

Understanding Increases in Head Start Teacher Turnover During COVID-19

KENDALL LAPARO & ANNA SHAW-AMOAH

About This Report

Teacher retention is a priority for Head Start because a consistent, experienced workforce supports high-quality care for Head Start children and families. Research links teacher retention with positive social and developmental outcomes for children in early childhood, including in Head Start programs (Markowitz, 2019; Philips, Austin, & Whitebook, 2016). Hence, the Office of Head Start has invested in recruitment, retention, and professionalization initiatives (Head Start Reauthorization Act, 2007) and set a research priority of understanding teacher turnover during COVID-19 (Steber, et al., 2021). Yet, the research on Head Start teacher turnover is limited and typically focuses solely on Head Start preschool.

This report describes the turnover rates of Head Start teachers for all program types over the past 12 years, from the 2010–11 program year to the 2021–22 program year. We observe trends in turnover before and during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand whether pandemic-related disruptions affected the turnover rate. This report also explores the reasons teachers departed over time and whether those reasons changed during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

We find a concerning and statistically significant uptick in Head Start teacher turnover in both 2020–21 and 2021–22, the most recent years for which teacher turnover data was available at the time of this study. We explore

potential explanations for the sharp increase in turnover during these years and recommend close monitoring of teacher turnover in future years to understand whether the upward trend continues.

This report contains all major findings from Research for Action's mixed-methods study of teacher turnover across all Head Start program types before and during COVID-19. This study was funded by the Administration of Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

Research Questions

The investigation was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does Head Start teacher turnover during COVID-19 compare to the previous decade of pre-pandemic teacher turnover (2010–2019)? Do turnover rates vary by program type?
2. What are the reported reasons for teacher departure? Do reported reasons for teacher departure change during COVID-19?

Major findings include:

1. Head Start teacher turnover increased significantly in both COVID-19 years for which data is available (2020-21 and 2021-22).
2. The increase in teacher turnover was particularly dramatic in 2021-22 year, exceeding for the first time more than one quarter of teachers (28.1%).
3. Teacher turnover varies by program type. Early Head Start programs saw higher teacher turnover than traditional Head Start programs. American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Early Head Start programs saw the highest rate of teacher turnover during COVID-19 of any program type at 37.1%, whereas AIAN Head Start programs (traditional, not Early) saw little change in teacher turnover during COVID-19. Migrant and Seasonal Early Head Start programs saw the lowest average teacher turnover, both pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19.

About Head Start

Head Start programs make up a substantial portion of the early childcare sector. In 2019, Head Start programs served 873,000 families, pregnant women, and children ages 0 to 5 (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), 2019). Head Start programs specifically target low-income children, children with disabilities, and children from marginalized groups, including children of migrant and seasonal workers and children in AIAN tribes (Administration of Children and Families, 2018; Head Start ECLKC, 2019).

There are six distinct Head Start program types:

Head Start: Traditional Head Start programs serve preschool-aged children (3-5 years old) with education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services.

Early Head Start (EHS): Targets infants, toddlers (birth to 3 years old), and pregnant women, offering comprehensive services to support early development, health, and family well-being.

American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start: Provides culturally relevant services to preschool-aged children and their families in Native American and Alaska Native communities.

AIAN Early Head Start: Also serves children and their families in Native American and Alaska Native communities, focusing on infant and toddlers.

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start: Focuses on preschool aged children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, ensuring access to early education and care while accounting for their families' mobile lifestyles.

Migrant and Seasonal Early Head Start: Also focuses on children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, targeting infants, toddlers, and their families for education, nutrition, and other support services.

Data and Methods

Data. This study leverages administrative data from the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) published by the Office of Head Start between 2010 and 2022. All Head Start programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS), and American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start programs, are required to complete the PIR annually (Head Start ECLKC, 2020). The reports provide detailed, longitudinal information about the program services, staff, families, and children of each program. Since the 2001–02 program year, Head Start operators are required to report teacher turnover. PIR data from 1988–2022 is publicly available to those who request access via the Office of Head Start’s Head Start Enterprise System (HSES), with the exception of the 2019–20 program year in which PIR data collection was canceled due to COVID-19. PIR data is limited in that it is reported by administrators about their program in the aggregate and therefore does not report data individually about teachers, staff, or children.

Sample. The PIR reports data at the “delegate” level. Head Start consists of 10 regional offices and two offices dedicated to serving migrant and seasonal populations and Native Americans. These entities allocate federal grants to either public or private agencies, known as grantees, who either directly manage centers or delegate some or all responsibilities to local agencies. These local agencies, in turn, can oversee Head Start at multiple locations. For example, a Head Start grantee might be a local education agency (LEA) that directly operates 12 Head Start classrooms across 10 different schools. In this case, the LEA is both the grantee and the delegate. In another arrangement, a Head Start grantee might be a government agency, such as a city office, that delegates all program operations to a local agency that runs Head Start programs at two centers. In this case, the local agency is the delegate. The study uses administrative data at the “delegate” or local agency level, offering the most comprehensive longitudinal insights into Head Start programs nationwide. The study team compiled a 12-year panel spanning from 2010 to 2022 (excluding the 2019–20 program year, when PIR data was not collected), encompassing the entirety of Head Start programs during this period. Using delegate-

level IDs provided by the Office of Head Start, renewed Head Start grants were linked over time, so that the same program that was issued a new Head Start grant was linked to its prior grant records (grants are renewed every five years). This generated a panel of 3,044 programs over 12 years. Hereafter in this report, the term “Head Start programs” refers to Head Start delegates, or local agencies, that directly operate Head Start programs at one or more locations.

The sample of Head Start programs was refined to those that served at least one child and employed at least one teacher in a given program year, reducing the sample to 2,704 programs. The sample was further restricted to Head Start programs that were open in both 2020–21 and 2021–22 program years, as well as *at least two* pre-COVID-19 program years. This refined the sample to programs that existed for at least two years before and after the pandemic, to ensure that the pre- and post-COVID-19 comparisons refer to a comparable set of programs. A total of 2,148 programs met the criteria for inclusion in the study, or a total of 20,217 program-year records.

Measures. As described here, RFA calculated two measures: (1) teacher turnover and (2) reason for teacher departure, using PIR data.

