Education, Child Development, and Family Services

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Marissa Congdon, Executive Director / BCBA, Autism Heroes
Nancy Cruz, Senior Manager, State Preschool Programs, SBCSS
Cristie Granillo, Community Health Worker Integration Manager, Loma Linda University Institute for Community Partnerships
LaTrinda Terrell, Deputy Director, Preschool Services Department, San Bernardino County

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Minutes

The Education, Child Development, and Family Services panel featured six professionals representing early childhood education, Head Start and state preschool, school-based mental health, autism and behavior services, and community health worker integration. Together, they described current workforce trends, expectations for students entering the field, the variety of entry-level roles, and how educators can better connect classroom learning to the realities of working with children, families, and communities. The following minutes synthesize the panelists' responses.

Question 1: What emerging trends and technologies do you believe will drive the most change in this industry over the next 3-5 years, and what should teachers and students focus on to stay ahead?

Antonio Castro: Antonio explained that school-based mental health has shifted from a small support to a comprehensive, districtwide system. Over the past nine years, his district has built an integrated mental health program that includes counseling, case management, crisis response, and a network of wellness centers at every secondary school site, with elementary counselors added to support younger students. The work is grounded in the "whole child" and Maslow's hierarchy, addressing food, housing, safety, and connection so students are able to engage in learning. He noted that new initiatives like wellness centers, expanded school-counseling services, and community partnerships (including state initiatives such as the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative) are creating growing demand for professionals who understand mental health, case management, and cross-system collaboration.

Antonio encouraged teachers to expose students to the broad range of roles now embedded in schools: mental health clinicians, case managers, behavioral aides, and community health workers. Students should learn how data is used to identify students needing support, how teams collaborate across departments, and how trauma and social determinants of health affect behavior and attendance. For him, the trend is clear: whether students become teachers, counselors, or support staff, they must be prepared to work in environments where mental health and basic needs supports are central to education, not "add-ons."

Marissa Congdon: Marissa shared that in autism and behavior services, there is a growing emphasis on inclusive preschool settings and thoughtful transition services for older students. As a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and co-founder of Autism Heroes, she and her team provide in-home applied behavior analysis (ABA) services and community trainings, and they are actively working with partners to build inclusive preschool programs. At the same time, they are designing supports on the other end of the pipeline, helping older students and young adults with autism or other disabilities develop career skills, social skills, and basic independent-living skills to prepare for life after high school.

She noted that technology (including telehealth, data-collection tools, and digital communication platforms) is increasingly embedded in behavior programs. CTE pathways can help students practice using digital tools to record data, document progress, and communicate with families and teams, while also teaching ethical use of data and respect for confidentiality. Marissa emphasized that as inclusive preschool and transition programming expand, there will be more need for paraprofessionals, behavior technicians, and educators who are comfortable working in diverse, integrated settings.

Nancy Cruz: Nancy described how the landscape of state preschool and early childhood education is evolving. As Senior Manager for State Preschool Programs, she oversees 23 directly operated preschool sites and an additional 25 subcontracted sites serving three- to five-year-olds across the county. She highlighted that eligibility rules have shifted: while programs remain income-based, there is now expanded room to serve "over-income" families when children have an IEP or IFSP, or when the school is located in high-need areas defined by updated measures that replaced FRPM terminology. These changes reflect a broader trend toward prioritizing access for children with disabilities and those in historically underserved communities.

Nancy also emphasized the increasing focus on family engagement, language and literacy, and positive behavior supports in early learning. Her team provides staff training on PBIS, nutrition, and language-literacy tools like Footsteps2Brilliance. She encouraged teachers to integrate these same priorities into high school coursework by modeling strong family communication, embedding literacy-rich activities, and introducing students to evidence-based practices used in preschool settings.

Cristie Granillo: Cristie explained that community health worker (CHW) roles inside school systems are growing rapidly. As a Community Health Worker Integration Manager at a local university, she has spent seven years building CHW programs in multiple school districts, with a focus on health and equity. Her work began with early childhood and counseling, then expanded into health education and CHW pipeline programs. She now oversees school-based CHWs who support families with everything from health education to navigating complex systems. She noted a rising need in mental and behavioral health supports, as well as a widening resource gap that CHWs help bridge by connecting families to services that schools alone cannot provide.

Cristie encouraged teachers to help students understand that education, child development, and family services careers increasingly involve community health, social determinants of health, and data-informed problem solving. Programs can introduce students to CHW models, teach them to look at attendance and engagement through a health-equity lens, and show how partnerships between schools, universities, and community organizations create new roles focused on the whole child.

LaTrinda Terrell: LaTrinda shared that Head Start and preschool services are experiencing both increased expectations and expanded opportunities. As Deputy Director of the county's Preschool Services Department, she described a 31-year journey from teacher to site supervisor, program manager, and now system leader, as well as being a Head Start alum herself. She highlighted the power of comprehensive services, education, health, nutrition, and family support, working together to help children and families achieve their goals. At the same time,

Head Start programs are adapting to new policy requirements, increased demand for inclusive services, and higher expectations for data, accountability, and staff qualifications.

She pointed to cohort-based hiring and training models as an important trend. Her agency's Head Start program has created cohorts in partnership with local community colleges, allowing new employees to take coursework, gain on-the-job experience in classrooms, and receive training in active supervision and best practices while being paid. She sees these models as critical for addressing workforce shortages and providing accessible entry points for students interested in early childhood careers.

Jennifer Carter: Jennifer explained that Oak Tree Learning Center has evolved from a preschool into a combined early learning and parent-resource hub. In addition to preschool services, the center connects families to a wide range of community supports, from housing resources and vouchers to local service providers and even informal supports like event vendors. She described Oak Tree as a "community resource center plus preschool," where parents build networks and learn how to access the resources they need. Her own journey, from aspiring journalist to Peace Corps teacher in East Africa, to working with students with oppositional disorders, and ultimately to leading Oak Tree, illustrates how education careers often weave through different roles and settings.

Jennifer sees a growing trend toward schools and early learning centers functioning as community hubs. Teachers should help students understand that working in early childhood is not just about "watching kids"; it involves problem-solving alongside families, navigating resource systems, and building trust within the community. She encouraged CTE programs to highlight these broader roles and to give students practice in resource navigation, community mapping, and relationship-building with families.

