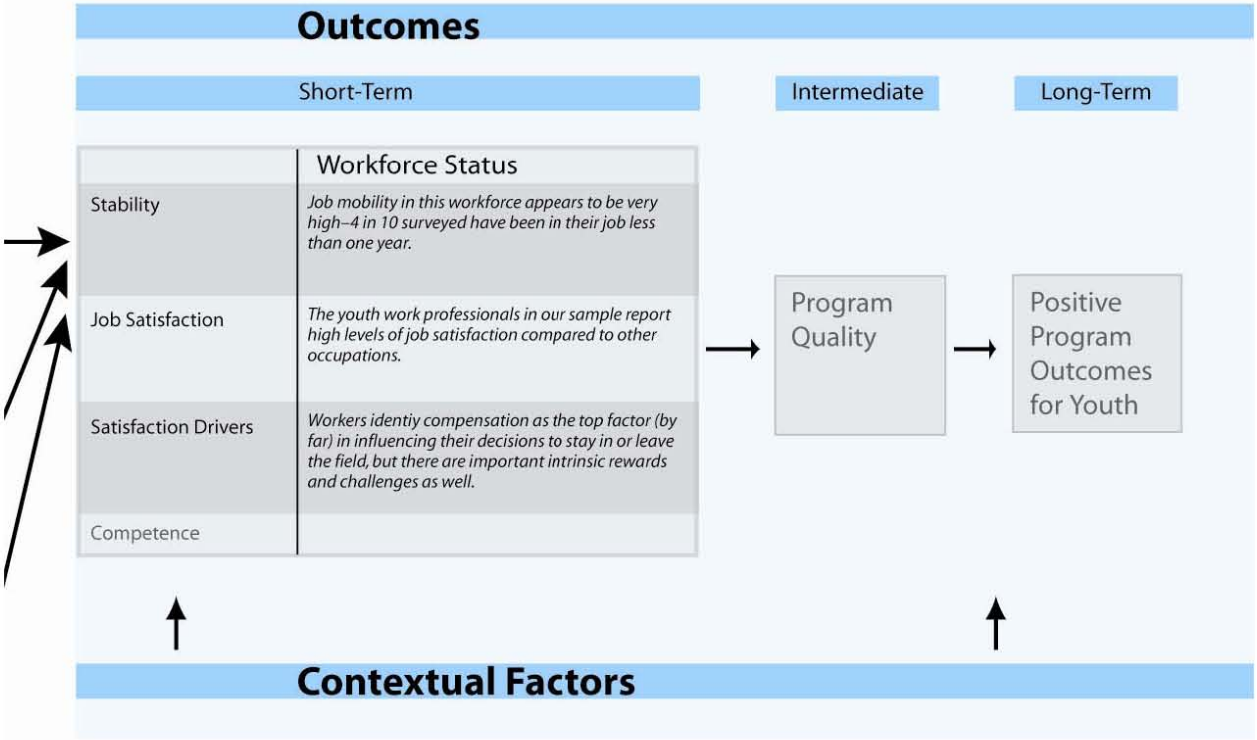
	Worker Demographics
Age and Gender	*The survey population is predominantly female (seven out of ten) and relatively young. Half are under age 30, and half are about age 30; 13 percent are 21 or younger.*
Race / Ethnicity	*The survey population is predominantly minority. In fact, it is predominantly African American (59 percent); only 27 percent of workers are white, and 7 percent are Hispanic/Latino.*
Personal Similarity	*Three-quarters of youth workers describe themselves as either very or somewhat similar to the participants in their program.*
Education	*The education levels of youth work professionals surveyed are reasonably high, especially given their youthfulness; 60 percent have a two-year college degree or higher.*
Experience	*Most of those surveyed come to youth work from related fields. Two-thirds have a relevant credential.*

	Organizational Characteristics
Settings	*Youth work settings vary. Only one in four youth work professionals works in a school-based program.*
Incomes Served	*Most of those surveyed work with low-income children and youth.*
Ages (and Age Ranges) Served	*Coverage across the age groups is quite broad. Responsibility for children and youth of all ages is relatively common – one in four reports working with all grades.*
Program Activities	*The majority of youth workers surveyed identified academics and educational enrichment as the most common activities offered in their programs.*
Mission / Values	

