



Building Belonging: Valuing Family Child Care Via Licensing Systems

Home Grown's Family Child Care Licensing Work Group Recommendations 2024



Home Grown is a national collaborative of funders committed to improving the quality of and access to home-based child care. Home Grown's mission is to support systemic change across the country for all home-based child care providers. Home Grown envisions a country in which all children have the care they need to grow, learn and thrive. To achieve this vision, Home Grown seeks to remove policy barriers, strengthen home-based child care practices and business models, and support the growth and recognition of the sector so that all providers have the tools and resources they need to offer quality care options for parents to choose from.

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Introduction

The mission of Home Grown is inclusive and recognizes and values the contributions of both formal and informal home-based child care providers which includes family child care providers (registered, licensed or licensed-exempt), and family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers. This project focused exclusively on the experiences of family child care providers (FCC). In the future, we hope to engage FFN caregivers in understanding more about their perceptions of state licensing systems, their barriers to participation in these systems, and how they might be able to access state public support outside of licensing.

Licensing is critical infrastructure in the family child care system: Through licensing, family child care providers are publicly recognized as child care professionals. In recognition of the important impact of state licensing policy and practice on family child care, Home Grown brought together its first-ever Family Child Care Licensing Work Group (“Work Group”). The Work Group consisted of family child care professionals who convened regularly to develop Home Grown’s understanding of state licensing for family child care and develop recommendations for these systems. This report represents their work.

Audience. The report is intended for use by family child care professionals, state leaders, licensing staff, and others who understand the fundamental and critical role that state licensing systems play in the development of the family child care system.

Approach and Organization. Home Grown invited existing family child care professionals who were directly engaged in their state’s family child care licensing system to collaborate in developing these licensing recommendations. This approach to the Work Group reflects Home Grown’s commitment to working directly and collaboratively with family child care providers in its work, recognizing the deep expertise of those who have decided to combine their commitment to care for and educate children with their work as small business leaders. Individually and collectively, the family child care professionals who joined the Work Group put a high value on licensing, strongly emphasizing the continued development of family child care licensing that supports and recognizes the professional expertise and value of family child care providers. As one family child care professional put it:

“Licensing rules are set by the state to ensure that all practicing professionals have appropriate education and training, and that they abide by recognized standards of professional conduct while serving their clients.”

– Family Child Care Professional

We hope that family child care professionals see themselves in this report. The family child care professionals who gave so much of themselves to work on this report are committed to working at a high level for the children and families they serve and performing well within state licensing systems. They view licensing as vital to supporting their credibility and professionalism, while also helping others to see them as the highly skilled professionals they are. These providers use their creativity, ingenuity and knowledge to further the health, safety and development of the children in their care and want to be recognized for their roles. Family child care providers often feel forgotten in the child care sector and view licensing practices as contributing to, and in many ways, defining who they are as professional educators and caregivers.

This report identifies the fundamental principles for approaching licensing for family child care, and provides key insights and recommendations developed through Home Grown’s collaborative process.



The recommendations are organized into seven areas for states to consider as they are implementing and revising their licensing work and seeking to ensure that their licensing infrastructure takes into account the perspectives of critical experts in the field—family child care providers.

1. *Principles*
2. *Licensing Standards and Expectations*
3. *Language Access*
4. *Monitoring and Enforcement*
5. *State-Provider Engagement*
6. *Provider Support*
7. *Costs*

Overview of Work Group Participants and Process

The Family Child Care Licensing Work Group was made up of representatives from a geographically diverse set of states, with urban, suburban, and rural participation. These professionals had a wide range of experience, ranging from one year to 32 years. The average tenure of the participating providers was 13 years. The group represented diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and included providers who self-identified as Asian, Black, Hispanic, and white. The Work Group also included multilingual representation, with some participants also speaking Spanish and Mandarin. Members of the Work Group engaged with the public sector not only through licensing but also through participation in other public programs. Over 70% participated in their state's child care assistance program including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and 55% participated in their state's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). All participants were part of networks and associations, including informal local networks, state specific networks, and for some, national organizations such as the National Black Child Development Institute, the National Association of Family Child Care, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The Work Group met on eight Saturdays throughout the year and each meeting focused on a specific topic. The topics included: standards and expectations; monitoring and enforcement; provider relationship with licensing staff; provider voice; and costs. In addition to the group sessions, providers also participated in individual check-in meetings throughout the process. All Work Group members were compensated for their time.

The Work Group was co-facilitated by an experienced family child care provider who serves as the Provider in Residence for Home Grown and a policy analyst with significant state government leadership experience that included oversight for licensing. Home Grown's Director of Policy and Strategy joined most meetings as an observer.

To create a safe space and ensure equity of voice amongst participants, the Work Group members established group agreements before beginning the process. The agreements were:

To engage:	To stay safe:	To learn and contribute:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time to contribute and to comment • Staying on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No judgment • We are being heard • Respectful of everyone's time • Acknowledgement that we might have different values • Respect for different values and geographies • Awareness of personal bias • Empathy • What is said here, stays here • Practice patience and respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete surveys, contribute to materials and, visuals, participate in open dialogue

In between meetings, Work Group members completed surveys with open-ended questions for each topic area where they shared additional experiences, recommendation and perspectives.