Question 2: How should our Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways adapt to ensure students are well-equipped to meet future demands and changes in this industry?

Antonio Castro: Antonio emphasized that empathy, emotional regulation, and professional boundaries are non-negotiable for anyone entering education or child and family services. Students who will work around mental health and wellness need to be able to listen deeply, avoid judgment, and consider the context behind a student's behavior or attendance. He also stressed reliability, showing up on time, keeping commitments, and maintaining confidentiality, as core behaviors. For him, a "whole child" mindset is critical; future educators and support staff must see behavior as communication and understand how family, environment, trauma, and basic needs impact what happens in the classroom.

He encouraged CTE pathways to model multidisciplinary collaboration. Students should practice working in teams, role-playing meetings where teachers, counselors, social workers, and CHWs collaborate around case examples. He suggested integrating case studies that require students to identify what supports might be needed (mental health, housing, attendance,

nutrition) and where to refer families, helping them learn to think systemically rather than in isolation.

Marissa Congdon: Marissa highlighted patience, curiosity, and genuine care for children and families as foundational. In behavior analysis and autism services, practitioners must be comfortable with slow progress, repeated practice, and trial-and-error. She noted that future professionals should come into the field ready to ask questions, seek supervision, and adjust their strategies based on data and feedback. Communication skills, especially the ability to explain interventions in plain language and collaborate respectfully with families and teachers, are just as important as technical ABA knowledge.

She recommended that CTE teachers give students structured practice in observing behavior, collecting data, and reflecting on what they see. For example, students can watch short videos or classroom scenarios and practice identifying antecedents, behaviors, and consequences; then discuss how they might respond in ways that support the child's dignity and growth. Marissa also encouraged teachers to build confidence by giving students a chance to lead small group activities, present social-skills lessons, or practice communicating behavior plans to a "parent" or "teacher" in mock meetings.

Nancy Cruz: Nancy explained that commitment to ongoing learning, flexibility, and empathy, especially around children's behavior, are essential in preschool settings. Staff must be current on evidence-based practices, from literacy strategies to PBIS, and be willing to adapt lesson plans when children need more support or when unexpected events arise. She described how her program invests in training on PBIS, nutrition, and language and literacy so teachers can respond to student needs in thoughtful, proactive ways.

She recommended that CTE pathways intentionally teach students how to interpret behavior and respond with compassion instead of punishment. Classroom activities can include analyzing scenarios, identifying what might be driving a behavior (fatigue, hunger, sensory needs, trauma), and brainstorming supportive responses. Nancy also encouraged teachers to explicitly model professionalism in early childhood settings, greeting families, maintaining child dignity, and communicating clearly with colleagues, so high school students internalize these behaviors before entering the workforce.

Cristie Granillo: Cristie stressed that a strong equity lens, cultural humility, and the ability to build trust with families are vital. Community health workers, counselors, and education staff often work with families who have experienced systemic barriers or discrimination. Future professionals must be able to acknowledge that reality, listen to lived experiences, and partner with families rather than " fixing" them. She added that many CHWs bring their own lived experience of navigating low-income schools and communities, which can be a strength when paired with reflective practice and clear professional boundaries.

Cristie encouraged teachers to design assignments where students interview family or community members (with appropriate permissions), map community assets, and reflect on their own biases and assumptions. She also suggested integrating attendance and health data into lessons, asking students to think about what might cause chronic absenteeism and what

supports could help. These types of activities build the mindset that serving children means serving families and communities as well.

LaTrinda Terrell: LaTrinda emphasized passion, focus, and perseverance. She shared that her own path from Head Start child to Deputy Director involved many stages, teacher, site supervisor, program manager, and a commitment to continuous education, including associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. She believes that students entering the field need to understand that early childhood and family services work is demanding and requires a deep sense of purpose; those who are "in it for the right reasons" are more likely to persist and grow into leadership roles.

She recommended that CTE pathways help students explore their "why" for this work through journaling, reflection prompts, and conversations about their motivations. Programs can also highlight career ladders and encourage students to set long-term goals, linking current coursework to future roles such as teacher, site supervisor, or program leader. This helps students see early roles (such as aide or assistant) as the beginning of a meaningful career, not just a job.

Jennifer Carter: Jennifer underscored the importance of communication, adaptability, and relationship-building with parents and caregivers. Because Oak Tree Learning Center functions as both a preschool and resource hub, staff consistently interact with families who may be navigating housing, employment, or other stressors. She emphasized that students entering the field must be able to talk with adults respectfully, explain classroom activities, and connect families to appropriate resources while staying within their role. Flexibility is also key; staff must adjust daily routines as family needs, staffing, or community events shift.

For CTE pathways, Jennifer suggested giving students regular practice in "parent communication," such as writing short newsletters, scripting a positive phone call home, or role-playing a conversation with a caregiver about a child's behavior. She also encouraged teachers to incorporate community mapping activities where students identify local resources (food banks, libraries, health clinics, family centers), helping them understand the ecosystem that surrounds their future workplaces.

Question 3: What essential skills, educational qualifications, and certifications are currently required to gain employment in your industry, and how might these requirements change in the near future?

Antonio Castro: Antonio noted that licensed mental health positions in schools typically require at least a master's degree in social work, counseling, or a related field, along with appropriate state licensure. However, he emphasized that his department also employs a range of staff who do not yet hold advanced degrees: case managers, family support workers, and paraprofessionals who assist with wellness centers and programming. These roles rely heavily on strong communication skills, organized documentation, and the ability to coordinate

services. Over time, many staff choose to pursue additional education, moving into clinical or leadership roles.

He anticipates that as school-based mental health services expand, there will be more structured pathways from support roles into licensed positions, including paid internships and tuition-support programs. He encouraged teachers to help students understand this ladder—showing how entry-level positions can be a stepping stone into counseling, social work, or psychology careers.

Marissa Congdon: Marissa explained that many entry-level roles in autism services, such as Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) or behavior interventionists, require a high school diploma, specific training hours in applied behavior analysis, and successful completion of competency assessments. While RBTs and other paraprofessional roles do not require a degree, they demand attention to detail, consistent data collection, and adherence to strict ethical and confidentiality guidelines. For supervisory and clinical roles like Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), a master's degree and board certification are required.