Teacher turnover. Teacher turnover refers to the number of teachers who left their position in a given year divided by the total number of teachers employed that year.¹ The PIR asks administrators to report teacher departures since the last year of PIR reporting. PIR reports are submitted at the end of the program year and are due in August. Therefore, depending on timing, teacher departures that occur over the summer may be reported in either the preceding or subsequent program year’s PIR report. The PIR changed the way it tracked teacher turnover in 2020–21. Before 2020–21 “teacher turnover” refers to lead teachers only. During and after 2020–21, “teacher” is also inclusive of assistant teachers and home visitors, or positions the PIR refers to as “education and development staff.” This is particularly important to note as the change in the definition of teacher turnover is concurrent with the advent of COVID-19, meaning that differences

¹ Note that this definition of turnover differs from some measures of educator attrition (such as Bastian & Fuller, 2023) which focus on the rate of teachers who return to their positions from one year to the next.

between the pre-COVID-19 years and the 2020–21 year could also be attributed to changes in measurement. However, this would not appear to explain the significant increase in turnover between 2020–21 and 2021–22 as both years used the same measurement to track turnover.

Reason for teacher departure (closed-ended).

Reason for teacher departure refers to the percentage of teachers that left their position due to a given reason (i.e., compensation) divided by the total number of teachers who left their position. Head Start administrators are required to report the reasons for teacher departures.

Analysis. To address the first research question, we conducted a descriptive analysis of teacher turnover rates from 2010 to 2022. We also used an interrupted

time series model on a smaller portion of the program data (programs open in all years 2014–2022) to determine whether COVID-19 had a significant impact on teacher turnover. We then disaggregated turnover rates by program type to understand where differences in turnover rates might exist by program and to determine whether different program types experienced COVID-19 in different ways.

To answer the second research question, we completed a descriptive analysis of the closed-ended reasons for teacher departure. Then, researchers coded all open-ended reasons for departure for three program years: 2018–19 (pre-COVID-19), 2020–21 (the second year of COVID-19), and 2021–22 (the third year of COVID-19). The coded responses were aggregated and themes within certain codes were further analyzed.

Trends in Head Start Teacher Turnover Before and During COVID-19

How does Head Start teacher turnover during COVID-19 compare to the previous decade of pre-pandemic teacher turnover (2010-2019)?

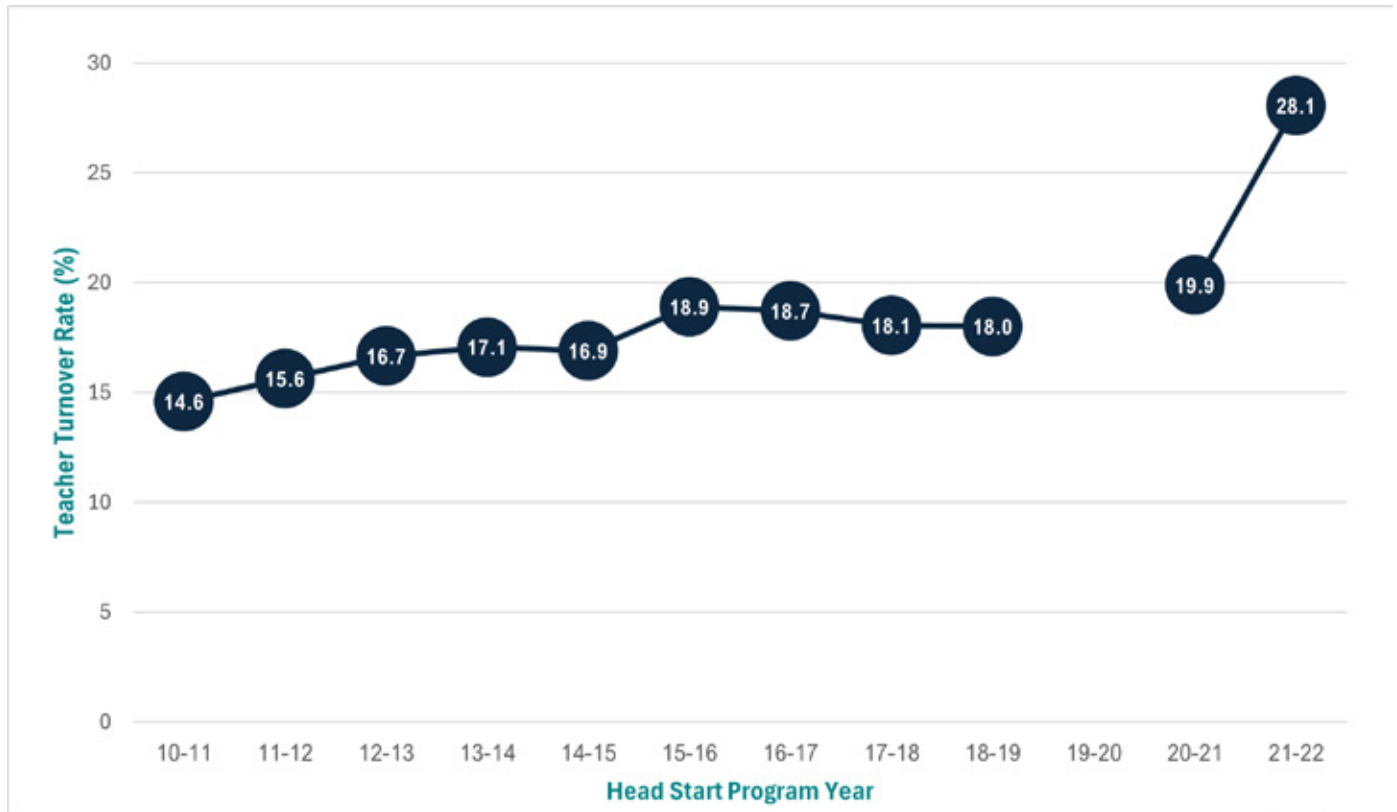
Head Start teacher turnover rates rose during both of the pandemic years. Head Start saw a particularly steep increase in turnover in 2021–22. During that year, teacher turnover rose more than eight percentage points, from 19.9% to 28.1%. For the first time in 12 years, the teacher turnover rate exceeded a quarter of teachers. As shown in Figure 1, in the years before the pandemic, the turnover rate held relatively steady for Head Start teachers but appears to have risen slowly between 2010–11 and 2018–19.

