*B*uilding *A*nd *S*ustaining the *E*arly Care and Education Workforce

Quality early care and education can have lasting positive effects on young children, especially those growing up in low-income families. However, there are ongoing challenges in recruiting, supporting, and retaining a qualified, healthy, and stable early care and education (ECE) workforce that reflects the linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the families and children it serves. Turnover rates, for example, are relatively high in the ECE field, which have negative consequences not only for children, but for teachers and providers. There are several aspects of this work that can inhibit recruitment and retention, but there is limited evidence on what strategies might improve them and what strategies work best for different types of workers and in different settings.

The *Building and Sustaining the Early Care and Education Workforce* (*BASE)* project aims to increase understanding of what drives workforce turnover in the early care and education (ECE) field and to inform efforts to improve the recruitment, development, and retention of the ECE workforce. It will do so by building knowledge in several areas, including patterns of employment dynamics—that is, entry into, movement within, and exit out of the ECE field—and drivers of turnover, retention, and advancement. The project will comprehensively consider the various factors and processes – at policy, community, provider, and individual levels – that may affect employment dynamics across center-based and home-based child care settings, including licensed, regulated, or registered family child care providers. The project will also build evidence on current initiatives underway at state, local, and provider levels across the U.S. that aim to recruit, support, and retain a qualified ECE workforce.

The BASE project is guided by several research questions, including:

- What conditions and practices drive ECE workforce turnover, and how does this differ by ages of the children served, worker characteristics and roles, program context (i.e., Head Start, child care subsidies and other funding sources and sponsors), community and state context?
- What program- and/or system-level policies, activities and characteristics support the recruitment and retention of the workforce, both within Head Start and subsidized child care programs and within the ECE field?
- What strategies or combination of strategies are currently being implemented to support staff development and retention?
- What is the evidence on the effectiveness of various strategies for supporting and retaining a qualified workforce (e.g., pay and benefit increases, professional supports, organizational capacity building), and do their effects vary by worker characteristics and roles, program context, and community and state context?
- What factors (e.g., program administration, funding sources, policy and community context) influence the successful implementation of promising strategies to support ECE workforce retention?

Launched in late 2020, the project has several key upfront activities, including a comprehensive review of existing research and a scan of current strategies aimed at building and sustaining a qualified ECE workforce. These scans will inform the development of conceptual frameworks, models illustrating the key factors driving turnover and the pathways through which they operate and highlighting connections between potential strategies and key outcomes. The early project activities will identify gaps in the field and promising strategies suitable for evaluation. A review of existing data sources, selected data analyses, and the design of study options will aim to address unanswered questions and inform future research. Final project activities may include case

studies and demonstrations to evaluate promising strategies supporting the ECE workforce in Head Start and subsidized child care settings.