She expects that demand for trained behavior staff in schools, clinics, and homes will continue to grow. CTE programs can prepare students by teaching foundational ABA concepts, data collection skills, and documentation practices. She suggested that programs make explicit connections to RBT and related credentials so students see how their high school coursework aligns with future certifications and degrees.

Nancy Cruz: Nancy outlined the child-development career ladder governed by the California Child Development Permit system. In her program, there are positions that range from classroom assistant roles, some of which require no college units and may be filled by parents or volunteers with experience, to intern, associate teacher, teacher, and supervisory roles. As educators move up the ladder, they must complete increasing levels of child development coursework, gain classroom experience, and, in many cases, earn associate or bachelor's degrees. She mentioned that her department supports staff with training in PBIS, nutrition, and language and literacy to ensure they are using current evidence-based practices.

She expects that credential and permit requirements will continue to increase over time, especially as quality standards and accountability measures grow. However, she emphasized that there will remain a variety of entry points for students: aides, interns, and assistant teachers can begin with limited units and gradually complete more education while working. She encouraged educators to explicitly teach the permit matrix and help students map their current courses to future permit levels.

Cristie Granillo: Cristie shared that community health worker roles within school districts generally require a high school diploma plus completion of a CHW training or certificate program. Some positions prefer or require additional college coursework in public health, social work, or related fields, and experience in community organizing or health education is highly valued. As CHW roles become more integrated into school systems, she expects to see more standardized training requirements, expanded stackable certificates, and clearer pathways from

CHW to roles such as case manager, care coordinator, or even graduate programs in health or education fields.

For CTE students, Cristie recommended introducing them to CHW frameworks, including core competencies like outreach, advocacy, documentation, and resource navigation. She also suggested sharing examples of local CHW or youth promotores programs and explaining how high school students can move into those roles after graduation.

LaTrinda Terrell: LaTrinda explained that in Head Start and preschool services, there is a broad range of roles from entry-level classroom aides to teachers, site supervisors, and program managers. Some positions allow individuals to enter with minimal formal education and build their skills and credentials over time, especially through cohort programs. She described her agency's cohort model, developed in partnership with San Bernardino Valley College, where individuals can apply with no prior experience, take early childhood classes, gain paid on-the-job training in classrooms, and receive targeted professional development in areas like active supervision and best practices. This approach allows them to both work and learn, building toward higher-level positions.

She anticipates that high-quality early learning programs will increasingly favor staff with formal qualifications and specialized training (e.g., inclusive practices, trauma-informed care, family engagement). CTE pathways can support this by introducing students to college program options, cohort or apprenticeship-style models, and the realities of working in Head Start classrooms.

Jennifer Carter: Jennifer noted that early learning centers like Oak Tree employ staff in multiple roles: aides and assistant teachers, lead teachers, program coordinators, and parent or family engagement staff. While some roles require associate or bachelor's degrees in child development or related fields, others are open to individuals with a high school diploma and some early childhood coursework. She emphasized that many centers, particularly those functioning as community hubs, also have administrative and outreach positions that rely on strong communication, organization, and problem-solving, even if they don't require advanced degrees.

She believes that as family needs become more complex, there will be more hybrid positions that blend early childhood education with family support and resource coordination. CTE teachers can prepare students by emphasizing both instructional and administrative skills, such as documentation, scheduling, event planning, and collaboration with community partners.

Question 4: What are a few occupations within the industry that do not require advanced degrees yet offer a living wage? Additionally, what advice would you give to a recent high school graduate that would help them gain employment in your industry?

Antonio Castro: Antonio pointed to roles such as behavioral aides, family support workers, and wellness-center support staff in school districts. These positions often require a high school diploma, some related coursework or paraprofessional certification, and strong interpersonal skills. Over time, employees can advance into higher-paying positions such as case manager, mental health coordinator, or program specialist, especially if they pursue further education while working.

He encouraged students who are interested in these roles to take CTE courses in education, child development, and health, and to seek opportunities to volunteer in schools or youth programs. He also suggested that teachers build in activities that mimic day-to-day responsibilities: documenting contacts, maintaining simple case logs, and collaborating with a team around a student scenario.

Marissa Congdon: Marissa highlighted Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) and other entry-level behavior intervention roles as strong options that do not require advanced degrees. With a high school diploma, completion of an approved training, and successful competency and exam processes, students can become RBTs working in homes, schools, or clinics. These roles can pay a living wage, especially with experience, and provide a pipeline into advanced degrees and BCBA certification.

To prepare, she advised that high school students build comfort with data collection, observation, and professional communication. CTE teachers can offer practice in writing simple session notes, tracking progress on behavior goals, and discussing observations in a professional manner. She also stressed that students should reflect honestly on whether they are comfortable with the hands-on nature of the work before committing to this path.

Nancy Cruz: Nancy shared that early childhood classrooms offer a variety of paraprofessional and assistant roles that can provide a living wage with room for advancement. Positions such as teacher assistant, associate teacher (with some college coursework), and family-service aide allow individuals to gain classroom experience while continuing their education. She noted that some staff begin as classroom volunteers or aides and eventually move into teacher or supervisory roles through ongoing coursework and permit upgrades.

She encouraged students to take every opportunity in high school to work directly with children. through preschool labs, elementary-school rotations, or after-school programs, to better understand which age groups and settings they enjoy. She also recommended that teachers explicitly connect class content (child development, lesson planning, behavior support) to specific job titles and permit levels so students can see a clear route from high school coursework to employment.

Cristie Granillo: Cristie identified community health worker (CHW) and youth promotor roles as strong non-degree starting points with significant growth potential. CHWs often begin with a high school diploma and specialized training, then grow into more advanced roles in schools, clinics, or community-based organizations. She noted that some CHWs later move into social work, public health, or education degrees, often with tuition support or flexible schedules because of their value to employers.

She recommended that students interested in CHW work build skills in communication, advocacy, and documentation. Teachers can incorporate assignments that ask students to identify community health issues, design simple outreach messages, or practice connecting families to resources on paper. Exposure to pipeline programs and summer opportunities at local universities or health systems can also help students decide whether this path fits their interests.