	Organizational Practies/Policies
Full-time / Part-time Employment	*One in two surveyed works part-time. One in three works only during the school year.*
Roles and Responsibilities	*Three-quarters of those surveyed spend 75 percent or more of their time with youth.*
Compensation	*The median range for salaried youth workers in our sample is $25,000 - $29,999; the median hourly wage is between $9.00 and $10.99. Forty percent of those surveyed have a second job.*
Professional Development, Recognition and Advancement	*Training opportunities are plentiful, but formal support of compensatory recognition for training is more elusive.*

Contextual Factors

Logic Model: Summary Findings



Further Analysis

- Full- and part-time employees are equally satisfied, have been in the field for similar numbers of years, and plan to remain in it for similar lengths of time.
- Analyses and focus group data suggest that many young adults consider youth work a viable profession until developmental milestones like raising a family and owning a home become priorities.
- Not surprisingly, better educated workers are more likely to be employed full-time and to earn more than those with less education. These workers also tend to spend less time interacting directly with young people and are more likely to characterize their background as different from that of the youth they work with.
- Our survey and focus group data, along with similar findings from NAA's study, suggest that the flexibility, hours and nature of part-time work, in spite of some drawbacks (particularly wages and benefits), may represent important incentives for certain youth workers and potential recruits.
- Workers spending 100 percent of their time with young people – like the part-time workers – tend to be less educated, and are more likely to be African American. Interestingly, they are just as satisfied with their work situation as those who have more mixed responsibilities.
- Very satisfied workers are more likely to have a teaching certificate and to have come from a related field like education or child care. They are more likely to be either new or more permanent members of the profession, are less likely to say pay influences their decisions to stay or leave, and more likely to say that their ability to make a difference influences their decision to stay.

VI. Implications

What implications does this new body of workforce research have for those making policy decisions related to youth work? We believe there are seven strong themes worth considering:

- **Focus on the workers, not the workplace.**
  This study demonstrates that significant variation exists within the youth work field. People work in different settings, with different aged kids, on different activities, and have different experiences and opportunities on the job. Some patterns exist within this variation. School-based programs, for example, typically employ part-time staff, focus on serving a single age-range, and are more likely than community-based programs to offer academic enrichment activities. Community-based programs and affiliates of national organizations tend to serve a broad range of ages, offer more activities on average, and are more likely to employ full-time staff.

  Despite these variations, it is not a mistake to talk about this as one workforce grappling with a common set of issues. Workers across these different types of settings come from a similarly diverse set of entry points, are highly satisfied, are absolutely consistent about what factors influence their decisions to stay in or leave the field, and tend to stay in their jobs, organizations, and the field for similar periods of time. Acknowledging real differences like those described initially is important, but doing so in the context of the many commonalities in the work and in the workforce is critical to advancing the field.

- **Capitalize on entry and exit patterns**.
  While youth work professionals face a common set of workforce issues, it is important to point out there is no "typical" youth worker. Just as youth work includes several overlapping fields (e.g., after school, school-age child care, youth development), youth workers are difficult to characterize in general terms. The profession successfully draws in people of various ages, diverse backgrounds, and a range of prior educational and professional experiences.

  There is a fairly clear pattern, however, around age of entry. *Many people enter this field young*. While a small percentage stay into their 30s, many do not, and compensation clearly factors into that trend. *Another wave enters in their 40s or 50s*. Survey and focus group data suggest that many older workers come from related fields, like education or child care; some come from a profession they found less personally meaningful; and some were involved in youth work in their early years, tried another profession, and decided to return.

  Managing multiple entry points presents complications, but the diversity of the workplace and workforce should also be considered an opportunity. Acknowledging that a significant group of young people may only plan to stay in the field for a few years is important. More formal short-term pathways (e.g., Americorps, Teach for America) could both strengthen this short-term workforce and encourage more young workers to remain.

- **Address concerns about compensation**.
  There is an almost unspoken assumption that the market simply cannot support significant increases in child care or youth work salaries. The satisfaction levels of those surveyed and the direct comments of those interviewed suggest that staff understand the inelasticity of the market. It would be irresponsible, however, not to underscore how strongly these data point to raising wages as a strategy for stabilizing the workforce and advancing the profession. Pay is cited as the number one factor influencing whether people stay in or leave the field, regardless of

demographic characteristics, employment status, job satisfaction, or place of employment. Even those who decide to stay in the field for the long term—having presumably come to terms with their limited earning potential—express strong concerns over wage levels.

Focus group data suggest two strong concerns that could be remedied without enormous cost, because they are specific rather than universal in scope. First, there is concern about the livability of part-time wages. Full-time workers in focus groups worried about their part-time peers and lamented that they have fewer benefits and, hour for hour, receive lower wages. Second, frontline staff who enjoy being frontline staff lament the fact that the only way to earn more money is to take on administrative and management duties that mean spending less time with young people.