To determine whether the apparent uptick in teacher turnover in the COVID-19 years was statistically different from the prior years, we fitted an interrupted time series (ITS) model. ITS models are useful for determining the impact of an event by calculating whether it is significantly different from the pre-event trend (Bloom, 2003). Another benefit of the ITS model is that it can be used to control for program characteristics. The model applies program fixed effects, accounting for time-invariant program characteristics. The model further controls for variables associated with teacher turnover in the literature: teacher race, child-teacher ratio, the percentage of students with disabilities, and the number of Head Start staff who are current or former Head Start

parents. To meet the assumptions of an ITS model, the sample for this analysis was limited to programs open *all* program years from 2014–2022 (in other words, five years before COVID-19 and both available COVID-19 years). This restricted the ITS sample to 1,747 programs or 81.3% of the full analytic sample.

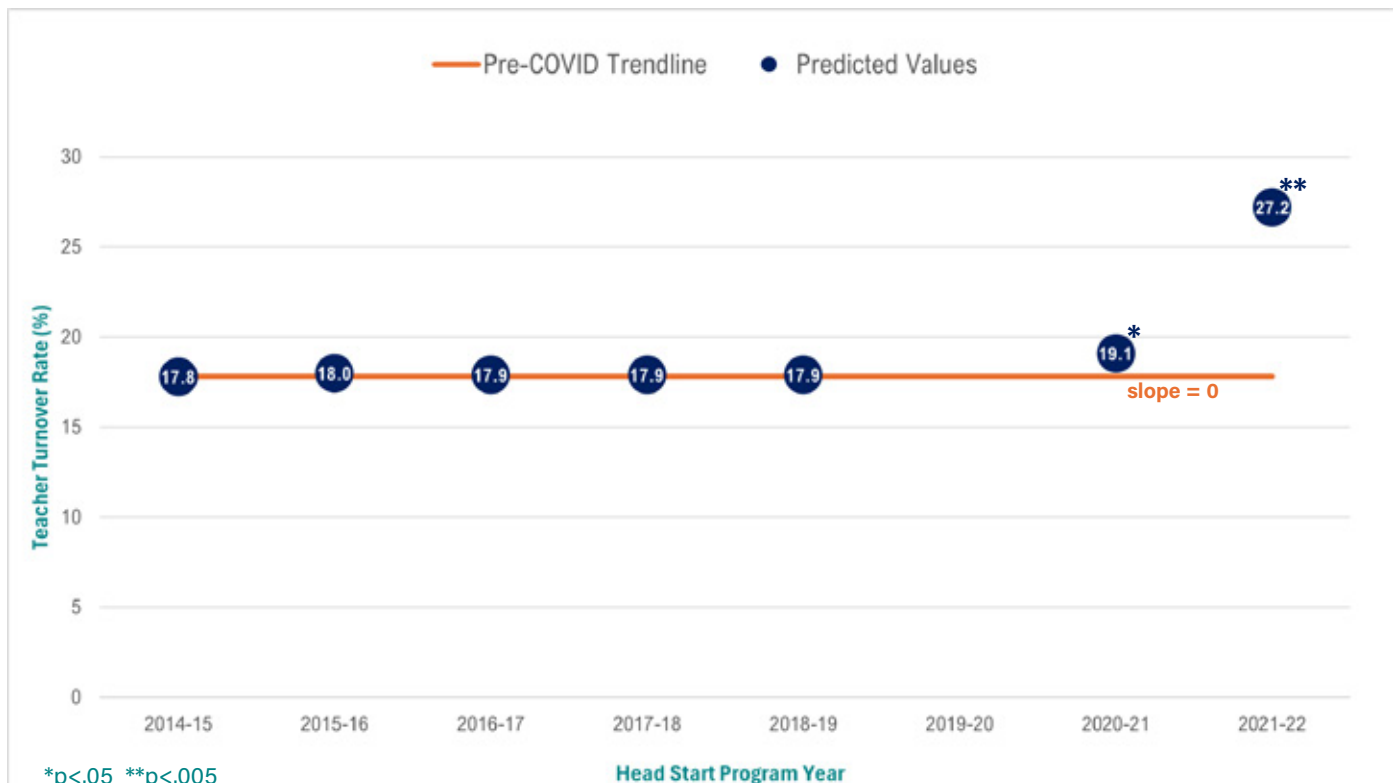
The results of the ITS model (Figure 2) largely confirm the conclusions drawn from the descriptive summary of teacher turnover above. After controlling for program characteristics, the pre-COVID-19 trend in teacher turnover was entirely flat, neither increasing nor decreasing between 2014–15 and 2018–19. However, both post-COVID-19 program years deviated significantly from this trend. In the 2020–21 program year, the increase in teacher turnover was less pronounced but still significant ($p < .05$), at an estimated 1.3 percentage points higher than would be expected based on pre-COVID-19 trends, or a predicted value of 19.1% turnover. In the 2021–22 program year, the increase in teacher turnover is dramatic, at a predicted 27.2% (controlling for program characteristics) or 9.4 percentage points higher than would be expected based on pre-COVID-19 trends ($p < .005$).

Figure 1. Head Start Teacher Turnover, All Programs, 2010-11 to 2021-22



N=2,148 programs

Figure 2. Predicted Values of Head Start Teacher Turnover based on Interrupted Time Series Model with Program Fixed Effects, Controlling for Time Variant Program Characteristics, 2014-15 to 2021-22



*p<.05 **p<.005
N=1,747 programs

Trends in Head Start Teacher Turnover by Program Type

Do teacher turnover rates vary by program type?

Next, we turn to whether teacher turnover looks different depending on the type of Head Start program. The type of program may alter the Head Start teacher experience, and therefore, we might expect teacher turnover rates to differ based on program type. As described earlier, there are six Head Start program types:

1. Head Start,
2. Early Head Start,

3. American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start,
4. AIAN Early Head Start,
5. Migrant and Seasonal (MS) Head Start, and
6. MS Early Head Start.

Table 1 shows the number of programs by program type in the analytic sample. The Migrant and Seasonal Early Head Start program type only began operating in the 2015–16 program year.

Table 1. Number of Head Start (HS) Programs by Program Type, 2010-11 to 2021-22

Year	Traditional HS	Early HS	AIAN HS	AIAN Early HS	MS HS	MS Early HS	Total
2010-11	984	518	50	15	18	0	1,585
2011-12	990	519	51	15	18	0	1,593
2012-13	998	521	51	16	18	0	1,604
2013-14	1,024	522	73	23	20	0	1,662
2014-15	1,038	540	123	37	21	0	1,759
2015-16	1,062	622	121	43	21	3	1,872
2016-17	1,075	642	123	46	22	3	1,911
2017-18	1,084	667	123	48	22	3	1,947
2018-19	1,106	683	124	50	22	3	1,988
2019-20	Data not available due to COVID-19						
2020-21	1,180	749	133	59	24	3	2,148
2021-22	1,180	749	133	59	24	3	2,148
Total	13,685	7,635	1,204	438	266	18	23,246

In the following sections, we describe teacher turnover by program type. We pair programs that serve preschool-age children (e.g., traditional Head Start)

with their Early Head Start counterparts to understand differences based on the age of children served.