LaTrinda Terrell: LaTrinda emphasized that Head Start and early childhood programs hire classroom aides, family advocates, and home visitors who do not initially need advanced degrees. Through models like her agency's cohort program, individuals can start in these roles, receive paid training, and complete college coursework that leads to higher positions and pay. She stressed that these roles are particularly meaningful for individuals who come from the communities they serve and want to "give back" by helping families navigate early learning systems.

To prepare, she advised that students build strong habits around attendance, punctuality, and follow-through, as reliability is paramount in Head Start classrooms. She also encouraged CTE teachers to emphasize reading and writing skills, since staff must complete detailed documentation, communicate with families, and follow program guidelines.

Jennifer Carter: Jennifer noted that assistant teacher, instructional aide, and family engagement roles at centers like Oak Tree can be accessible to students without advanced degrees, especially if they have some child development coursework and a strong track record of working with children. Over time, individuals can move into lead teacher, program coordinator, or director roles by combining on-the-job experience with additional education. She also mentioned administrative and outreach positions (e.g., enrollment coordinator, family liaison, resource navigator) as pathways that require strong communication and organizational skills more than advanced degrees.

Jennifer offered clear advice for students: get your "foot in the door" early, be personable and sincere, and be ready to talk about what you enjoy doing with children. She emphasized that interviews in early childhood and family services fields are not about "right" or "wrong" answers but about demonstrating passion, confidence, and the ability to interact with others. She encouraged teachers to give students frequent practice in introducing themselves, talking about their strengths, and describing why they want to work with children and families.

Audience Questions

Audience Question 1: *How can students gain exposure to Head Start programs despite age restrictions that require students to be 18 to work in Head Start?*

LaTrinda Terrell: Confirmed the age requirement and acknowledged the challenge. She shared that Head Start uses cohort models with local colleges once students turn 18 and encouraged continued K–12 classroom rotations. She noted that supervised small-group visits or guided observations at Head Start may be possible even before students reach working age.

Audience Question 2: *How can teachers manage new district-wide cell phone bans, requiring Yondr pouches, when some coursework and dual enrollment activities rely on mobile apps?*

Jennifer Carter: Recommended asking administration for instructional exceptions or shifting activities to laptops/tablets. She emphasized the importance of realistic conversations about equity, noting that many students rely on phones as their primary device. The panel agreed that teachers can guide students to explore mobile versions at home when restricted on campus.

Audience Question 3: *Has using AI tools caused confidentiality or HIPAA concerns and would HIPAA training benefit students entering related fields?*

Marissa Congdon: Confirmed that HIPAA training is valuable and likely to become more important as regulations tighten. She explained that personal information should never be entered into AI tools and shared that her organization uses coded identifiers to protect confidentiality even in internal discussions.

Cross-Panel Key Takeaways

These are the themes that appeared consistently across the full four questions AND the audience Q&A.

1. Education, child development, and family services careers now operate within a "whole child, whole family" framework.
Panelists stressed that modern roles in early childhood, mental health, and community health extend far beyond instruction or care. Staff are expected to think about basic needs, trauma, social determinants of health, and access to services when supporting children and families.

2. There are multiple entry points into the field, with clear opportunities to "earn and learn."
From Head Start cohorts to state preschool ladders and CHW pipelines, students can begin in paraprofessional or assistant roles and grow into higher-paying positions through ongoing education, permit upgrades, and structured training programs.

3. Soft skills and professional behaviors are as important as technical knowledge.
Empathy, patience, communication, reliability, and reflective practice were repeatedly named as critical. Programs are looking for people who can collaborate with colleagues, communicate respectfully with families, and respond to challenging behavior with understanding rather than punishment.

4. Family and community engagement are central to effective programs.
Whether through parent classes, family engagement activities, CHW outreach, or preschool resource hubs, panelists emphasized that engaging and supporting families is a core part of the work. Staff need to be comfortable partnering with caregivers and connecting them to resources, not just serving the child in isolation.

5. Real-world exposure helps students find the right fit and make informed choices.
Rotations through elementary and special education classrooms, early exposure to Head Start, and participation in CHW or university pipeline programs all help students see what daily work actually looks like and decide which roles, age groups, and settings best match their interests.

Cross-Panel Action Items

These action items synthesize the most actionable guidance from the full advisory. These are the steps teachers can embed into coursework, lesson plans, or pathway design.

1. Integrate Whole-Child and Mental-Health Perspectives Across the Curriculum

- Use case studies that ask students to consider academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and basic needs together when analyzing student situations.
- Introduce concepts like Maslow's hierarchy, social determinants of health, and trauma-informed practices in age-appropriate ways.
- Model how educators collaborate with mental health staff, CHWs, and family-support workers when addressing student concerns.

2. Teach and Practice Core Professional Behaviors Explicitly

- Build structured opportunities for students to practice greeting families, communicating with colleagues, and participating in team discussions.
- Incorporate expectations for punctuality, attendance, documentation, and follow-through into classroom routines and grading.
- Use role-play scenarios to help students practice responding to challenging behaviors or difficult conversations with sensitivity and professionalism.

3. Map and Teach Career Pathways and Permit/Credential Ladders

- Create visuals showing entry-level roles (aide, assistant, CHW, RBT) and how they connect to permits, certificates, degrees, and leadership positions.
- Align course projects and work-based learning with specific roles and credentials so students see how current assignments build future employability.
- Invite panelists or local partners to explain their own career journeys and the steps they took from entry-level positions to current roles.

4. Expand Structured, Guided Exposure to Real Settings

- Continue or develop rotation models where students visit multiple grade levels, special education classrooms, preschool programs, and family-support settings.
- Work with Head Start, state preschool, and CHW programs to design safe observations or internship experiences that fit age and eligibility requirements.
- Debrief experiences through reflection prompts asking students what they noticed, which environments they felt comfortable in, and what skills they used or observed.

5. Embed Family and Community Engagement into Projects and Lessons

- Assign projects where students design simple family communication tools (newsletters, flyers, workshop outlines) or create resource guides for caregivers.
- Have students map local community assets (libraries, clinics, family centers, food resources) connected to their school or future workplace.
- Partner with community organizations and universities to bring CHWs, Head Start staff, and early learning leaders into the classroom to share their work supporting families.

