



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR FRONT-LINE Afterschool and Youth Development Staff: AN ACTION AGENDA

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Ellen Gannett, National Institute on Out-of-School Time

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Outline

- About the Next Gen Coalition
 - Goals and Strategies
 - About Front-line Youth Workers
 - Next Gen Action Agenda

Next Gen Goal

A strong, diverse after-school and youth development workforce that is *stable*, *prepared*, *supported* and *committed* to the well-being and empowerment of children and youth.

Next Gen Strategies

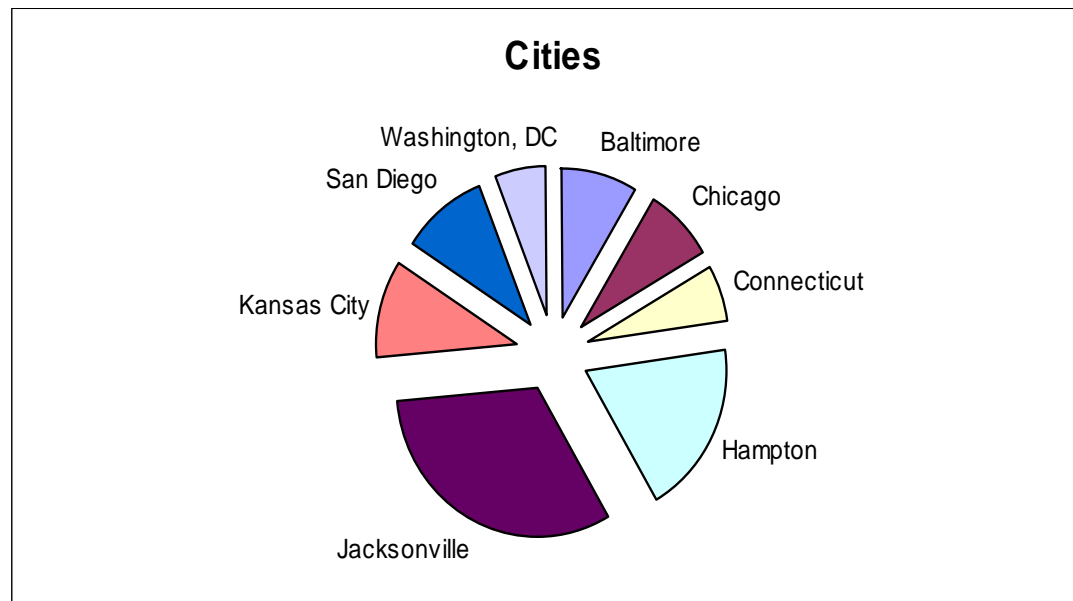
- Documenting activity and promising practices underway across the country;
- Raising awareness of such activity through regular communications;
- Creating opportunities for front-line workers and others committed to these issues to connect and communicate;
- Serving as a locus for joint action or advocacy efforts as they arise.

About Front-line Workers

1. What does the workforce look like? *How **stable, prepared, committed**?*
2. How and to what extent are professionals ***supported*** in the workplace?
3. What could be done to improve the employment experiences of youth workers and the stability of the workforce?

Survey design

- Sample includes 1,053 front-line youth workers and 195 directors from 8 largely urban communities. Data were collected in partnership with the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work through local intermediaries.