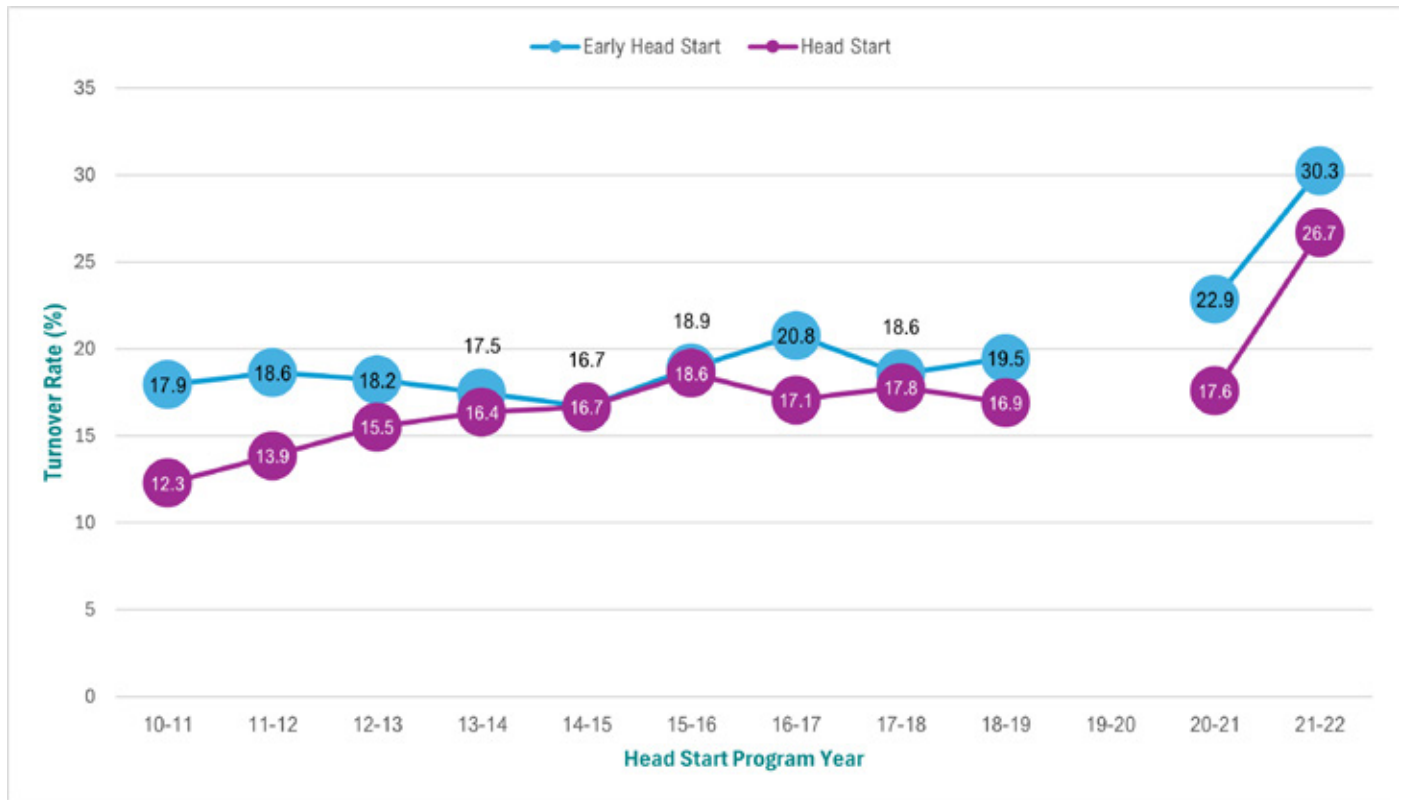
Head Start and Early Head Start Program Types

The traditional Head Start and Early Head Start program are the largest two Head Start programs. Traditional Head Start serves economically disadvantaged children ages 3–5 years old, while Early Head Start serves economically disadvantaged infants and toddlers younger than three years old.

In all years, Early Head Start programs saw higher teacher turnover than Head Start programs with the exception of 2014–15, when the turnover rate was

the same for both programs. This may be due to the additional demands of caring for infants and toddlers compared to preschool-aged children or due to differences in the characteristics of teachers serving different age populations. Both programs saw a slight increase in teacher turnover in 2020-21 and a sharp increase in 2021-22. More than a quarter (26.7%) of Head Start teachers left during the 2021-22 program year, and nearly a third (30.3%) of Early Head Start teachers left in this year.

Figure 3. Teacher Turnover for Traditional Head Start and Early Head Start, 2010-11 to 2021-22