Work Group members were also asked to complete additional questionnaires that require them to spend time getting to know how their state licensing standards are created and implemented. While developing these recommendations, the Work Group considered what was fair, relevant and appropriate for family child care, and what the unintended consequences might be from the recommendations proposed.

The final recommendations in this guide reflect the consensus of the Work Group participants, and are based on their knowledge and experience with family child care in their states. Work Group participants were also encouraged to network and consult with others in their states throughout the course of this process. Work Group participants noted the many similarities in their experiences and viewpoints, despite the fact that they are from different regions and did not know one another prior to the process.

To evaluate the group's recommendations, the Work Group recruited additional family child care providers through Home Grown's Policy Work Group and Provider Insight Panel, as well as the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC). These providers were invited to review the recommendations and offer written feedback. The providers were then asked to participate in a collaborative meeting to discuss all the feedback and further refine the recommendations.

This final recommendation report has been approved by the Family Child Care Licensing Work Group.



I. Principles

The Work Group recommends that states adopt principles to provide a framework for family child care licensing. The principles are intended to inform the entire life-cycle of licensing, including the design, revision and implementation of licensing standards. These principles speak to the content of the licensing standards and prioritize standards that focus on child development, health and safety, while ensuring that the standards are feasible and achievable by those who must implement them. The principles also include implementation recommendations. The guiding principles for the licensing recommendations are:

- **Child-focused:** The standard is needed to support child development, health and safety.
- **Achievable:** The standard is achievable by providers, i.e. it can be feasibly and reasonably implemented.
- **Consistent and clear:** The state is consistent and clear about both articulating and implementing the standards themselves, how they are applied, what is expected, how implementation is supported, and timelines and consequences if compliance cannot be achieved.
- **State supported:** Supports, such as resources, technical assistance, professional development, and referrals, are provided by the state to assist providers in meeting licensing expectations.
- **Well-informed by family child care providers:** Family child care providers are recognized as experts, actively engaged, and play an integral role in standards development, implementation and revision. They are valued partners in all parts of the life-cycle for licensing.
- **Partnership:** There is a mutual understanding of the role of the state and providers, with each respecting and supporting each other's role in the child care system. The licensing agency and its staff seek to facilitate sound understanding and implementation of licensing standards. Providers respect and value the role of licensing. Licensing is integral to advancing the professionalism of the vital work of child care. Licensing plays a fundamental role in advancing child health, safety and development. Providers and the state both value and work on a mutually respectful partnership with the understanding that the provision of family child care is an essential, critical element of the state's child care system.



II. Licensing Standards and Expectations

These recommendations focus on what providers find to be most beneficial and helpful in regards to overall licensing standards and expectations. These recommendations propose that licensing requirements be closely tied to advancing the health, safety and development of the children in care and should include strategies to promote full implementation of the state's expectations for licensing.

1. Focus on Child Health, Safety and Development

Providers highly value a focus on child-related health, safety and development requirements. These standards should be clear and specific, and accompanied by ongoing support, such as professional development.

Family child care providers are focused on meeting the needs of children in their care, especially in regards to their health, safety and development. Licensing plays an important role because as providers review licensing requirements, they want to know that the expectations are aligned with meeting the needs of the child.

Examples of standards that providers consider to have a focus on child-related health, safety, and development include standards related to: caring for infants and toddlers, transportation, child health, child observation and family involvement. In these areas, there is currently a considerable variation across states. The [National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations](#) notes that 43 states have general infant toddler requirements in their licensing standards, but the depth varies considerably, with 22 states calling out infant-toddler interactions, 29 calling out infant-toddler programs and activities, and 31 covering infant-toddler specific equipment and materials. In child health, the National Database shows that 19 states require documentation of the child's health exam, 11 require a daily health screening, and seven require lead screening. For child observations, according to the National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations, for family child care programs, there are three states that have standards for family child care around observation and assessment of child development, one that requires this information be used to individualize services, and three that require sharing with families. In the area of family communication, 39 states have a general requirement for family communication, seven ask for logs of children's care and for family involvement, seven have general family involvement requirements and three include specific requirements for family involvement.

About Voices from the Field

To lift up provider perspectives and voices, each recommendation includes quotes or "voices from the field" from various providers from different states and regions. These quotes shine a light on the provider experiences and provide context to the recommendations. For additional quotes, go to the Voices from the Field in the appendix.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Health:**

“My state's unwavering commitment to the health and safety of children in child care facilities is truly exemplary. It is heartening to note that before enrolling, each child must furnish proof of immunization and undergo a comprehensive physical examination within a year. Similarly, staff members are mandated to complete a health screening form, undergo a tuberculosis test, and maintain impeccable physical as well as mental health. What is truly impressive is that these regulations are stringently monitored on an annual basis to ensure compliance.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Staff Qualifications & Training Requirements:**

“Our state has recently changed standards and continues to review and assess minimum standards with the mindset that a well-prepared workforce will be able to offer high-quality care to children and families. This process should be a model for other states.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Family Involvement:**

“We currently have no family communication requirements in place. I think something should be implemented for providers to better serve their families.”

