

Shared Sub Pools: Current Examples and Lessons Learned November 2018

Over the last few years, OppEx has interviewed several organizations about their experiences with shared hiring and sub pools. Following are summaries of 5 organizations with relevant experience, including challenges and lessons learned.

Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative

<https://nebraskaeearly.org/>

Summary: The Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) was established in 2014 as a strategic initiative of the [Buffett Early Childhood Fund](#) to support early childhood education centers. NECC is a network of 5 early childhood organizations – Educare Omaha (2 sites), Educare Lincoln, and Omaha Early Learning Centers (2 sites) – that facilitates knowledge sharing and cost reduction through a shared Collaborative office. The sub pool was started in January 2018, and as of November 2018 employs approximately 25 subs shared across the 5 schools. NECC provides recruiting, hiring, onboarding and orientation, and is the employer of record. The sites view the subs as potential recruits for full-time positions at the centers, for which they are eligible after at least 6 months of substitute experience. After placement at a particular site, site management provides orientation to that site’s facility, rules, and procedures.

Process: The NECC Human Resources department is responsible for recruiting and hiring the subs. Once subs are hired, NECC provides a 2-week onboarding and orientation. The site director contacts the NECC when subs are needed and NECC assigns a sub to that center. Because sub retention has been strong, the Collaborative is often able to assign subs that have previous experience with that center.

Wages: Wages vary, based on credentials and the role they substitute for (e.g., Associate Teacher, Lead Teacher, Site Director). Wages are set by NECC, the employer, and are based on a common pay grid for all the schools in the Collaborative. There is no differential wage for substitutes vs. regular teachers.

Cost to centers: Centers agree to pay NECC a fee of 37.5% of the subs’ hourly wages to cover costs for fringe benefits, workers’ comp, unemployment, onboarding and orientation, and administrative costs (many subs work enough hours to qualify for NECC’s full-time benefits package).

Benefits to centers: Participating centers perceive several benefits to the sub pool. In addition to performing all recruiting and initial training, which frees up centers’ administrative time, NECC also provides stability in sub availability (i.e. a preferred sub is often available to a center over time), as well as higher quality subs and staff recruits. Prior to the formation of the NECC

sub pool, most providers were utilizing another sub service, paying higher fees and receiving lower quality subs with less predictability of sub availability. The goal for the sub pool is to become a pipeline for future full-time teachers, and two longer-term subs have already transitioned to full-time teaching positions within the centers.

Staffing: One full-time HR Specialist devotes approximately 20% of her time to managing the sub pool, which includes recruiting subs, part of the orientation, scheduling, and review of subs' billable hours. The 2-week onboarding and orientation process is led by the HR department, which provides the same services for all newly hired staff at all NECC sites.

Funding: The sub pool is fully supported by fees described above.

Sound Child Care Solutions, Seattle WA

<http://soundchild.org/>

Summary: Sound Child Care Solutions (SCCS) is an early childhood consortium in Seattle consisting of 7 centers serving over 500 children, employing over 100 teachers, and a sub pool ("Relief Squad") of approximately 20 individuals. SCCS recruits, supports and mentors this small team of individuals to provide seamless transitions in classrooms when required by either time off for professional development or staff call-outs. SCCS views the Relief Squad as a "paid internship opportunity", and in fact hires for both permanent and sub staff at the same time. Group hiring is conducted on a regular basis.

Process: The SCCS HR Generalist (part-time) is responsible for recruiting job candidates. Once candidates are selected, they go through initial orientation and ongoing professional development and training along with full-time recruits. When subs are needed, center directors inform the Relief Squad Coordinator, who then assigns the appropriate sub to the center for that day.

Sourcing: Candidates are sourced through advertising, social media, and word of mouth through strong relationships with community colleges, training programs, and welfare-to-work organizations. In particular, community colleges are very effective resources, including several ECE professors who want to return to the ECE classroom during the summer. The center directors sit on hiring panels to select both permanent and substitute staff.

Staffing: A part-time Relief Squad Coordinator manages the substitutes on a day-to-day basis, working early morning and late evening hours.

Funding: The cost of the Relief Squad is assumed by the members of the consortium, who each pay a fee to the consortium's hub office for shared administration. The Relief Squad cost is the part-time salary for the Relief Squad Coordinator, estimated at approximately \$2000 - \$3000 per center annually. This cost is not billed separately from other consortium shared administrative services.

Nashville, TN

Summary: *Childcare TN* and *Childcare Nashville* are initiatives of The Community Foundation of Middle TN to provide a variety of Shared Services in Nashville and statewide. The *Childcare TN Substitute Service* is a placement service for participating childcare programs. The Service screens and collects documents for applicants to work as substitutes for both last minute and planned absences. The documents are stored in a protected area of ChildcareTennessee.com, where directors can download as needed.