It appears that many consider youth work a viable profession until developmental milestones like raising a family and owning a home become priorities. Most youth workers are satisfied, committed, and bring valuable experience and education to the table. Finding small ways to increase compensation packages could have an important stabilizing effect on organizations and the field. In lieu of wage increases, other incentives and supports targeted at mid-career employees, such as loan forgiveness, credit unions, financial literacy, and retirement counseling, could help address some of the financial concerns raised by respondents.

- **Consider the potential role of part-time employment.**
  There is a tendency to assume that part-time work is necessarily undesirable and/or functions primarily as a stepping stone to full-time employment. One might conclude, then, that the part-time nature of a large segment of this field (our sample was nearly half part time) is an inherent challenge and that reducing the number of part-time slots is a sound policy strategy. These data suggest we may want to understand the implications of part-time work more thoroughly before writing it off altogether.

  Part-time workers in our sample report extremely high levels of job satisfaction—levels equal to those of full-time workers, and they anticipate staying in the field for the same length of time as full-time workers. We do not mean to suggest the picture is rosy for part-timers; they are much less likely, for example, to have benefits than their full-time counterparts and, focus group data suggest that, hour for hour they are even more underpaid than full-time workers.

  Sixty percent of part-time workers surveyed said they would be interested in full-time work at their organization were it available. But for the 40 percent who are not—still a large group within the overall workforce—the flexibility, hours, and nature of part-time work may be an important draw. Recognizing that a relatively stable, relatively well-educated group of young workers appears interested in part-time work is important as organizations and systems think about recruiting and retaining staff.

  A critical issue that deserves further research is whether programs employing part-time staff can generate the same outcomes for young people as those employing full-time workers—in other words, does employment status influence program quality?

- **Create clearer organizational steps and career ladders.**
  This recommendation builds directly on comments from the focus groups about the need for more defined salary/grade increases for frontline workers. The survey data supported focus group reports that, for many frontline staff, career advancement (especially salary increases) requires changing jobs. In the absence of organizational career ladders or even modest but regular salary/grade adjustments for longevity and/or increased responsibility or expertise, frontline

workers committed to staying in the field find themselves hopping jobs to get the recognition and rewards they believe they deserve.

While most of those surveyed report having access to training and professional development opportunities, the links between that training and tangible rewards or promotions within their organizations are weak to non-existent. Strengthening those connections and ensuring that training opportunities are not only accessible and relevant but recognized in concrete ways could be an important strategy for reducing turnover.

One of the things that distinguishes youth work from teaching is that young people can be encouraged to maintain relationships with youth work professionals from year to year. This wonderful developmental gift is undermined by high turnover rates. Creating a norm for small but regular compensation adjustments for frontline workers could significantly improve job stability.

- **Create support systems and networks.**
  In equal numbers, youth work professionals report that they stay because they are making a difference but leave because of stress. Youth work is not easy, and stress and burn-out are real. Working with all grades, which many youth workers report doing, could drive up stress, as could juggling a wide range of roles and responsibilities. These day-to-day stressors could be exacerbated by persistent concerns about job stability, funding, and organizational capacity.

  The survey findings suggest that supervision and support do matter. Less satisfied workers are much less likely than their satisfied counterparts to say they get the feedback that they need. Employees in other high-stress jobs (e.g., law enforcement, social work) often have supports they can access within their organizations, within systems (e.g., at the city-wide level), and within their profession. Youth and community workers in Great Britain have a union. While no focus group members specifically suggested unionizing, many participants did suggest the need for stronger peer associations that offer networking, personal and career counseling, financial literacy, etc.

- **Legitimize youth work.**
  People who do youth work want to make a difference, and feeling that they are doing so is a critical factor in influencing whether they remain in the field. Beyond the kinds of individual recognition and support that come from effective supervision and management, youth workers seek recognition in a much broader sense of the term. Focus group discussants often characterized this work as largely invisible, and many suggested that campaigns and other efforts aimed at raising awareness among the public about youth work could both improve worker morale and bolster program resources. Advocates in Hampton, VA, are using workforce data to try to get youth work recognized as a profession by their local Workforce Investment Board. Recognition could mean additional resources for professional development, recruitment, and preparation.

