

Supporting Family Child Care in New Jersey



A Collaborative Vision for
High-Quality Care



Across the country, there is a crisis in the declining availability of family child care.

The supply of family child care is down significantly over the past decade with estimates ranging from 15% to more than 20%.¹

In New Jersey, there were nearly 5,000 registered family child care providers in 2001. That number dropped to 3,000 by 2010 and stood at less than 2,000 registered providers in 2016. At the same time, about three-quarters of New Jersey’s infants and toddlers do not have access to a licensed child care center² either. These children are *somewhere*. Stakeholders in New Jersey and in other states express a need to quantify these declines and their implications for families.

Stakeholders indicate retirement, long

hours at a challenging job, dwindling enrollment causing insufficient income, technology, and confusing regulations were contributing to the decline in registered providers.

Family child care providers who participate in multiple early childhood programs (e.g., Voluntary Registration, the Child and Adult Care Food Program – CACFP, Grow New Jersey Kids, and/or Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships) expressed frustration with sometimes conflicting regulatory requirements as well as the number of monitoring visits by early childhood funding stream, which often mean a disruption in their daily schedule and interactions with children.

“Everyone comes in with a different opinion about my program... I move the mats around depending on who is knocking on my door.”

Availability of Registered Family Child Care In CCA NJ Member Counties — Fall 2018			
County	# of FCC Homes	County	# of FCC Homes
Bergen	47	Monmouth	75
Burlington	82	Morris	54
Camden	114	Ocean	30
Essex	221	Passaic	268
Hunterdon	12	Somerset	17
Hudson	182	Sussex	18
Mercer	40	Union	74
Middlesex	117	Warren	48

There are major system barriers like low compensation, low payment rates in the subsidy program, the enrollment cap (five children maximum), and inconsistent rules or standards across initiatives. Providers and Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) staff also point to day-to-day barriers like the Manual of Regulations and other materials available only in English; challenges with finding and using substitutes; access to computers/electronic devices and for some -- access to Internet/wi-fi. **These are all problems with solutions.**

Family Child Care: A Place Like Home

Families choose home-based care for price, location, a desire for a home environment, the opportunity for a personal relationship with the caregiver, availability during nontraditional hours, and small group sizes for interactions.

Particularly for families with infants and toddlers, parents seek out family child care homes. Families with siblings often want to keep their children together – for family reasons and also for logistical reasons. It’s not easy juggling work and child care, particularly for families with multiple children.

Seventy percent of low-income children in regular, non-parental care receive care within three miles of their home.³ In communities where price, location, and transportation barriers limit child care options and limit the feasibility of a child care center business, family child care fills a critical need for families.

Predictors of quality in family child care include licensing, professional support, training, financial resources, and provider experience.⁴

“People don’t have much knowledge of home day care. They always look for big daycares thinking they are more professional, experienced, better routines, and kids are safe. Most of the kids I get are from parents who can’t afford big daycares, kids that can’t adapt to big crowds and kids that require more one on one care.”

Despite research and quality validation studies, stakeholders shared anecdotally that some families have quality concerns about family child care – potentially based on preconceived notions, not experience.

There is an opportunity to leverage the research-basis for small group size, relationships, continuity of care, and predictors of quality in family child care. The benefits of family child care may not be widely known to parents, and it is crucial to educate policymakers about how family child care fits into the systems of quality and early learning in New Jersey.

“[CCR&R] can make those local connections. They’re the people out there in the community and they know the providers — they’re in a role that could be very influential in improving the quality and availability of family child care in communities.”



Time for a Thoughtful Strategy and Collaborative Approach

Throughout 2018, Child Care Aware of New Jersey (CCANJ) interviewed stakeholders and brought together CCR&R staff and family child care providers to create an agenda to support and advance family child care.

The agenda was informed through numerous conversations, a day-long convening of child care providers and CCR&R staff and directors, as well as a survey of family child care providers where nearly 500 providers responded in both English and Spanish to share their challenges, hopes, and suggestions to work collaboratively with CCR&Rs (see appendix for a survey summary).

The CCANJ project is based on two foundational ideas:

1. CCR&R agencies are part of the solution for child care in New Jersey and should be a centerpiece of the work to build the supply and the recognition of high-quality family child care.
2. It is crucial to listen to and collaborate *with* family child care providers *for* family child care providers and the families who depend on them.

