



Khalida Naz is a Licensed Family Child Care Provider and Owner/Operator of Bright Home Daycare in Springfield, Virginia

Virginia Can't Work Without Her

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For Khalida Naz, the work day begins as early as 6 a.m. She starts each morning by setting out juice cups and organizing her child care space to welcome families who arrive with infants and toddlers in tow. Parents sign in and transition their children to toys or books in Khalida's bright family room, and then leave for their own jobs in law, finance, or medicine. Parents' confidence in the expert care that Khalida and her assistant will provide for the next 10 hours is the critical foundation of their own work and family life, yet Khalida's work—the day-to-day routine of home-based child care providers—is often invisible and undervalued even within the broader child care sector.

Like many home-based providers, Khalida started her business to solve her own child care dilemma. After immigrating from Pakistan with her husband, Khalida worked as a teacher's assistant and went to school to improve her English. Then, after having a child who was born with some chronic health problems, she realized she couldn't afford child care. That's when she discovered the Infant Toddler Family Day Care Network, which provided the training, networking, and technical assistance that helped her open her own child care business as a registered provider.

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Seven years later, after courses in child development at the local community college, completing numerous forms, and meeting all of the child care safety and quality requirements set by her state and county, she acquired her license to care for up to seven children in her rented home. Along the way, she’s also learned to navigate the complex federal, state, and county systems that regulate and support home-based child care. Some of her parents receive a subsidy from the county, which helps cover tuition. She also receives about \$400 per month to help cover the expenses of three meals and two snacks a day for the three infants and four toddlers in her care. Both subsidies require time-consuming monitoring and reporting of expenses that she does after her long day caring for children, cleaning, and preparing lessons for the next day. Still, it’s what she needs to do in order to keep her small business afloat, with an annual income under \$30,000 per year in one of the country’s most expensive zip codes.

As a business, she notes, home based child care operates on a wing and a prayer. For example, she says, although she’s grateful that her landlord paid the \$3,000 necessary to fence her back yard in order to meet the state’s safety requirement, other expenses of maintaining her business crop up unpredictably. She pays to market her business, for her own health and business insurance, and sometimes needs to replace equipment or purchase new toys. “When a family decides to move or equipment needs to be replaced, or I need to pay a doctor or hire a substitute so that I can go to the doctor, the money coming in doesn’t always cover the money going out.”

She’s learned to operate on a narrow margin and has just taken on a full-time assistant so that she can care for 12 children in the hope that the extra income will enable her to save toward a down payment on a home of her own. “This is the fourth house I’ve had my child care business in,” she explains. “When you’re renting, you’re always worrying if the landlord’s

circumstances will change or neighbors will complain, and if you have to move, you often start all over with new clients.”

Although Khalida has given 15 years to a profession that barely pays her a living wage, she’s anything but bitter. “I just want leaders to see us and listen to us,” she says. “We providers, we love our jobs. It is our earning, but it is also the love of our heart. I am grateful to be in this field, but we also need true support, so that we can continue to grow and be there reliably for children and their families.”



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