Panelist Key Takeaways and Action Items

These key takeaways and action item lists highlight each respondent's insights, concerns, and suggested actions to address industry trends and to prepare students for the evolving landscape within their respective industries.

Jennifer Carter, Executive Director & CEO, Oak Tree Learning Center
Key Takeaways:

- Early learning centers increasingly function as community hubs, connecting families to a broad range of resources beyond traditional preschool services.
- Diverse career journeys can lead into early childhood leadership; skills from other sectors (journalism, international work, special education) are highly transferrable.
- Strong communication with parents—explaining learning activities, sharing resources, and listening to needs—is central to student and family success.

Action Items:

- Incorporate assignments where students create mock family newsletters, resource boards, or short presentations explaining classroom activities to caregivers.
- Use "community mapping" projects that require students to identify local agencies, services, and informal supports relevant to families with young children.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice introducing themselves professionally and describing why they want to work with children and families during mock interviews.

Antonio Castro, Director of Behavioral Health Services & Supports, K–12 District
Key Takeaways:

- School-based mental health has expanded into a comprehensive system including wellness centers, counseling, case management, and crisis response.
- Effective support requires a "whole child" lens that considers basic needs, family context, and trauma, not just behavior in isolation.
- There is a growing need for staff in both licensed and non-licensed roles who can collaborate across education, mental health, and community systems.

Action Items:

- Use case studies or simulations where students must recommend appropriate supports (counseling, CHW referral, family support) for hypothetical students.
- Invite mental health staff or CHWs to speak in class about their roles, workflows, and collaboration with teachers.
- Incorporate simple documentation exercises (e.g., behavior logs, contact notes) so students practice the type of recordkeeping expected in mental health-related roles.

Marissa Congdon, Executive Director of Business & Community Engagement / BCBA, Autism Heroes
Key Takeaways:

- Behavior analysis roles (e.g., RBTs, behavior interventionists) provide accessible entry points into autism and behavior services with strong growth potential.

- Inclusive preschool and transition services for older students with disabilities are major areas of expansion, requiring skilled, reflective staff.
- Data collection, ethical practice, and collaborative communication with families and schools are central to high-quality behavior support.

Action Items:

- Create assignments where students practice ABC (Antecedent–Behavior–Consequence) charting using case examples or short videos.
- Include structured reflection activities where students consider the ethical dimensions of behavior interventions and the importance of preserving student dignity
- Connect students to information about RBT or similar credentials and illustrate how high school coursework in education and child development prepares them for those pathways.

Nancy Cruz, Senior Manager, State Preschool Programs
Key Takeaways:

- The child-development permit matrix provides a clear ladder from assistant roles to teacher and leadership positions, with multiple entry points.
- State preschool programs are expanding eligibility to better serve children with disabilities and those living in high-need school communities.
- High-quality early learning relies on strong family engagement, language and literacy, and use of evidence-based practices such as PBIS and early-literacy tools.

Action Items:

- Teach the Child Development Permit matrix explicitly, asking students to identify which permit level they might pursue first and what steps are required.
- Incorporate PBIS-aligned classroom scenarios where students propose positive, proactive strategies to support children with challenging behaviors.
- Integrate language and literacy strategies into projects (e.g., storytime plans, alphabet or vocabulary activities) that mirror those used in preschool classrooms.

Cristie Granillo, Community Health Worker Integration Manager, University Health Sciences
Key Takeaways:

- Community health workers embedded in schools bridge gaps between families, schools, and community resources, with a growing emphasis on mental and behavioral health.
- An equity lens and cultural humility are critical; staff must understand how social determinants of health influence attendance, behavior, and learning.
- CHW roles provide non-degree entry points with opportunities to advance into public health, social work, or education careers over time.

Action Items:

- Assign projects where students analyze hypothetical attendance data and identify possible social or health-related factors contributing to chronic absenteeism.
- Introduce CHW competencies—such as outreach, advocacy, education, and documentation—and align them with classroom activities.
- Share information about local CHW or youth promotor programs and pipeline opportunities, encouraging interested students to explore these as potential next steps.

LaTrinda Terrell, Deputy Director, Preschool Services Department / Head Start
Key Takeaways:

- Head Start offers comprehensive services that support both children and families, and it benefits from staff who share a deep commitment to the mission.
- Cohort models, developed in partnership with community colleges, provide structured, paid pathways into early childhood roles with built-in training and support.
- Long-term success in the field comes from passion, focus, and commitment to ongoing education, as illustrated by her own progression from Head Start child to program leader.

Action Items:

- Highlight cohort, apprenticeship, and “earn-and-learn” opportunities in Head Start and early childhood programs when discussing postsecondary options.
- Use reflection prompts and goal-setting activities that help students articulate why they want to work in early childhood or family services and what long-term roles they might pursue.
- Explore partnerships that allow students to visit Head Start classrooms or attend information sessions about cohort programs, even before they are age-eligible for employment.

Labor Market Information

The following labor market information was sourced from https://www.onetonline.org/ on December 2, 2025.

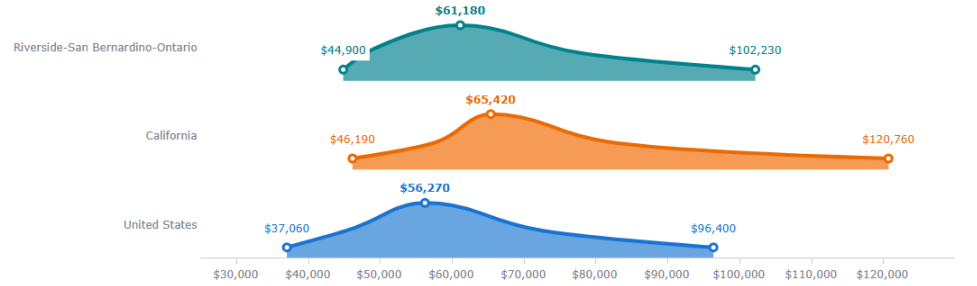
Local Wages

11-9031.00 - Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$61,180**.
- 10% of workers earn **$44,900 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$102,230 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$65,420**.
- 10% of workers earn **$46,190 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$120,760 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$56,270**.
- 10% of workers earn **$37,060 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$96,400 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

11-9031.00 - Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment data for **Education Administrators, Preschool and Childcare Center/Program**.