VII. Conclusion

"Google" teacher policy and the first entry that pops up is Teacher Policy Research:

> ***Teacher Policy Research*** is a research partnership between the University at Albany and Stanford University that examines teachers, issues in teaching and teacher education to provide education policy makers with current, useful data to inform their policy decisions. The research is funded by organizations interested in evaluating current education policies and issues in education in order to effect change or implement new policies as needed. The research covers a broad range of issues in teacher education policy, including teacher preparation, teacher labor markets, how teachers are distributed across schools, and teacher retention, particularly in urban, low performing schools. The ***Teacher Pathways Project*** is a multi-year study of teachers and teacher preparation programs to examine characteristics of teacher education and pathways into teaching and identify attributes that impact student outcomes in New York City schools. (Available at http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org.)

"Google" youth worker policy and the first entry that pops up is a comprehensive, but very specific application form for Youth/Children Workers interested in working at Denair Friends Church in Denair, California. The first relevant entry that is not specific to one organization is the Archive of European Integration, the Archive for the European Union. The subject: Youth policy/youth workers. One has to have permission to enter the site.

This unofficial test demonstrates the relative infancy of the youth work profession compared to that of teaching in the United States and compared with that of youth work in the United Kingdom and other European countries. That said, while the field is in many respects nascent, organizational policies, regulations, and guidelines are being developed and changed daily in ways that make it more or less difficult or attractive for those interested in supporting "young people's personal and social development" (the definition of youth work used by the National Youth Agency in Great Britain) to enter or remain in the field. And the need for workforce policies is becoming clearer as state and local after-school and youth development systems mature and as research on the relationship between workforce quality and program outcomes evolves.

In Great Britain, the Community and Youth Workers Union negotiates regularly on behalf of workers, and the National Youth Agency orchestrates structured conversations between youth work professionals, employers, and government officials in every jurisdiction across the country to generate feedback on the principles and policies that undergird the field. The United States is not Great Britain, in size, history or temperament. But it is not impossible to conceive of a strategy for supporting and synthesizing local conversations between youth workers, employers, funders, regulators, training/credentialing institutions, and young people themselves. And it is not unrealistic to believe that, given some data with which to begin the discussions, these groups could find common ground for creating a policy agenda for stabilizing, preparing, supporting, and rejuvenating the youth work workforce.

ENDNOTES

[i] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2003). *The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Condition of the Frontline Human Services Workforce*. Baltimore, MD: author, page 12.
[ii] Indiana Youth Institute. (1999). *Youth Work: More than Child's Play*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Youth Institute.
[iii] Fusco, D. (2003). *A landscape study of youth workers in out-of-school time*. Unpublished paper. New York, York: College of the City University of New York, CUNY Workforce Development Initiative.
[iv] Dennehy, J. and Noam, G. (2005). *Evidence for Action: Strengthening After-School Programs for All Children and Youth: The Massachusetts Out-of-School Time Workforce*. Boston, MA: Achieve Boston, an initiative of Boston After-School and Beyond.
[v] Resource Development Associates. (February 2006). *Beacon Workforce Study*. Lafayette, CA: Resource Development Associates.
[vi] Barton-Villagrana, H. and Becker-Mouhcine, J. (forthcoming). *Illinois After-School Partnership Workforce Survey*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Center for Violence Prevention.
[vii] Harvard Family Research Project. (Winter 2005/2006). Pathways from Workforce Development to Child Outcomes. *Evaluation Exchange*. Vol. XI, No. 4, page 3.
[viii] National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *Special Analysis on Mobility in the Teacher Workforce*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
[ix] National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (June 2006*). Finding Our Strength: Boston's Youth Worker Survey*. Technical Report. Cambridge, MA: Wellesley College.
[x] The Forum for Youth Investment. (2003). *Policy Commentary #2: High School After-School: What Is It? What Might It Be? Why Is It Important?* Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc. http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/comment/ostpc2.pdf.
[xi] Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2006-2007 edition). *Career Guide to Industries.* http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/home.htm.
[xii] U.S. Department of Labor, (2005). Occupational Employment Statistics. Bureau of Labor Statistics. http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm#00-0000
[xiii] Ingersoll, R. (2003). *Is There Really a Teacher Shortage*? Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington.
[xiv] The Conference Board. (Feb. 28, 2005). *U.S. Job Satisfaction Keeps Falling, The Conference Board Reports Today*. http://www.conference-board.org/utilities/pressDetail.cfm?press_ID=2582
[xv] Resource Development Associates. (February 2006). *Beacon Workforce Study*. Lafayette, CA: Resource Development Associates.