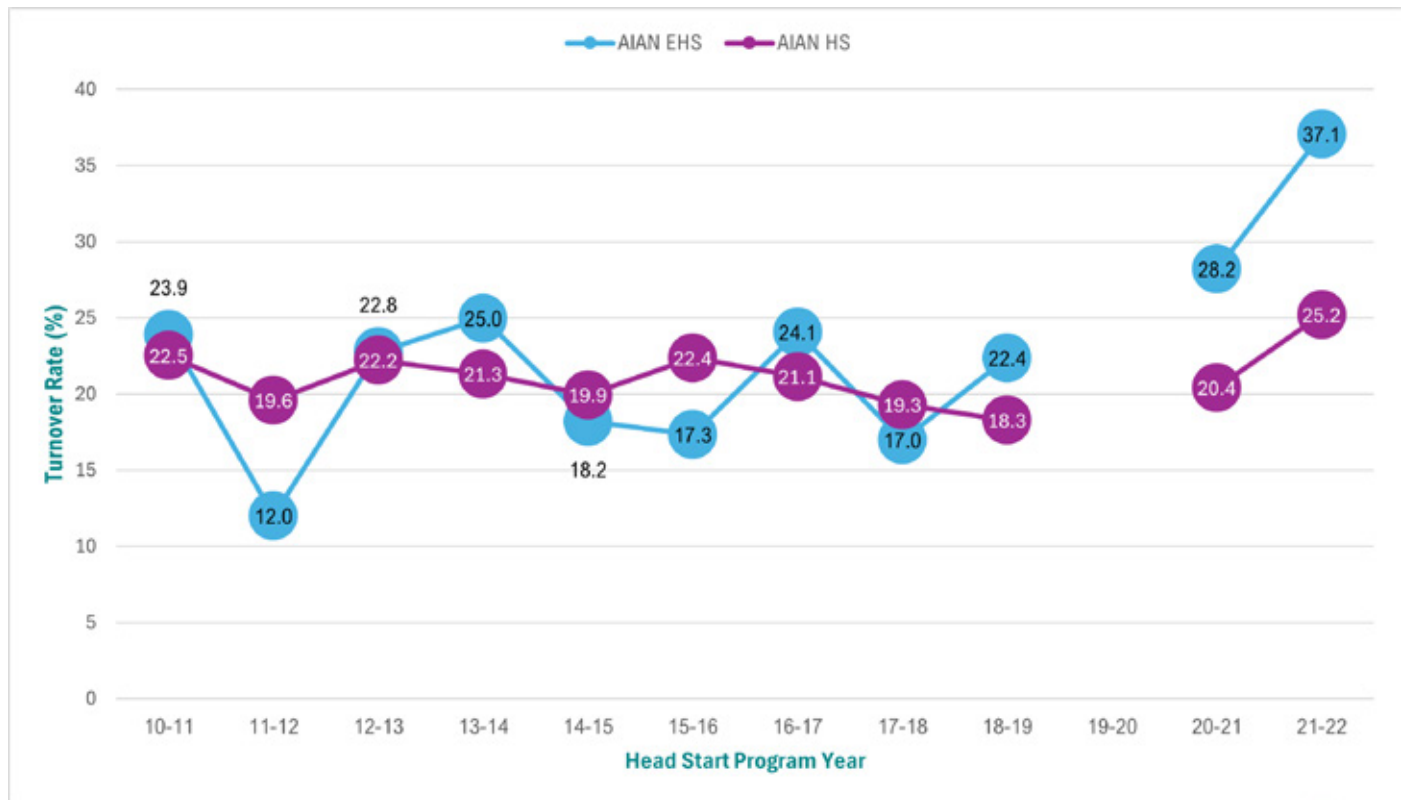
AIAN Head Start and Early Head Start Program Types

The AIAN Head Start and Early Head Start programs are operated by 150 federally recognized AIAN tribes and largely serve AIAN children and their families. Like the traditional programs, AIAN Head Start serves ages 3-5, and AIAN Early Head Start serves children younger than three years old.

Compared to traditional Head Start and Early Head Start programs, the AIAN Head Start programs experienced on average slightly elevated rates of pre-COVID-19 teacher turnover. However, AIAN Head Start programs appear to have weathered COVID-19 slightly better than traditional Head Start programs. The rates

of teacher turnover during 2020-21 (20.4%) and 2021-22 (25.2%) did not appear to deviate drastically from pre-COVID-19 trends in the way that other program types experienced. The same cannot be said of AIAN Early Head Start programs, which saw the highest rate of teacher turnover of any program type at 37.1%, or more than a third of AIAN Early Head Start teachers in a single year. Understanding if there were different approaches to staff retention employed by AIAN Head Start compared to AIAN Early Head Start in the 2021-22 program year could teach us important lessons about Head Start teacher retention.

Figure 4. Teacher Turnover for AIAN Head Start (HS) and AIAN Early Head Start (EHS), 2010-11 to 2021-22



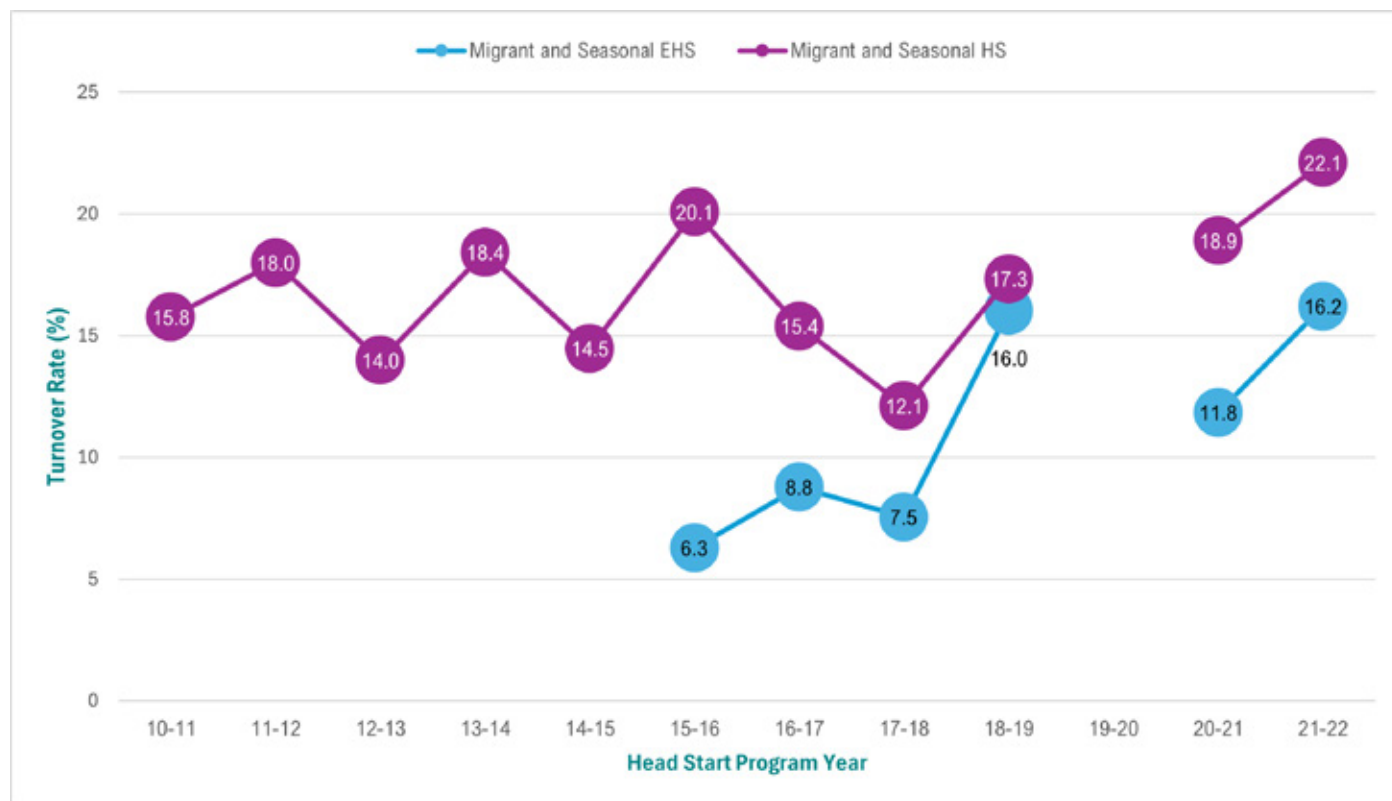
Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Early Head Start Program Types