Employment (2022)	9,100 employees
Projected employment (2032)	10,600 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	17%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	800

In the United States:

Employment data for **Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare**.

Employment (2024)	90,200 employees
Projected employment (2034)	87,900 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	-3% Decline
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	5,500

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

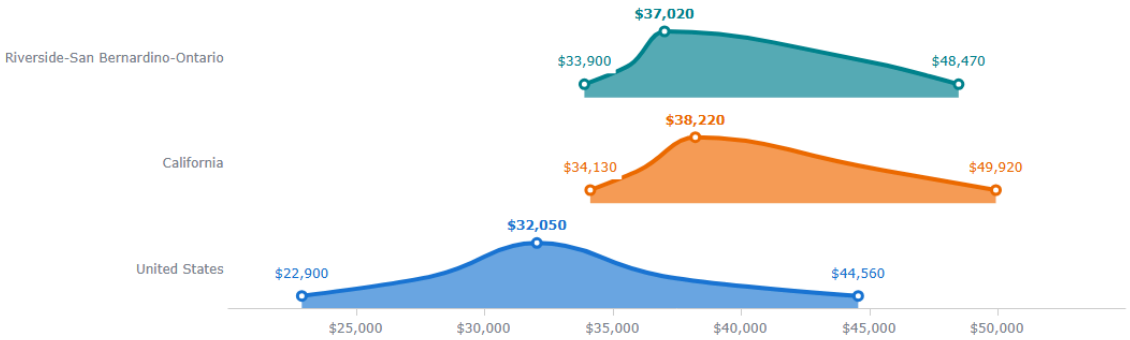
Local Wages

39-9011.00 - Childcare Workers Bright Outlook

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$37,020**.
- 10% of workers earn **$33,900 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$48,470 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$38,220**.
- 10% of workers earn **$34,130 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$49,920 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$32,050**.
- 10% of workers earn **$22,900 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$44,560 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

39-9011.00 - Childcare Workers Bright Outlook

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	62,400 employees
Projected employment (2032)	66,800 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	7%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	11,130

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	991,600 employees
Projected employment (2034)	962,400 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	-3% Decline
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	160,200

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

Local Wages

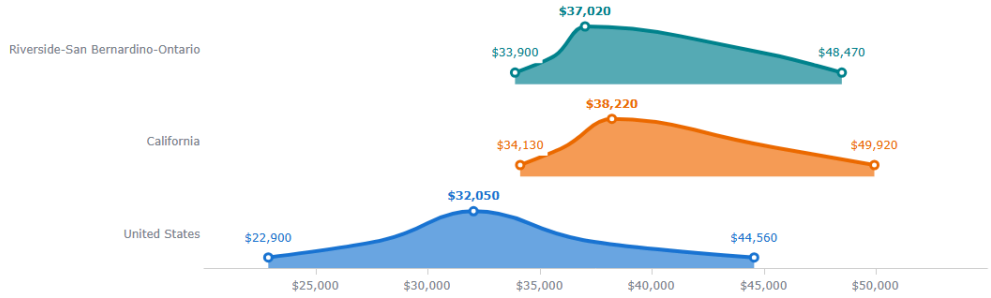
39-9011.01 - Nannies Bright Outlook

Wage data collected from **Childcare Workers**.

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

Wage data for **Childcare Workers**.

- Workers on average earn **$37,020**.
- 10% of workers earn **$33,900 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$48,470 or more**.

In California:

Wage data for **Childcare Workers**.

- Workers on average earn **$38,220**.
- 10% of workers earn **$34,130 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$49,920 or more**.

In the United States:

Wage data for **Childcare Workers**.

- Workers on average earn **$32,050**.
- 10% of workers earn **$22,900 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$44,560 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

39-9011.01 - Nannies Bright Outlook

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment data for **Childcare Workers**.

Employment (2022)	62,400 employees
Projected employment (2032)	66,800 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	7%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	11,130

In the United States:

Employment data for **Childcare Workers**.

Employment (2024)	991,600 employees
Projected employment (2034)	962,400 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	-3% Decline
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	160,200

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

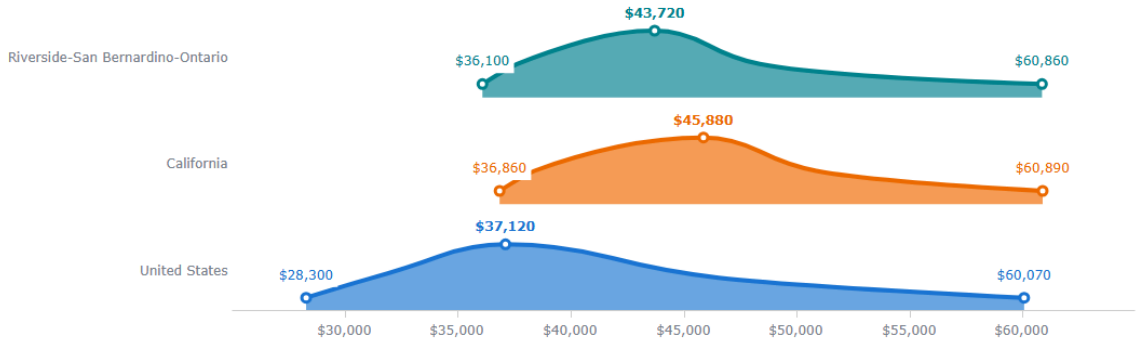
Local Wages

25-2011.00 - Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$43,720**.
- 10% of workers earn **$36,100 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$60,860 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$45,880**.
- 10% of workers earn **$36,860 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$60,890 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$37,120**.
- 10% of workers earn **$28,300 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$60,070 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

25-2011.00 - Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	53,600 employees
Projected employment (2032)	65,100 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	22%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	7,370

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	555,100 employees
Projected employment (2034)	578,100 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	4% Average
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	65,500

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

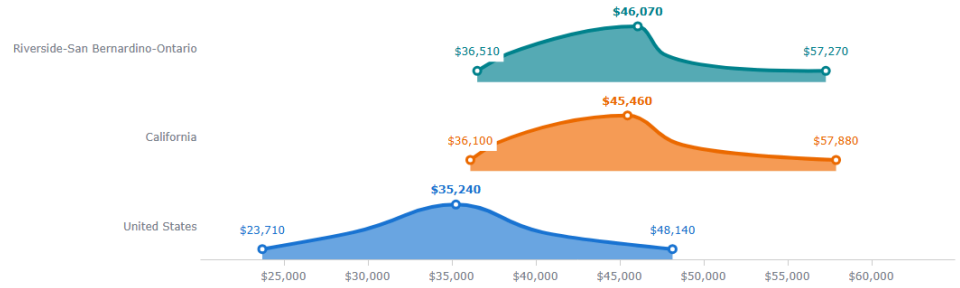
Local Wages

25-9042.00 - Teaching Assistants, Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School, Except Special Education

Wage data collected from **Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary**.