Highlights from the Data

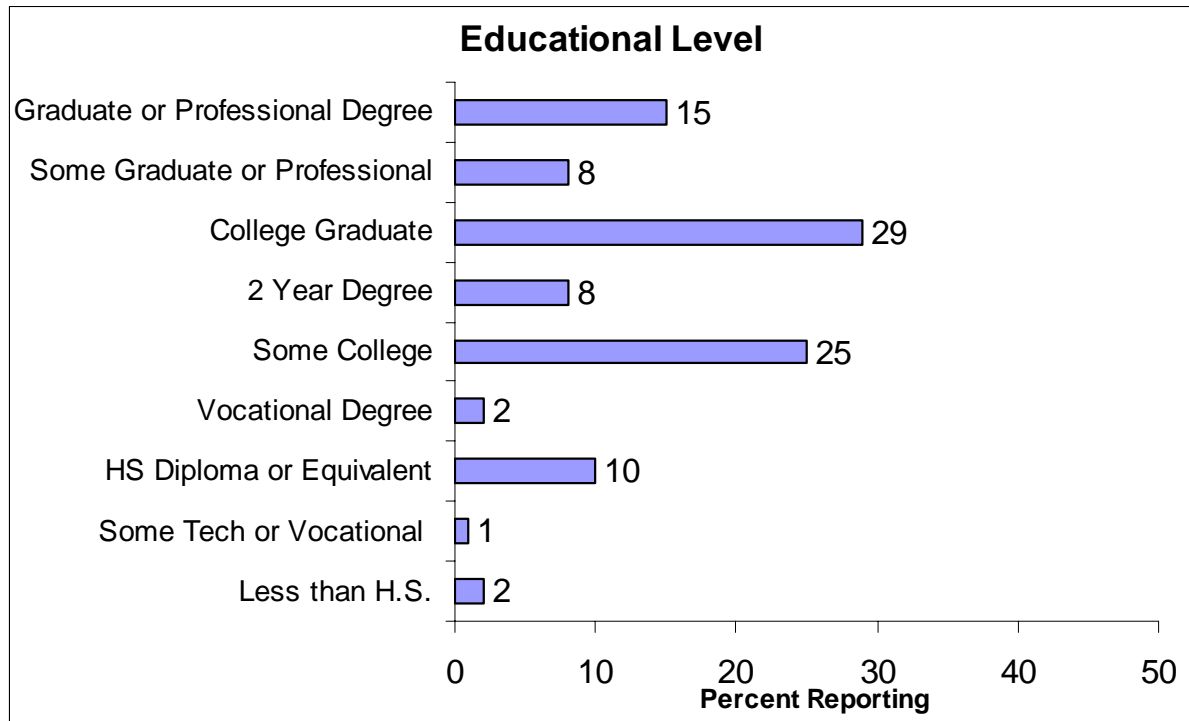
About youth workers and youth work...

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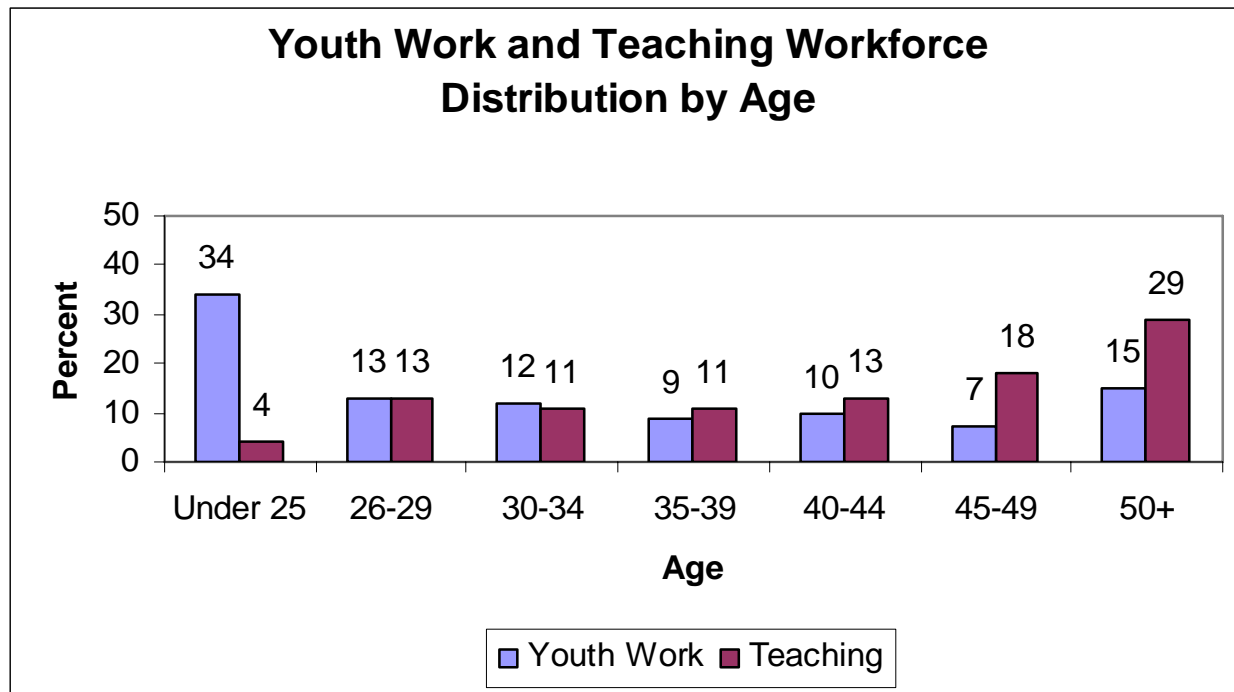
Education and Experience

- Especially given age, education levels are high.
- Most come from related fields: education, child care, social services and faith-based. Others come from retail, health care, technology, etc.