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Early Head Start programs serve families who are migrant and seasonal workers and their children. Like other Head Start programs, the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program serves ages 3-5, and the Early Head Start program serves children younger than three. Migrant and Seasonal Early Head Start programs saw the lowest average teacher turnover, both pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19. This may be because this

program is very small (only three programs per year since its inception²). It may be easier to administer to the concerns of teachers within the context of a smaller, more targeted program type. The rates of teacher turnover for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start were consistently higher than its Early Head Start counterpart, but the program only experienced a slight elevation in teacher turnover during the pandemic years (18.9% in 2020–21 and 22.1% in 2021–22).

² Despite the small number of Migrant and Seasonal Early Head Start programs, the programs collectively employ more than 80 teachers per year and therefore demonstrated sufficient sample size to be included in the analyses.

Figure 5. Teacher Turnover for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS), 2010-11 to 2021-22



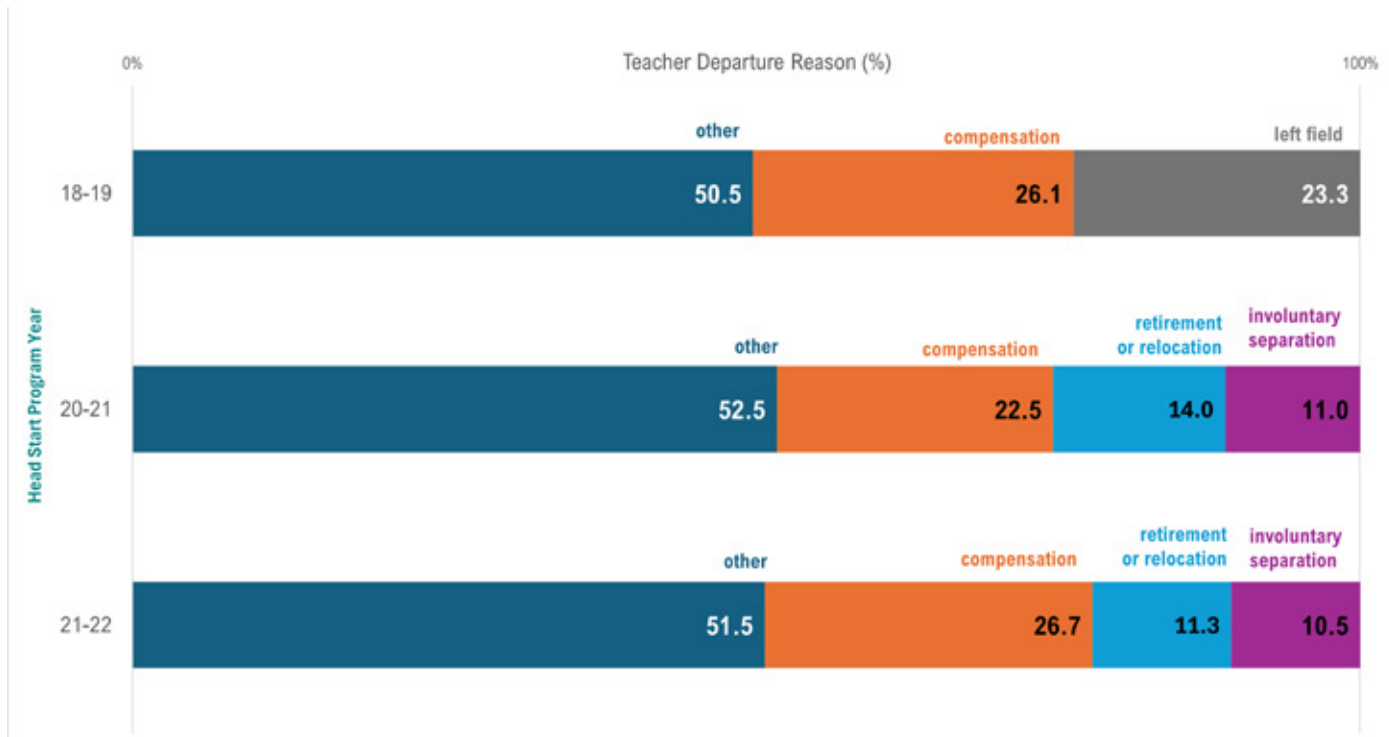
Trends in Reasons for Teacher Departure

What are the reported reasons for teacher departure? Do reported reasons for teacher departure change during COVID-19?

The study team investigated why Head Start teachers departed their positions as reported by their program administrators. We compared one pre-COVID-19 year (2018–19) to both pandemic program years for which data were available (2020–21 and 2021–22). In the Program Information Report (PIR), the reasons for teacher departure are reported in a closed-ended format, with the option to write an open-ended reason for departure if the closed-ended categories do not apply. These data are the most comprehensive window into nationwide reasons for Head Start teacher departure. However, they should be interpreted with caution because 1) they are secondhand information, reported by administrators and not the teachers themselves, and 2) the open-ended responses do not capture the number of teachers who left for a given reason, only that one or more teacher(s) left for that reason in the program.

The closed-ended reasons for teacher departure offer limited information. In all three years examined, the most common reason that Head Start teachers left their jobs was “Other.” The “Other” category made up more than half the reasons for departure in all three years. The second most common reason for departure in all three years was “Compensation.” Between 2018–19 and 2020–21, the remaining closed-ended categories on the PIR form changed. In 2018–19, the third most common reason for teacher departure was “Left Field” (23.3%), meaning the teacher left the ECE field. In both 2020–21 and 2021–22, “Left Field” was no longer an option. In these years, the third most common reason for exit was “Retirement or Relocation,” and the fourth most common reason for exit was “Involuntary Separation,” meaning firing or layoff.