CCANJ embarked on this effort now because child care availability is in a crisis and because New Jersey leaders are making decisions. The following are timely opportunities:

- Congressional investment that nearly doubled the funds for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, sent \$38 million in new dollars to New Jersey in FY2018 plus an additional \$1.1 million in FY2019⁵
- The reimagined federal Preschool Development Grants for birth-to-five mixed delivery approaches have a definition that includes licensed/regulated family child care
- Expansion funds for Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships where services can be delivered through regulated family child care
- Advocacy campaigns, foundations, and national organizations growing interest in family child care

Each one of these is an opportunity to include family child care in the strategy and contribute to reversing the declining availability of family child care.



Recommendations

It is going to take every willing partner to turn around the declining numbers of registered family child care programs. The work should include strategies to support current family child care providers, strategies to bring unregistered family child care providers back into the system, and strategies to recruit new registered family child care providers. The approach is to support children where they are by supporting their child care providers.

This is a statewide effort because we have a

statewide challenge in the decreasing availability of registered family child care which needs statewide solutions. Further, state-level policy and funding opportunities are guiding our steps.

We observe so many allies and potential allies for family child care, and we know that in addition to changing policy, there exists a need to change hearts and minds about family child care as well.

Stakeholder interviews, provider input, and the convening in September 2018 revealed common themes:

- A desire to work together as allies to increase the availability of family child care
- Compensation is a barrier to recruitment (and includes complexities of the cap on enrollment and insufficient payment rates in subsidy)
- Peer support among providers is crucial, as is professional development and peer support for CCR&R staff working with family child care providers to translate knowledge into practice

The following recommendations for action have been identified:

- Understanding the Rules and the Roles Across New Jersey Agencies and Authorities
- Facilitating Peer Support Among and Between CCR&R Staff and Family Child Care Providers and Strengthening Relationships
- Implementing Background Checks
- Work Group to Explore Issues of Substitute Staff in Family Child Care Programs
- Working Together to Create the Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Vision and Plan for Policy Changes
- Promoting “How Family Child Care Fits” and Supporting Families’ Choices
- Addressing the Technology Barrier

CCR&R staff and the New Jersey Family Child Care Provider Association identified tactics to implement each of these recommendations.

These collaborative strategies support CCR&R, family child care providers, and the families throughout New Jersey communities who seek home-based care for their children. To find out more, please visit Child Care Aware of New Jersey at: <https://www.ccanj.org/>

Appendix

Child Care Aware of New Jersey conducted a statewide survey among family child care providers between April 12 – August 24, 2018. The survey was disseminated to 1,020 providers with 499 responding (48.9%). Survey links were available in English and Spanish (406 providers responded in English and 93 providers responded in Spanish). The intent of the survey was to better understand the composition of the family child care workforce, challenges faced by providers, and to identify ways in which Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies can best meet the needs of family child care providers.

Highlights

FCC Workforce Composition: Of those family child care providers responding to the survey, more than half (56%) have 10 or more years of experience providing child care. About three-fifths (58%) identify as Black or African American. Also, nearly three-fifths (57%) have some college or a college degree.

Children Served/Enrollment: The children participating in family child care programs speak a diverse array of languages including English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, Creole, German, Turkish, Urdu, Chinese, and Bangali. Most providers (80%) say they don't have difficulty recruiting children for their programs. However, for family child care providers who struggle with full enrollment, they are looking for help with advertising and referrals.

Registration/Provider Motivation: Overwhelmingly, providers see a benefit to state registration (with access to information and resources as well as to professional development opportunities topping the list). Many family child care providers enter the field because they feel it's "their calling," however, low pay and lack of benefits could influence whether they continue providing child care to children in their community.

Provider Support Suggestions/Internet Access: When asked about what changes they'd like to make to their program over the next year, the most frequently mentioned goal (selected by 39% of respondents) was learning how to be a better manager of their child care business. More than 90% of family child care providers



own a computer and 61% said they would be interested in computer training. Of those who have a computer, 93% said they have reliable internet. There was strong interest in online training. Two top topics of interest selected by family child care providers were: addressing children's challenging behaviors (69%) and strengthening business management skills (58%).

Child Care Food Program Participation and Services of Interest: Only 32% of respondents said they participate in the child care food program. Responses indicated that some didn't know about it, didn't know the rules, or didn't know how to access the program. More outreach could potentially increase participation. Among future services that could be offered by CCR&Rs, 56% of family child care providers expressed an interest in a book sharing program (like a mobile library) with 50% of providers who responded in Spanish interested in children's books written in Spanish and 53% of family child care providers expressed an interest in a toy sharing program (like a mobile toy library to vary toys and learning materials).

Home Repair/Facility Needs: An area with a very large interest from the family child care community was related to home repairs and playground improvements. More than half of respondents indicated a need and 118 specific suggestions were made with playgrounds/playground equipment (46%), window repairs/screens (18.6%), and fencing assistance/support/repair (13.5%) as the top suggestions.



