

Shared Hiring and Sub Pools: Two Alliance Experiences

Summary

In July 2014, two ECE Shared Services Alliances were interviewed about their experiences with shared hiring and sub pools. Both organizations found that it was only practical to run a shared sub pool if they also ran shared hiring. It was too expensive to have two separate hiring processes, one for subs and one for permanent staff. In addition, when just running a substitute hiring process on a stand-alone basis, it was very difficult to find individuals who wanted to be substitutes and who were of high enough quality to qualify for employment. In both cases, the sub was hired by one central organization, and remained the employee of that organization throughout their time as a sub. They did not become the employee of each of the organizations that used them as subs, nor did they work as independent contractors.

Alliance A

This Louisiana multi-site child care organization had 7 centers serving 600 children, with 75-80 teachers employed. Turnover was very high – over 100% a year in some positions. As a result, the seven centers were always looking for both permanent staff and subs.

The Alliance ran a group hiring process every month. They would put out ads in all the digital media (Craigslist, Facebook, etc.). In addition, they had strong relationships with the high schools that had CDA programs. They also had relationships with community colleges that had CDA programs, however in this case these were typically not good referral sources. The process was managed via email – all information was submitted to the Alliance from candidates via email, and the group hiring date was organized by email.

At the group hiring event, all candidates were given an overview presentation of the work of the Alliance and the positions that were open. Staff noted that many of their candidates would hear the word “substitute” and they would cringe. This cringe was alleviated once candidates understood that subs could usually count on an average 30-35 hours per week. There was such a high need for subs that it was fairly easy to keep the limited number of subs that they hired busy. In addition, they let the subs know that they would be first in line for permanent positions if they performed well as a sub.

The directors from all seven of the Alliance centers would attend the event, and they would have “speed dating interviews”, in which each of the directors would meet for 5-10 minutes with the candidates. There was a standard set of questions that everyone was asked. What are your qualifications? What type of work experience do you seek? What hours do you prefer? In what locations do you prefer to work?

After the meeting, the directors would get together, and decide which candidates should be offered permanent positions to (both full and part-time) and which should be offered sub positions. Some candidates were offered part-time plus sub positions, in which they would have a fixed part-time schedule, and then get sub work to fill in the balance.

The director of HR for the Alliance was also the dispatcher for the subs. She would spend some time each evening and some time each morning working on scheduling subs for the coming day and week. This was not highly time-consuming. The big time-consumer was the hiring process.

The Alliance charged its members 10% of the first year's salary for full-time employees and 10% of the subs' wages for this shared hiring and sub pool process. This was about break-even for the Alliance. The site directors thought that this was a reasonable charge given how much work it took off their plates.

Alliance B

This early childhood consortium in the State of Washington also has 7 centers serving 440 children, employing approximately 100 teachers, and a sub pool of approximately 20 individuals. Similar to Alliance A, they found it was more effective to hire for both permanent and sub staff at the same time. It lowered the hiring cost, and brought in a better quality of person for the sub pool. They also had high turnover – typically 100% a year in the sub pool, and fairly high levels in the teaching staff as well. While they didn't have a monthly group hiring process, they conduct group hiring on a regular basis.

The HR specialist was responsible for recruiting job candidates. They advertised in digital media, and they also had strong relationships with community colleges, training programs, and welfare-to-work organizations. Unlike Alliance A, however, they found that community colleges were a useful source of subs. In particular, they had a number of community college professors who taught ECE, and who liked to be able to get back into an ECE classroom for a couple of months during the summer. Like Alliance A, the center directors sat on hiring panels to select both permanent and substitute staff.

The substitutes at Alliance B are managed on a day-to-day basis by a dispatcher. She works from 5:30 – 7:00 am in the morning, and then from around 9:00 – 10:00 at night.

The Alliance found that the total time required for this shared hiring and sub process was around 0.5 FTE. This translated into approximately \$15,000 - \$20,000 per year, or around \$2,000 - \$3,000 per center. In this case, the cost was part of a larger fee for shared administration paid by each center to the Alliance hub, and was not billed separately from the other administrative services.