Figure 6. Reasons for Teacher Departure, Closed-Ended Categories (%), 2019-2022



Unpacking “Other” Reasons for Teacher Turnover

To better understand the reasons for teacher departure, RFA researchers unpacked the “Other” category by systematically coding the open-ended responses. The Appendix includes the full codebook and coder interrater reliability results. All Head Start administrators who completed the PIR form were prompted to write an open-ended response if they indicated that at least one teacher left for a reason in the “Other” category. If more than one teacher was reported in the “Other” category, administrators would often list multiple reasons within the open-ended response box. Each reason for departure was coded separately. This approach helps understand the “Other” category by adding more detailed information about the scope of reasons for teacher departure. However, it does not offer an accurate sense of the number of teachers who left for each reason because administrators did not reliably indicate how many teachers left for each reason in the open-ended response box. For example, an administrator who indicated that five teachers left for “Other” reason might write in two reasons for leaving without specifying how many of the five teachers left for each reason. Therefore, the list of open-ended reasons for leaving should be understood as a list of the reasons for teacher exit that Head Start *programs* encounter the most frequently, but the list cannot offer an accurate

picture of the *number of teachers* who leave for each reason.

Most of the differences in the open-ended reasons for Head Start teachers leaving can be explained by changes in the form. For example, in 2018–19, some of the most commonly reported reasons for teachers leaving were involuntary separation (21%), relocation (13%), and retirement (9%). Because these three categories were added to the PIR as closed-ended responses, in subsequent years, they no longer appear in the open-ended data. Similarly, the spike in responses related to “Job change” in 2020–21 and 2021–22 is likely due to the removal of “Left field” from the PIR form in these years, when it had been included in 2018–19.

Of the remaining open-ended reasons for leaving, many remained relatively consistent across all three years. Leaving due to family or childcare responsibilities was a prominent reason for exiting teachers and made up 12–13% of responses in all three years. (This excludes COVID-19-related childcare concerns, which were coded in the “COVID-19” category). Responses related to health stayed steady at 6% for all three years. Responses reporting a poor job fit made up 3–4% of responses all three years, as did responses related to teachers leaving to pursue additional education. Sadly,

teachers exiting Head Start due to their own death came up in the open-ended responses in all three years and was mentioned relatively rarely at 1-2% of responses each year.

One of the only major changes in reported reasons for teacher departure that is not explained by changes in the PIR form is the number of open-ended responses that cite COVID-19 as a reason for exit. In 2020–21, the second year that COVID-19 affected Head Start programs, 11% of open-ended reasons for departure referred to COVID-19. COVID-19 was the fourth most

common open-ended code in that year. In 2021–22, this increased slightly to 13% of open-ended responses, and it was the third most commonly cited open-ended code.

The other notable change over time is a spike in the “Resignation – General” category in both 2020–21 and 2021–22. This category is reserved for generic responses such as “resigned” or “unknown.” Because this category is by definition not specific, it is difficult to determine why this category represented a larger share of responses than in the pre-pandemic year.

Table 2. Reasons for Teacher Departure, Coded Open-Ended “Other” Responses (%), 2019–2022

Reason for Departure	18-19	20-21	21-22
Involuntary Separation*	21	0	0
Resignation - General	20	27	27
Relocation*	13	0	0
Family/Childcare	12	13	12
Job Change**	11	27	27
Retirement*	9	0	0
Health	6	6	6
Poor Fit	4	3	3
Education	3	4	4
Death	1	2	2
COVID-19	0	11	13
Total***	100%	93%	94%

*Added as a close-ended category in 20-21 and 21-22

**Removed as a closed-ended category in 18-19

***Within years, responses do not sum to 100% because open-ended responses that refer to a closed-ended category (e.g., “Compensation”) are excluded from the table. In 2018-19, this applied to 1% of responses, and in both 2020–21 and 2021–22, this applied to 7% of responses.

COVID-19-Related Reasons for Teacher Departure

In response to the apparent importance of COVID-19-related responses above, the research team conducted a comparative, thematic analysis of all open-ended responses in 2020-21 and 2021-22 that referred to COVID-19. This was conducted by compiling all COVID-19-related responses in each year, reading them separately, compiling the major themes that arose within the responses, and comparing the themes across the two years. The most common themes that emerged in 2020-21 were 1) fear of the pandemic and 2) childcare concerns related to the pandemic. For example, administrators reported that teachers left because they were “worried about COVID” or that “due to COVID they chose to stay home with their kids.” To put these concerns in context, the COVID-19 vaccine became available in the middle of this program year, in December of 2020, but was only widely available in the spring of 2021 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). Further, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) only approved the COVID-19 vaccine for all children younger than 12 years old well after this program year, in June of 2022 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024; CDC, 2022).

In 2021-22, the most common reason that administrators reported teachers leaving due to COVID-19 referred to Head Start’s program-wide vaccine mandate.

Conclusion

A sharp spike in teacher turnover is a concern in any part of the education sector, but particularly for Head Start programs, which serve low-income children and families who can benefit greatly from high-quality education and care. A spike in Head Start teacher turnover presents several challenges. Firstly, it disrupts the continuity of care and relationships crucial for the development of young children. High turnover can also lead to instability within the program, impacting the quality of education and support provided to children and families. Additionally, frequent turnover may incur significant costs for recruitment, hiring, and training, straining already limited resources within the program.

This study uncovers a statistically significant increase in teacher turnover during COVID-19. This increase bucks

The vaccine mandate was cited in 79%, or 283 out of 358, of the open-ended responses that included COVID-19 as a reason for exit in this year. For example, administrators wrote in reasons for teacher departure like, “5 staff left due to the vaccine mandate” and “refused COVID-19 vaccine requirement.” The Office of Head Start instituted a vaccine mandate in November 2021 that took effect in January of 2022 (Federal Register, 2021). This vaccine mandate is no longer in effect as of January 2023 (Federal Register, 2023). In the announcement of the vaccine mandate, the Office of Head Start acknowledged staff departures as a known and anticipated risk of the vaccine mandate, so the fact that it surfaced in the reasons for teacher exit is not altogether a surprise (Federal Register, 2021). However, it is a confirmation that, as expected, some Head Start teachers did cite the vaccine mandate as their reason for departure. While it is possible that the vaccine mandate contributed to the spike in teacher turnover observed in the 2021–22 program year, this conclusion cannot be drawn from the present analysis. The open-ended responses are reported at the program level and do not reliably indicate the number of teachers that correspond to each listed reason for departure. Because the vaccine mandate is no longer in effect, it will not be a reason for teacher departure in future years.

the pre-COVID-19 trend of a relatively consistent Head Start teacher workforce. We find that compensation is the most cited reason for teacher exit, both before and during COVID-19. We also present evidence that some programs cited COVID-19 as a reason for teacher exit. As COVID-19 persists, it will be important to continue to monitor Head Start teacher turnover to determine whether the upward trend in Head Start teacher turnover continues, or if it was the short-term consequence of a temporary crisis. In light of the unprecedented Head Start teacher turnover rates, it is essential that researchers and policymakers redouble the effort to identify and institute policies that boost Head Start teacher retention, with a particular focus on policies that improve compensation for Head Start teachers.