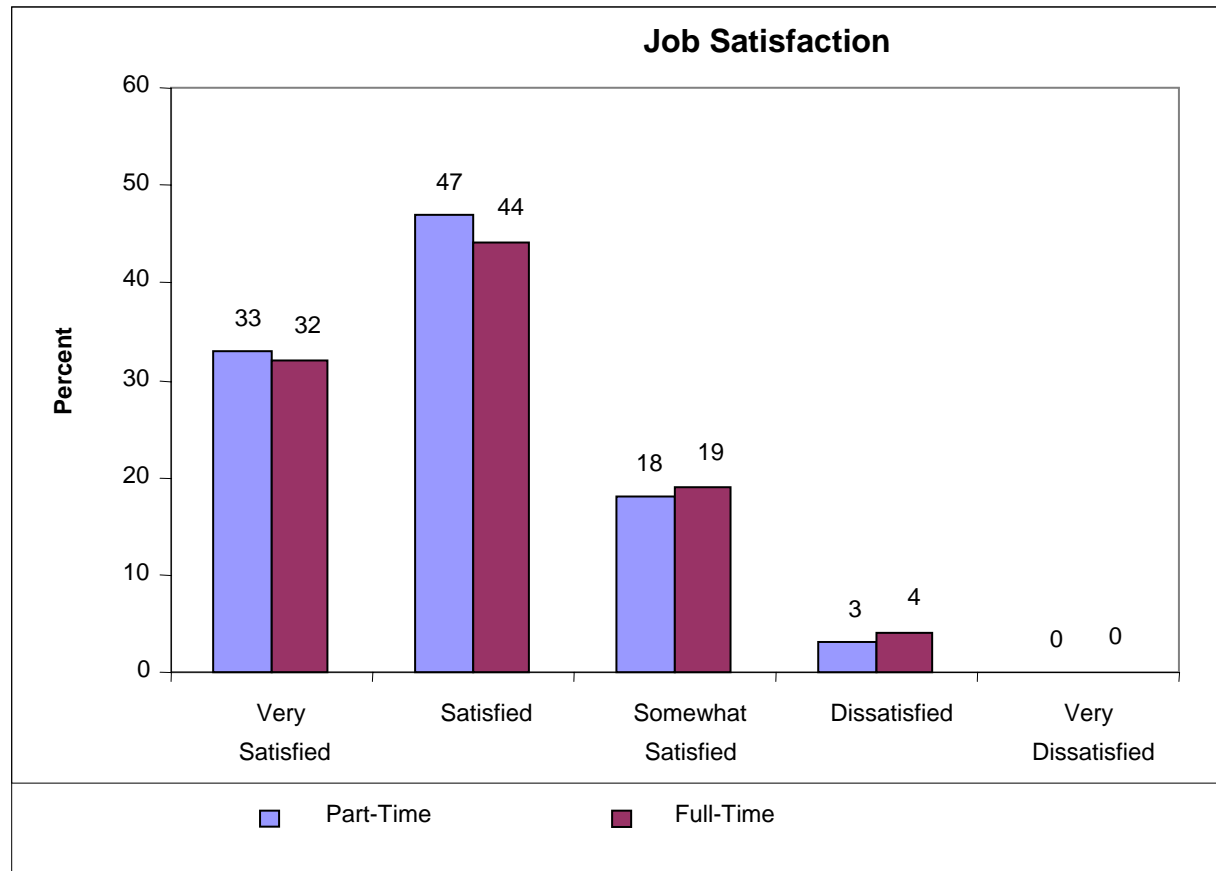


Age

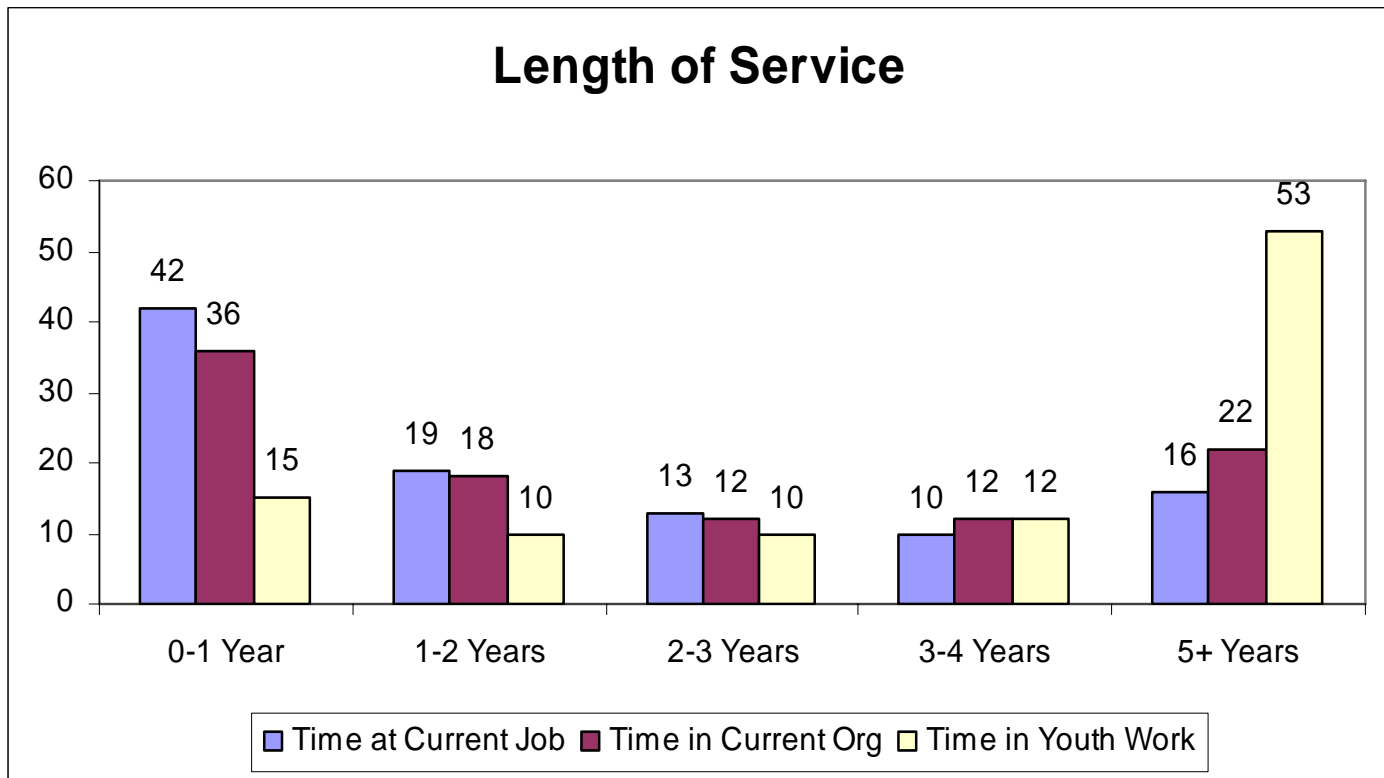
Half are under age 30; one-third under 25. One third are 40 or older. Many enter young. While some stay into their 30s, many do not. Another wave enters in their 40s and 50s.