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

Wage data for **Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary**.

- Workers on average earn **$46,070**.
- 10% of workers earn **$36,510 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$57,270 or more**.

In California:

Wage data for **Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary**.

- Workers on average earn **$45,460**.
- 10% of workers earn **$36,100 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$57,880 or more**.

In the United States:

Wage data for **Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary**.

- Workers on average earn **$35,240**.
- 10% of workers earn **$23,710 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$48,140 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

25-9042.00 - Teaching Assistants, Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School, Except Special Education

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment data for **Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary**.

Employment (2022)	162,800 employees
Projected employment (2032)	171,100 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	5%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	20,220

In the United States:

Employment data for **Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary**.

Employment (2024)	1,422,800 employees
Projected employment (2034)	1,401,700 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	-2% Decline
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	170,400

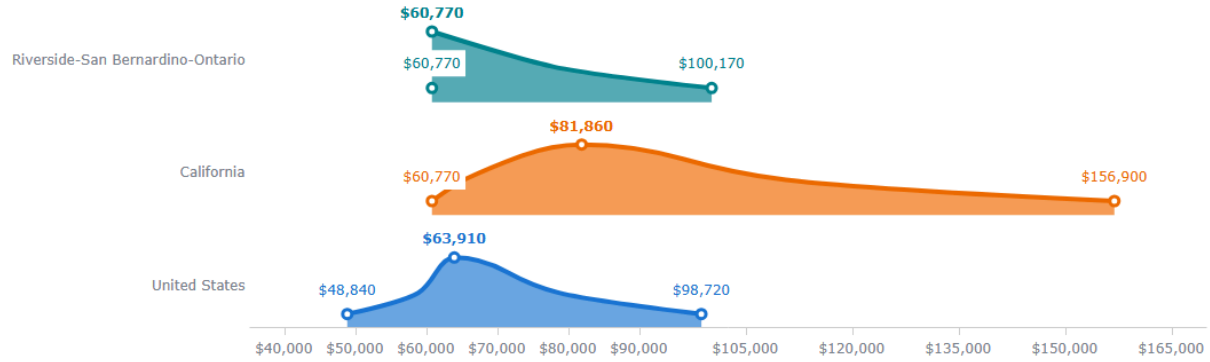
California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

Local Wages

25-2032.00 - Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$60,770**.
- 10% of workers earn **$60,770 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$100,170 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$81,860**.
- 10% of workers earn **$60,770 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$156,900 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$63,910**.
- 10% of workers earn **$48,840 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$98,720 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

25-2032.00 - Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	2,100 employees
Projected employment (2032)	2,200 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	5%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	140

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	103,400 employees
Projected employment (2034)	101,500 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	-2% Decline
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	6,200

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

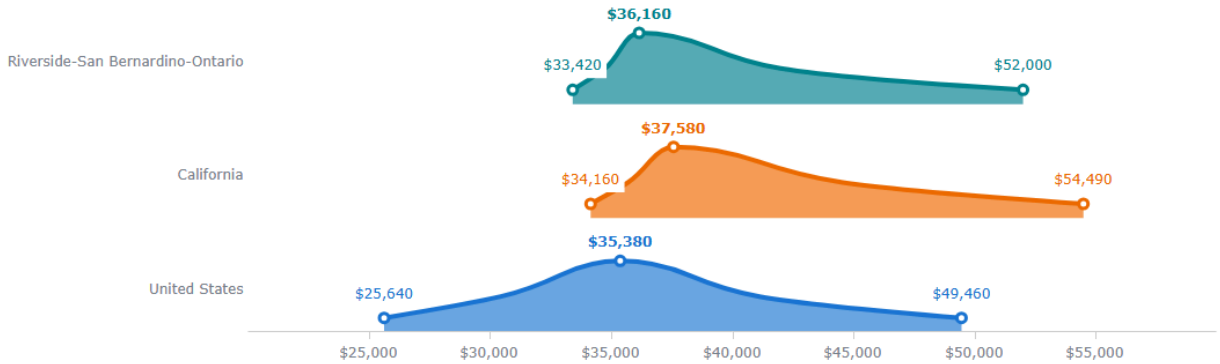
Local Wages

39-9032.00 - Recreation Workers

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$36,160**.
- 10% of workers earn **$33,420 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$52,000 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$37,580**.
- 10% of workers earn **$34,160 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$54,490 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$35,380**.
- 10% of workers earn **$25,640 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$49,460 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

39-9032.00 - Recreation Workers

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	42,500 employees
Projected employment (2032)	47,300 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	11%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	9,630

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	327,700 employees
Projected employment (2034)	341,100 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	4% Average
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	68,100

