



Leadership That Attracts & Retains

Strategies for Child Care Leaders



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The Zero to Five Team



Working Together For Our Children, For Our Future.

Zero to Five Montana works to increase access to early care and education while supporting families, uplifting voices, and empowering child care businesses across Montana.

Framing the Work



Leadership is your #1 recruitment tool



Turnover Crisis in Child Care



Culture is created, not accidental



Leadership drives Retention

- **Analyze leadership styles that influence retention**
- **Apply advanced leadership approaches in child care settings**
- **Identify gaps between current and desired leadership practices**
- **Create an Action Plan that includes strategies that strengthen workforce retention**



Learning objectives

High burnout + Low wages = Low retention

Staff Stay For

1

Relationships

Staff stay when they feel genuinely connected to their coworkers and supported by their leadership.

2

Respect

Staff stay when they feel valued, heard, and treated as professionals.

3

Growth

Staff stay when they see opportunities to learn, improve, and advance in their roles.





Why Leadership Matters More in Childcare

Turnover impacts

- ✓ Children & Families
- ✓ Program Stability
- ✓ Quality of Care



Leadership styles we'll explore



Transformational Leadership



Strengths-Based Leadership



Servant Leadership



**Emotionally Intelligent
Leadership**



Adaptive Leadership



Transformational Leadership



01. Builds Purpose and meaning

Selling products directly to consumers through our digital storefront.

03. Increases Commitment

Licensing our proven formulations to trusted health and wellness partners.

02. Connects daily work to impact

Monthly wellness kits delivered conveniently to subscribers.

04. Reduces Staff Burnout

Collaborating with strategic brands to expand reach and overall market impact.

Transformational Leadership Example



Reframing “just a day” into impact



Celebrating development milestones



Sharing stories of influence



Connecting to long-term child outcomes

Strengths Based Leadership



Focus on strengths over deficits



Align roles to natural abilities



Increases engagement



Reduces burnout

- Creative teacher → curriculum design
- Organized teacher → classroom systems
- Nurturing teacher → infant room support
- Social teacher → family communication



Strengths - Based Example

Servant Leadership

✓ **Leader supports the team:**

The leader prioritizes meeting staff needs so they can do their best work.

✓ **Builds Trust:**

The leader earns trust through consistency, follow-through, and genuine care for staff.

✓ **Removes barriers:**

The leader actively identifies and eliminates obstacles that create stress or inefficiency.

✓ **Increases Loyalty:**

Staff stay longer when they feel supported, valued, and not left to struggle alone.



Servant Leadership Examples:

✓ Consistently cover breaks:

Leaders step in to ensure staff receive reliable and uninterrupted breaks.

✓ Advocating for staff needs:

Leaders actively speak up to ensure staff have what they need to succeed.

✓ Listen before solving:

Leaders take time to fully hear staff concerns before offering solutions.

✓ Protecting planning time:

Leaders prioritize and safeguard time for staff to prepare and be effective.



Emotionally Intelligent Leadership



Self awareness



Awareness of others



Regulating Responses



Creating psychological safety

Example of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

- ✓ **Naming emotions in the moment:**
Acknowledging when staff are overwhelmed or frustrated
- ✓ **Responding with Curiosity:**
Asking questions instead of reacting with assumptions
- ✓ **De-escalating staff conflict:**
Staying calm and guiding productive conversations
- ✓ **Checking in Proactively:**
Noticing burnout signs and addressing them early



Adaptive Leadership



Flexible, not rigid



Adjusts to staff needs



Responds to changing environments



Encourages problem solving

Example of Adaptive Leadership

✓ Adjusting support for experience levels:

Providing more guidance to new staff, autonomy to experienced staff

✓ Problem solving with staff input:

Involving team members in finding workable solutions

✓ Shifting roles during staffing shortages:

Flexibly redistributing responsibilities to meet immediate needs

✓ Responding to change quickly:

Adapting to enrollment, behavior, or staffing challenges in real time



Leadership styles Reflection



- Which style is your strength?
- Which style is your gap?
- How does your team experience you?



Transformational Leadership



Strengths-Based Leadership



Servant Leadership



Emotionally Intelligent
Leadership



Adaptive Leadership



Let's come back together and share what came up.

You'll likely notice patterns—many programs struggle in similar areas. That's important, because it shows you're not alone—and that these are solvable challenges.

Lets share the findings

Leadership Behaviors that Drive Retention



Consistency



Recognition



Communication



Growth opportunities



Support during Stress

Recognition as a Retention Strategy



Specific, not generic:

Recognition clearly names the action or behavior being appreciated



Authentic, not forced:

Recognition feels genuine and reflects real observations



Frequent, not rare:

Recognition happens regularly, not just during formal reviews



Timely, not delayed:

Recognition is given close to the moment the behavior occurs



Growth Pathways

✓ Career progression matters:

Staff stay when they can see a future within your program

✓ Leadership development for staff:

Preparing staff for leadership roles increases engagement and ownership

✓ Skill-building opportunities:

Ongoing learning helps staff feel more confident and capable

✓ Clear pathways, not guesswork:

Staff are more committed when growth opportunities are defined and visible



Action Planning



One leadership shift to implement



One retention strategy to try



One habit to build that will support your actions