Satisfaction

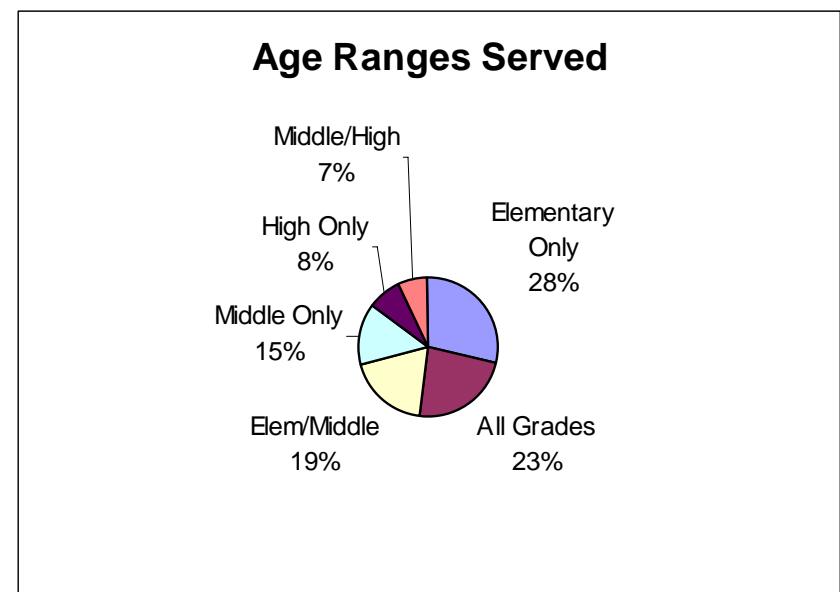
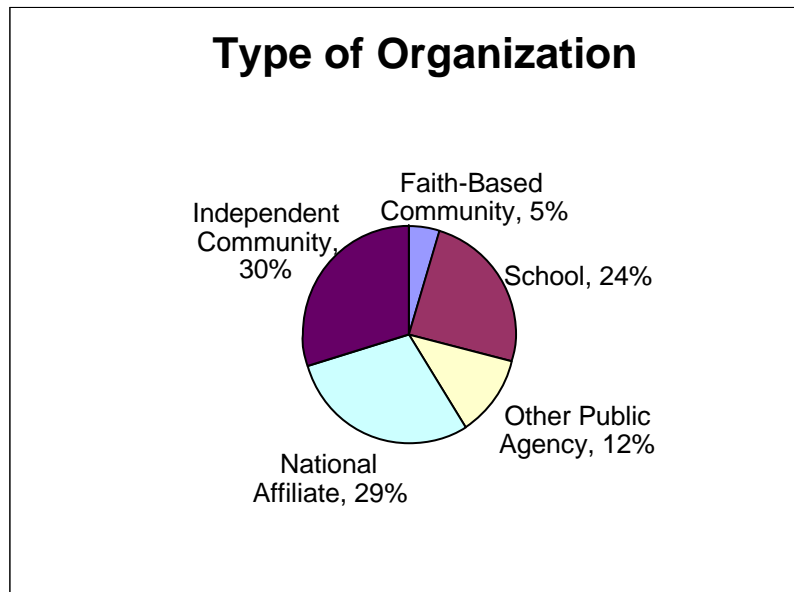


Mobility



Organizational Settings

- Youth work settings, activities, ages served and job responsibilities vary quite a bit.



- But longevity patterns, satisfaction levels and factors influencing decisions to leave are consistent.

Part-Time Employment

- 1 in 2 work part-time (1 in 3 of the NAA sample are part-time).
- Part-time workers report extremely high job satisfaction levels – equal to those of full-timers.
- Part-time workers anticipate staying in the field as long as full-time workers.
- 60 percent of part-timers were interested in full-time work, 40 percent were not.
- Part-timers earn less and are much less likely to have benefits.