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

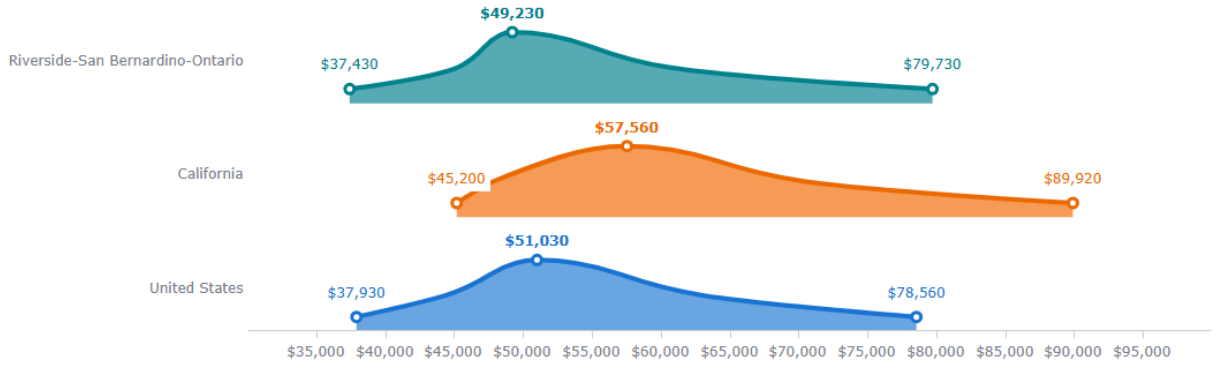
Local Wages

21-1094.00 - Community Health Workers Bright Outlook

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$49,230**.
- 10% of workers earn **$37,430 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$79,730 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$57,560**.
- 10% of workers earn **$45,200 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$89,920 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$51,030**.
- 10% of workers earn **$37,930 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$78,560 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

21-1094.00 - Community Health Workers Bright Outlook

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	8,600 employees
Projected employment (2032)	10,300 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	20%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	1,100

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	65,100 employees
Projected employment (2034)	72,500 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	11% Much faster than average
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	7,800

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

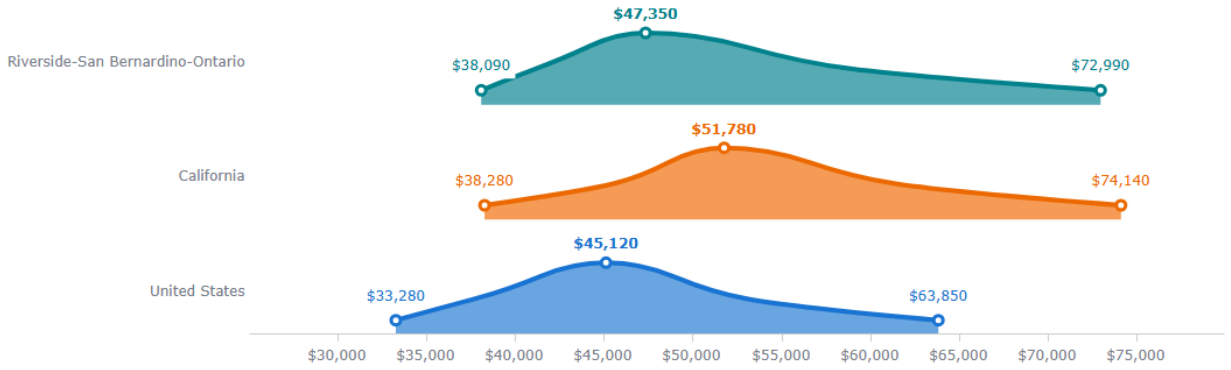
Local Wages

21-1093.00 - Social and Human Service Assistants Bright Outlook

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$47,350**.
- 10% of workers earn **$38,090 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$72,990 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$51,780**.
- 10% of workers earn **$38,280 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$74,140 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$45,120**.
- 10% of workers earn **$33,280 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$63,850 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

21-1093.00 - Social and Human Service Assistants Bright Outlook

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	53,200 employees
Projected employment (2032)	60,500 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	14%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	6,480

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	449,600 employees
Projected employment (2034)	478,500 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	6% Faster than average
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	50,600

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

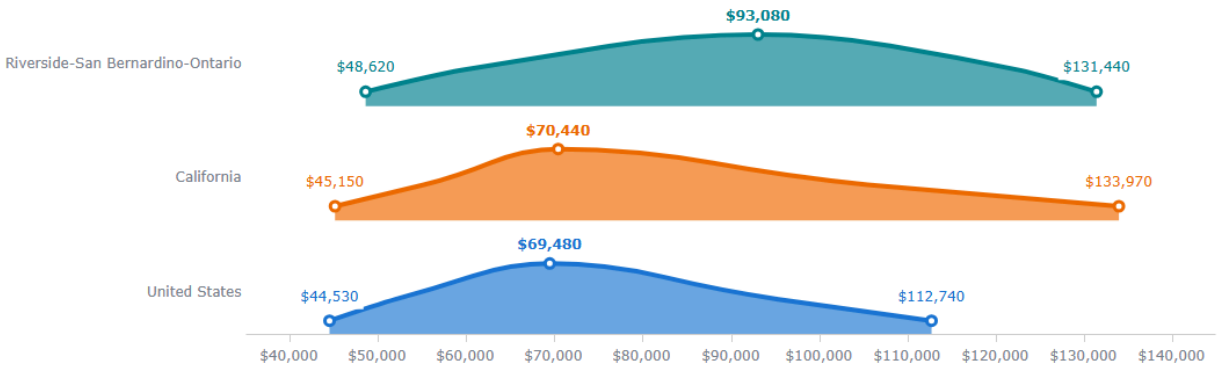
Local Wages

21-1029.00 - Social Workers, All Other

Wages for state: California Go

Wages near ZIP Code: 92408 Go

Annual Wages | Hourly Wages



In Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA:

- Workers on average earn **$93,080**.
- 10% of workers earn **$48,620 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$131,440 or more**.

In California:

- Workers on average earn **$70,440**.
- 10% of workers earn **$45,150 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$133,970 or more**.

In the United States:

- Workers on average earn **$69,480**.
- 10% of workers earn **$44,530 or less**.
- 10% of workers earn **$112,740 or more**.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 wage data.

California Employment Trends

21-1029.00 - Social Workers, All Other

View trends for state: California Go

In California:

Employment (2022)	8,700 employees
Projected employment (2032)	9,900 employees
Projected growth (2022-2032)	14%
Projected annual job openings (2022-2032)	850

In the United States:

Employment (2024)	81,000 employees
Projected employment (2034)	84,100 employees
Projected growth (2024-2034)	4% Average
Projected annual job openings (2024-2034)	7,000

California source: Projections Central 2022-2032 long-term projections. United States source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024-2034 employment projections. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period. "Projected annual job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.