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# Quality Care For Kids

## A newsletter for Scott County Child Care Providers

Written by Stacy Kraft, RN BSN

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### Addressing the Needs of Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators play an important role in supporting children's learning and development. "Children benefit most when teachers are well supported and healthy. However, early childhood educators face many challenges that negatively affect their mental health and well-being, including long hours, low pay, stressful situations, and lack of workplace supports." "Depression affects more than 16 million adults in the United States. Estimates of clinically depressive symptoms among early childhood educators range from 5% to more than 25% nationally. Research suggests that teachers who report more depressive symptoms are less sensitive and more withdrawn in their interactions with children."

A recent research study was released by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, University of Nebraska. The study examined possible risk factors associated with teachers' depression in a variety of early childhood settings (homes, centers, preschools/schools). 1,640 teachers were surveyed. The data found that 86% were found to have some depressive symptoms and 1 in 10 teachers reported clinically significant depressive symptoms.

Teachers with lower pay, no health insurance, multiple jobs, greater job stress, and those that have more adult-centered beliefs (tending to view child learning as more passive requiring adult control) reported more symptoms of depression. Overall this study showed that teachers need to be

supported within the work-related environment to help decrease work-related depressive symptoms.

Another study released by the Child Care and Early Education Research and Policy Analysis, showed similar results. This study explored psychological distress in the workplace and "formal" and "informal" work-related supports to early childhood educators. Formal work-related supports including coaching and mentoring, and informal work-related supports included teamwork and feeling respected in the workplace. Both of these work-related supports were shown to help decrease depressive symptoms, but more research is needed.

Efforts should be made to support teachers' mental health at multiple levels, including individual, environmental, and through policy. Systematic supports and higher compensation/benefits for early educators ultimately helps both teachers and the children they care for.

For more information or to read the studies in their entirety, visit: [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece\\_psychological\\_wellbeing\\_612018\\_to\\_opre\\_508\\_2.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece_psychological_wellbeing_612018_to_opre_508_2.pdf)

[https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/beci/docs/jadp-research-brief-4-8-19.pdf?la=en&utm\\_source=april-newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=risk-factors-for-depression-among-early-childhood-teachers&utm\\_campaign=buffett-general](https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/beci/docs/jadp-research-brief-4-8-19.pdf?la=en&utm_source=april-newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=risk-factors-for-depression-among-early-childhood-teachers&utm_campaign=buffett-general)

Call your Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC) if you have any questions about child health and safety, or any special training needs.



[www.earlychildhoodiowa.org](http://www.earlychildhoodiowa.org)

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#### Relaxation techniques to implement daily for early childhood educators:

- ◆ Deep breathing
- ◆ Taking walks
- ◆ Implementing yoga into daily activities with children
- ◆ Listening to music
- ◆ Coloring or other art therapy
- ◆ Answering reflective questions— questions can be found at:

[https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/itrg/article\\_self-care\\_for\\_teachers.pdf](https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/itrg/article_self-care_for_teachers.pdf)