Highlights from the Data

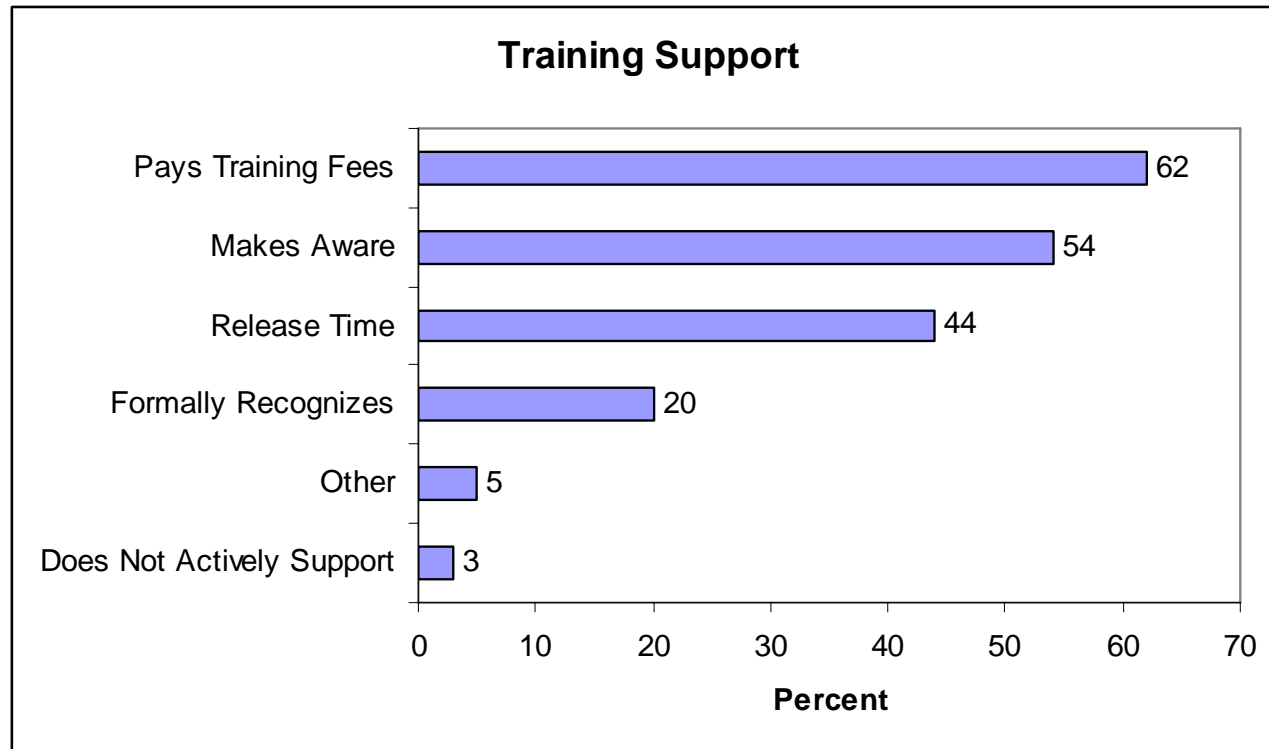
About how and to what extent youth workers are supported in their work...

Competencies

- Has your organization identified specific skills needed to work effectively with youth?
 - 68% YES
 - 20% DON'T KNOW
 - 12% NO

Access to Training

- While training is available, links between training and tangible rewards are rare.

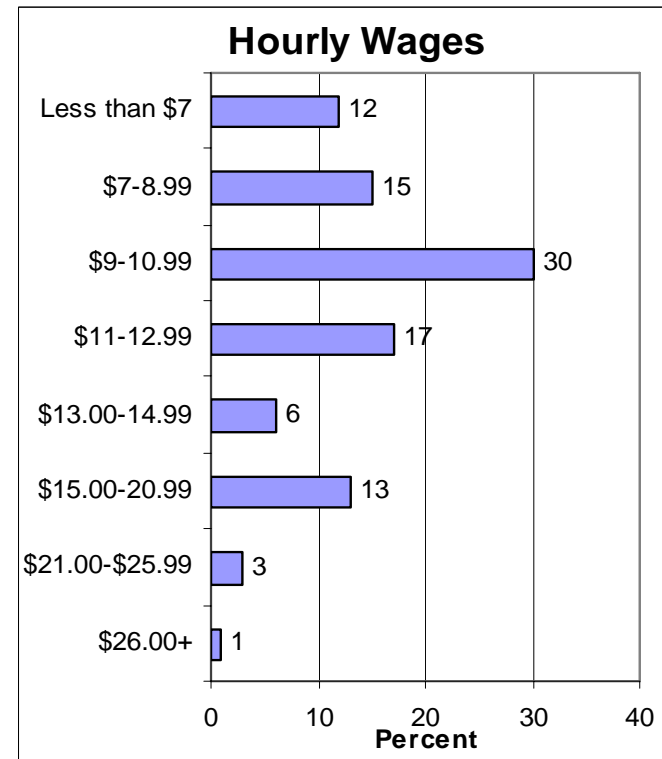
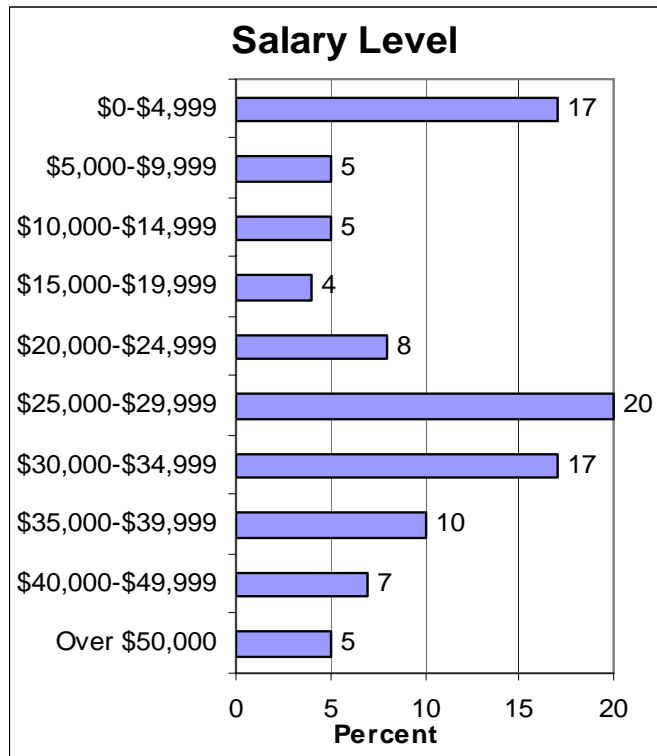