Childcare Nashville is a free, public website for families to search for open spaces in child care centers and homes, and also provides job applicants (including substitutes) a place to find employment in the child care community. The back end of this website has a dashboard that allows providers to post job openings and provides access to the Substitute Service (as well as other services they contract to use). Providers pay a placement fee to the Substitute Service in advance of use, on a per-day basis. The fee does not expire, and can be “reload” as needed.

Process for Subs: Providers post jobs online, and the Subs, who have registered with the Service, are alerted by text. Subs choose their location and dates as their schedule permits. The Director “accepts” the sub by reply text. Pay is based on education and experience, within a range of \$8 - \$13 per hour. Teachers are paid directly by the preschool but will make the same amount at each location. No minimum hours are guaranteed. Requirements include:

- High school diploma or GED
- Background check
- Health exam
- Participation in paid training when available

Fingerprint and background checks are conducted by the Childcare TN Substitute Service, and are transferrable to all participating centers (currently 9). Employment through the Substitute Service can lead to permanent positions at a participating program.

Process for Providers: Nine centers currently participate; it is expected that Family Child Care homes will have the opportunity to join in the future. Programs choose a package to purchase. From 5 placements to 52 placements, the administrative charge is \$13/day to \$18/day depending on how many placements are purchased per day. There is no charge for posting a job. The platform has expanded to include shared job postings for permanent staff and initial screening of potential employees. Applicants can upload their resume and send in their application online. Providers may hire subs as full-time employees; when subs are hired by a participating center they must pay a \$500 finders fee to the Substitute Service.

Wages: *Childcare TN* sets the wage for the sub based on experience and education, within a range of \$8 - \$13 per hour. The individual school pays the sub, but all subs are paid equally for same experience.

Training: A subset of program directors collaborated to create an 8-hour orientation program for the subs, which has been approved by the state. State law requires each center to provide a 1-hour orientation, which is done upfront, matching a mentor with a new sub. This is a hands-

on, walk through of the center, like that done with a new hire. Six hours of orientation are done as a group (offered quarterly). Two hours are done as a shadow in a classroom, one with infants, and one with preschoolers. The subs are paid by the mentor center for this training. The centers are given five free sub placements as a thank you.

Staffing: Care Services Coordinator (part-time on Substitute Service; also works on other *Childcare TN* and *Childcare Nashville* activities)

Funding: Startup was funded from a private grant. Ongoing costs are funded from provider fees.

Santa Fe, NM

Background: The Santa Fe substitute pool is managed at the Santa Fe Community College, as part of the work plan for a City of Santa Fe grant, as well as to serve the needs of the Lab School on the SFCC campus. Sub pool membership currently consists of participants in the [Santa Fe Collaborative Teachers Institute](#), a group of 7 early childhood programs convened by the Santa Fe Baby Fund at the Santa Fe Community Foundation. In the future, a broader group of centers will be offered the opportunity to participate. At present, the sub pool is designed to provide coverage for teachers' professional development; in the future, once the number of available subs is expanded, coverage will be extended for call-outs as well.

Wages: Wages are paid by Santa Fe Community College, and centers reimburse SFCC. All subs are paid the same wage, regardless of the center in which they are placed. Current wages are approximately \$12/hour + \$.33 fringe. At present all administrative costs are covered by a grant from the Santa Fe Community Foundation. Thus, SFCC does not currently charge any additional administrative cost to the participating centers. Over time, fees may be introduced in order to ensure sustainability.

Training: Before placement in a center, subs spend at least 2 weeks with staff at the Santa Fe Community College. SFCC provides a basic orientation on standards such as safety and licensing. Subs then shadow/observe a Master Teacher in a SFCC Lab School classroom until they are deemed ready for classroom work.

Sourcing the subs: Recruiting currently focuses primarily on Community College students. At present, the demand for subs is greater than the available supply. To help address this need, SFCC recently launched a Spanish-speaking cohort for the first certificate, where students are taught in Spanish. It is hoped that this will create a larger supply of qualified teachers.

State regulations: SFCC requested from the state and received approval to create a "traveling personnel file," rather than requiring each individual participating center to hold files for each sub. The traveling file includes a copy of the sub's legal identification documents, their professional development log, evidence of mandated trainings and background check documentation. (Also included in the file, for the subs' benefit, are directions to the centers, parking codes, etc.) The state allowed the traveling file, once SFCC had signed an MOU with

each participating center outlining SFCC and center responsibilities, including the assignment of liability for the sub on the day of employment to the employing center.

Staffing: Staffing is managed through the Lab School at Santa Fe Community College.