References

- Administration of Children & Families. (2018). Head Start program facts: Fiscal year 2018. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/hs-program-fact-sheet-2018.pdf>
- Bastian, K. C., & Fuller, S. C. (2023). Educator attrition and hiring in North Carolina Public Schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Education Policy Initiative at Carolina. <https://epic.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1268/2023/02/Educator-Attrition-and-Hiring-in-NC.pdf>
- Bloom, H. S. (2003). Using "short" interrupted time-series analysis to measure the impacts of whole-school reforms: With applications to a study of accelerated schools. *Evaluation Review*, 27(1), 3–49.
- Center for Disease Control (CDC). (2022, June 18). CDC Recommends COVID-19 Vaccines for Young Children. Media Statement. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/s0618-children-vaccine.html>
- Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) Archive. (2020). "Program Information Report (PIR). Office of Head Start. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/data-ongoing-monitoring/article/program-information-report-pir>
- Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). (2019). Head Start Program Facts: Fiscal Year 2019. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/head-start-program-facts-fiscal-year-2019>
- Head Start Reauthorization Act. (2007). Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. Public Law 110–134, 110th Congress.
- Federal Register. (2021) Vaccine and Mask Requirements To Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 in Head Start Programs. Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/11/30/2021-25869/vaccine-and-mask-requirements-to-mitigate-the-spread-of-covid-19-in-head-start-programs#h-9>
- Federal Register. (2023). Removal of the Vaccine Requirements for Head Start Programs. Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/06/26/2023-13423/removal-of-the-vaccine-requirements-for-head-start-programs>
- Markowitz, A. J. (2019). Within-year teacher turnover in Head Start and children's school readiness. Working Paper. EdPolicyWorks. University of Virginia. Retrieved from Charlottesville, VA. <https://education.virginia.edu/documents/epwworkingpaper-70teacherturnoverinheadstart2019-05pdf>
- Phillips, D., Austin, L. J. E., & Whitebook, M. (2016). The Early Care and Education Workforce. *The Future of Children*, 26(2): 139–58.
- Steber, K., Richards, D., Ulmen, K., Boddicker-Young, P., & Tout, K. (2021). COVID-19 Research, Evaluation, and Data Agenda for Child Care and Early Education. Special Topics Paper. OPRE Report 2021-162. Administration for Children & Families.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). COVID-19 Vaccines. Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. Accessed January, 2024. <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/index.html#:~:text=During%20the%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic,began%20on%20December%2014%2C%202020>
- Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study for Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

Appendix

Final Codebook for Open-Ended Teacher Reasons for Departure (22 codes, 11 code categories)

Category	Code	Description
COVID-19	COVID-19	This is a general code for COVID-19 responses that do not fit into any of the other COVID-19 categories. Responses might include “pandemic” and “coronavirus.”
	COVID-19-Fear	This refers to fears of COVID-19 infection or fears about the pandemic in general.
	COVID-19-Vaccine	This refers to any mention of the vaccine. Responses might include refusal to get vaccinated or fear of the vaccine.
	COVID-19-Layoff	This refers to layoffs related to COVID-19.
Medical or Death (non-COVID-19)	Medical	This refers to a medical issue/concern directly related to the parting staff member.
	Death-Self	This refers to the death of the parting staff member.
	Death-Family	This refers to a death in the family of the parting staff member.
Involuntary Separation	Fired	This refers to instances where a staff member was terminated by their employer (but not a layoff/position elimination), including for performance or not meeting requirements.
	Layoff	This refers to instances where a staff member was laid off, or their position was terminated (including end of contract).
Retirement or Relocation	Retired	This refers to instances where a staff member left the workforce to enter retirement.
	Relocation	This refers to turnover due to relocation of a staff member.
Resignation	Resignation	This is a general code for when a staff member voluntarily left their position, and the reason is not listed.
Job Change	Job Change	This is a general code related to job change that does not fit into external or internal.
	Job Change-Internal	This refers to job changes within education.
	Job Change-External	This refers to job changes outside of education. Responses might include a change in job field.
Family	Family	This is a general code for family-related reasons that do not fit into any of the other family categories. Responses might include non-child medical caretaking responsibilities or marriage or elderly care or just generic “family.”
	Family-Birth	This refers to instances where a staff member left due to pregnancy or newborn care.
	Family-Childcare	This refers to instances where a staff member left to take care of their children.
	Relocation	This refers to turnover due to relocation of a staff member.

Compensation	Compensation	This refers to turnover due to compensation.
Job Fit	Job Fit	This refers to expressions of job dissatisfaction or difficulties with the job, including conflict.
Education	Education	This refers to instances where the staff member left to pursue more education.
Other	Other	This is a code for any responses that do not fit into any of the other categories.

Open-Ended Coding and Interrater Reliability Practice Runs and Final Run (IRR % and Cohen's kappa)

Run	IRR %	Cohen's kappa	Responses coded each	# Total codes
Practice Run #1	88.2	.86	100	22
Practice Run #2	96.6	.96	100	22
Final IRR Test	98.1	.98	100	22

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Dr. Clare Waterman, David Lapp, and Kim Glassman for providing feedback and advisement on this project. Additional data analysis support was provided by Justis Freeman, Lena Pham, Jon Gray, and Ingrid Allison Teti.

This publication is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award (Grant #: 90YR0148) totaling \$100,000 with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

For more information, please visit the ACF website, [Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#). We would like to thank ACF and all our funders, who make it possible for Research for Action to advance our mission.



3675 Market Street
Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19104

267-295-7760
info@researchforaction.org
www.researchforaction.org