Recognition of Training

- Over half say there are **no** clear opportunities for promotion within their organization.
- Only one third say their organization formally recognizes or rewards higher education and years of experience.

Compensation

- The median salary range is \$25,000 - \$25,999. The median hourly wage is \$9.00 - \$10.99.



Compensation

- Less than half of the total sample has access to health insurance.
- 39 percent have no benefits at all (insurance, paid vacation, sick leave, retirement savings).
- Access to benefits varies significantly by employment status; **80 percent of full-time workers**, compared with only **5 percent of part-time workers**, have access to health insurance.
- 27% of full-time and 53% of part-time workers hold second jobs.



Highlights from the Data

About what youth workers tell us should be done...

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Address Compensation Concerns

- Pay is cited as the top factor influencing decisions to leave the field, regardless of demographics, part-time status, job satisfaction or setting.
- Livability of part-time wages is a major concern, as is the fact that increasing earnings typically means moving further away from direct service.
- Focus group participants talked about the need for financial support broadly (e.g. homebuyer information, loan forgiveness).

Strengthen Support Systems

- Youth workers are attracted to and remain in the field when they feel they can make a difference.
- The work is not easy – stress and burn-out are real (working with all ages simultaneously, juggling roles, concerns about job stability).
- Supervision and support matter. Less satisfied workers are much less likely to say they get the feedback they need.

Clearer Organizational Steps and Career Ladders

- For front-line staff, career advancement (especially salary increases) often requires job changes.
- Links between training and tangible rewards or promotions are weak. Ensure PD opportunities are accessible, relevant and **recognized** in concrete ways.

Legitimize Youth Work

- Despite the altruistic commitment of youth work professionals, they feel they are underpaid and underappreciated.
- Focus group participants characterized the work as invisible and called for major public awareness efforts.

Next Gen Action Agenda

- I. Influence Policy
 - I. Analyze federal policies
 - II. Influence implementation of Federal Youth Coordination Act.
 - III. Expand pathways/incentives for youth work
 - IV. Influence current expenditures
- II. Increase *Awareness outside of the Field*

Strengthen Organizational Capacity

- Provide guidelines and incentives to local organizations.
- Influence funder practice.
- Explore strategic alliances with the corporate community.

Increase Awareness in the Field

- Document promising state practices.
- Identify opportunities for innovative use of public funds.
- Explore linkages between youth worker associations.
- Educate and engage key decision-makers.

Improve External Communications/Positioning

- Engage the business community.
- Explore social marketing strategies.
- Create cross-system learning opportunities.

Group Discussions

- Do these data reflect your experiences in the field?
- What findings strike you as most surprising?
- What would be your priority for Next Gen's action agenda?
- What other questions would you like to ask in future research?

Contact Information

Ellen Gannett:

egannett@wellesley.org

Nicole Yohalem – nicole@forumfyi.org

To join Next Gen or access Coalition resources, go to:

www.nextgencoalition.org