Challenges Expressed by Family Child Care Providers

Children Served/Enrollment: Some providers expressed frustration with recruiting children for their programs. Provider comments included: not having enough referrals, limited to no advertising- relying on word of mouth, court challenges with space, payment issues with families (co-pays not paid; families struggling with the cost of care), families' need for non-traditional hours (not offered), not many referrals from the state, and impact of state pre-k). Some providers said their parents don't qualify for assistance, however, the families are living paycheck to paycheck and struggle with making child care payments (or paying in full). Some said that it has become more difficult to enroll 3-5 year old children because of the school district offering full day preschool.

Provider Registration Challenges:

Provider registration challenges top responses: 61% said state regulations, 47% said paperwork, and 35% said training requirements. Provider comments included: unannounced inspections that disrupt the program/children for the day, calling in for attendance, low payments, the low maximum number of children allowed in the home (with or without an assistant), trainings that are hard to attend in person due to location or time, the rules for substitutes (as well as finding substitutes), paperwork, delays with processing paperwork related to certification renewals, more regulations every year, and

not being treated/seen as professionals. Many providers expressed frustration with the cap on the maximum number of children and the threshold where an assistant is required. The concerns raised were related to income earned (e.g., with an assistant, providers ought to be able to care for more than 5 children – otherwise, not enough income is generated to share).

Challenges of being a Family Child Care Provider:

Nearly 40% said learning to live with changing income, 30% said finding children to care for, and 30% said collecting parent fees in full and on time. Most providers want support for recruitment but are not interested in support for fee collection. Provider comments included: unannounced inspections that are disruptive, low pay, no benefits, getting parents to follow rules, being limited to 5 children, keeping up with paperwork, not being respected, and feeling drained after work hours. Lack of respect was frequently mentioned and little positive feedback.

Reasons Why Family Child Care Providers

Might Stop Providing Child Care: Many providers expressed support for the work they do and cannot envision leaving the field. Among those reasons cited as why providers might leave the field: 65.5% said low pay, 56.6% said no benefits, 26% said long hours; other comments – retirement/aging, medical reasons/health, the low number of children allowed, parents always late picking up children, not receiving co-pays on time (or at all), part-time parents who are not committed to set schedules, enrollment difficulties, stress, and burnout.

Maintenance and Investment

Challenges: While there were many questions where space was offered for providers to offer comments, the largest number of comments entered (118 including responses in English and Spanish) were related to home repairs that would enable providers to improve their programs for children. Provider suggestions were related to grant assistance or reimbursement (not loans). Suggestions included: playground fixes/support/improvement, window repairs/screens, fencing, gates, and backyard/black top/yard repair, painting, carpet, toys and learning materials, curriculum and books, stairs, floors, roofing, pipes, indoor play space repairs, and ceiling fans.

Endnotes

1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Research Brief #2: Trends in Family Child Care Home Licensing Regulations and Policies for 2014, available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/research-brief-2-trends-family-child-care-home-licensing-regulations-and-policies-2014>; Committee for Economic Development, Child Care in State Economies: 2019 Update. <https://www.ced.org/childcareimpact>.

2 Advocates for Children of New Jersey. (2017). *No Room for Babies: Center-Based Infant-Toddler Child Care in Short Supply*. (2017) <https://acnj.org/issues/early-learning/infant-toddler/infant-toddler-child-care-capacity-in-new-jersey/>.

3 National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2016). Fact Sheet: How Far Are Early Care and Education Arrangements from Children's Homes? OPRE Report No. 2016-10, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services. Available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2014>.

4 Raikes, H., Torquati, J., Jung, E., Peterson, C., Atwater, J., Scott, J., and Messner, L. (2013). Family child care in four Midwestern states: Multiple measures of quality and relations to outcomes by licensed status and subsidy participation. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(4), 879–892; Forry, N., Iruka, I., Tout, K., Torquati, J., Susman-Stillman, A., Bryant, D., and Daneri, M.P. (2013). Predictors of quality and child outcomes in family child care settings. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(4), 893–904. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200613000550>.

5 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FY2019 CCDF Discretionary Funding allocated to states. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2019-ccdf-allocations-based-on-appropriations>.

Child Care Aware of New Jersey

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www.co.bergen.nj.us/bcdhs/divisions/children.htm

Burlington County

Burlington County CAP
718 South Route 130
Burlington, NJ 08016
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www.bccap.org

Camden County

Camden County Department of
Children's Services
512 Lakeland Road, Suite 200
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Phone: (856) 374-6376
www.camdencounty.com/children

Essex County

Programs for Parents, Inc.
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Hudson County

Urban League of Hudson County
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