Funding: Startup funding was provided through a grant from the Santa Fe Community Foundation. Going forward, the cost of the subs will be funded through an innovative stipend for substitutes that is available through the New Mexico QRIS system. In order to qualify for the funding, each center must be accredited, or be engaged in the QRIS system.

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- Because the purpose of the sub pool is to provide coverage for planned professional development, the initial plans called for each participating center to be “assigned” a particular day each week when they would receive a previously scheduled substitute. The centers, however, were not always ready when the sub appeared. After some discussion and effort, this situation improved and the centers were more prepared to coordinate professional development activities and available subs.
- Centers have hired subs for permanent positions. While this, long-term, is positive for overall staff quality, it creates challenges for maintaining the sub pool. After some discussion with participating centers and subs an agreement was made that subs would remain in the sub pool for at least 3 months before moving to full-time work at the participating centers.

Silver City, NM

Summary: Community Partnership for Children (CPC), a nonprofit agency leading Shared Services in Grant County, developed the Relief Squad in January 2017. The goal is to provide coverage for teachers in local early childhood centers, and eventually Family Child Care Homes, to cover planned professional development as well as call-outs. The secondary goal is, to the degree possible, to provide continual work opportunities for subs in order to maintain continuity and protect the value of the subs’ training and knowledge of the member centers.

Process for Subs: Subs apply to be trained in a cohort, and participate in an orientation training that is conducted at the beginning of each cohort. Each sub is also assigned to a Mentor Facilitator, who works directly with the substitute cohort to coach/train and provide opportunities for sharing experiences and challenges. Once initial training is complete and fingerprints clearance has processed, the Relief Squad Business Manager contacts subs when centers request a substitute. Subs are contacted in “next in line” order. The subs and centers communicate through the Relief Squad Business Manager (or through the Relief Squad Facilitator if the Business Manager is unavailable), rather than directly with each other.

Process for Centers: Centers call the CPC Business Manager or Facilitator to request a sub. The Business Manager assigns the subs to centers and tracks placements and availability. When a sub is required, the “next in line” sub is contacted, and the Relief Squad staff lets the director

know which person is coming. The centers do not have the ability to choose which sub they receive.

Wages: Substitutes are employed and compensated by each of the participating centers. Wages vary by center and range from \$7.50 - \$8.50/hour.

Training: Individuals selected to participate in the Relief Squad are required to participate in an initial training and, with funding from the private sector, are compensated by CPC for time spent in training. A cohort of approximately 10 subs is trained together. Training includes sub responsibilities and licensing criteria as well as any state-mandated trainings. The cohort also visits each participating center as a group to receive an orientation from the center director. CPR training is provided after some evidence that the subs will remain with the Relief Squad, and/or when training is available through another organization such as Head Start.

State regulations: The State approved CPC's request to maintain the subs' personnel files, including official background clearance, rather than requiring them to be held at each participating center. This also allows trainees to do online training through CPC rather than a particular center. Traveling personnel files are provided for the substitutes, in order to cover all requirements.

Staffing: The Shared Services Project is staffed by a part-time Coordinator (30% FTE), a Mentor/Facilitator (currently 25%FTE, but will increase), and a Business Manager (25% FTE).

Funding: Startup and early ongoing funding is provided by the Freeport McMoRan Community Investment Funds and the Thornburg Foundation.

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- Unequal wages across the centers is not ideal, and CPC's goal is to eventually bring wages to parity across centers.
- Finding qualified subs is difficult.
- Maintaining subs in the Relief Squad is challenging. Some are hired for permanent positions at the centers, which is a positive outcome overall. CPC is working on developing strategies and agreements with the participating centers that will help retain as many subs as possible.
- The Mentor/Facilitator is extremely important to building and maintaining high quality. The mentor works directly with the subs to coach/train and provide opportunities for sharing experiences and challenges.
- Word of mouth and social media are the most effective ways to identify and recruit substitutes in this rural community.

Summary of Lessons Learned

- Many organizations find that it is only practical to run a shared sub pool in conjunction with shared hiring for permanent employees.
- Sourcing high quality candidates who "only" want to be subs can be difficult.

- State rules and regulations can make a shared sub service difficult. Organizations who challenge these rules with a strong case can often succeed in receiving either waivers or rule changes that simplify their process and encourage providers to participate fully.
- Shared orientation and training among participating providers is key to ensuring that subs are able to transition seamlessly from one organization to another.
- Viewing the sub pool as a potential “internship” or eventual source for full-time employment can be beneficial in terms of training and providing a “trial period” of employment. However, doing so requires special attention to issues such as the minimum required work period before subs are available for full-time employment.
- Comparable wages and working conditions across providers that share a sub pool is important to retaining subs who are comfortable working at multiple organizations.