2. **Include Emergency Advance Planning**

Providers value licensing standards that help them prepare in advance for emergencies, such as emergency plans and routine preparation drills.

Family child care providers recognize that it is crucial to be prepared for extraordinary events, and prioritize ensuring that plans are in place for emergency situations. According to the National Database of Child Care Licensing, for family child care, 36 states require drills to be conducted, 30 require emergency evacuation plans and 29 require general emergency plans.



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Emergency Preparation Drills:**

“Our state requires emergency plans to be posted with our license. We are also required to perform fire and tornado drills monthly. The date, number of children and evacuation time is recorded and checked by the surveyor annually. These drills are so important and if I wasn’t required to do them monthly, I would probably not be as prepared in a real emergency.”

3. **Show Explicit Pathways for Meeting Standards**

If a licensing standard can be met in more than one way, providers value having that information widely and easily available so that they know what is permissible.

4. **Exclude Aspirational or Best Practice Standards**

Providers have concerns about the inclusion of statements of best practices as part of licensing standards. Providers view licensing standards as requirements.

These two recommendations go hand in glove. Providers recognize that licensing standards are requirements and, as indicated in the principles recommendations, clarity about requirements is important to them. If a licensing standard can be met in more than one way, providers expect this information to be readily and widely available, preferably in the licensing standards themselves. This could also be done through licensing interpretive resources. Providers value specific information on the availability of licensing waivers or variances, and concrete, practical information about obtaining these when they are an option to show compliance.

At the same time, providers find the inclusion of aspirational or best practice standards within licensing to be confusing and inconsistent with licensing’s role in the child care system. With licensing standards understood to be requirements, states are urged to exclude best practice or aspirational licensing expectations from the licensing framework. It is confusing to family child care providers to have requirements mixed in with voluntary best practices. Providers also note that intertwining requirements with best practices can result in differential treatment across providers, which gets in the way of the consistency that is a core to the integrity of licensing and can lead to variations in interpretation, which also speak to problems with consistency. Overall, providers expect that licensing agencies will openly and explicitly indicate what it takes to meet licensing expectations. The greater interpretive leeway the individual state licensing representative has in working with the provider, the greater the potential for distrust at the provider level. Distrust undermines the fundamental work of licensing and does not serve the mutual interests of the state and the provider. As noted in the provider insights, failing to specify the options for compliance can lead family child care providers who work within the licensed system to decide to leave it.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Licensing Pathways & Language Around Best Practices:**

“My state uses some ‘may’ language. Most of the ‘may’ language occurs when talking about serious violations. In all the violation statements where ‘may’ is stated, they talk about possibly suspending a license to operate for the safety of the children. I understand the reasoning behind the ‘may’ statements, but as a provider, if my livelihood was put at risk due to an irate parent’s unjustified complaint, I would have a hard time being understanding about the whole situation.”

5. **Include Provider Rights**

Providers value licensing standards that include clear statements of provider rights.

Family child care providers value having clear, widely available information about their rights, including information about how they can get support to ensure that they understand and can successfully implement licensing standards; how they can appeal or question concerns or violations; what waivers and variances can cover and how to get them; how they can ask questions and discuss questions about interpretation of licensing requirements without retaliation or fear.



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Provider Rights:**

“A few years ago, I received two violations during an inspection. The day before the licenser arrived, I had punctured a small hole in a changing pad and part of a porch railing had been taken out by a tree. I live in a rural community and I searched my local stores the same day the pad was punctured for a new pad and could not find a replacement. The porch railing was not used as an access or exit for my program families and was scheduled for repair in two weeks. Even when I explained the situation and could provide proof that I had ordered a replacement [changing pad] online, I was still cited for two violations. The paperwork for the violations contained very little information on the steps I could take to appeal and did not note if I had access to any free legal advice. I had to navigate the appeals process by trial and error and to this day I do not know if I could have had access to free legal advice or representation.”

III. Language Access

A strength of child care providers who work from their homes is the variety of languages that they speak, with 19 percent primarily speaking a language other than English to the children and families they serve. In contrast, in child care centers, only 9 percent primarily speak a language other than English, according to an analysis conducted by [Child Trends for OPRE](#). The child population of the United States is linguistically diverse, and family child care providers are responding to these needs. According to the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in a report led by the [Erickson Institute and Mathematica](#), the range of languages spoken in family child care settings is an important contributor to quality child care. Recent information from the [United States Census Bureau](#) shows an increase of 52.3 percent, from 2000 to 2019, of those speaking a language other than English at home with the greatest gains for those speaking African or South Asian languages, and Spanish. For the licensing system to work in partnership with family child care, more work is needed to support bilingual and multilingual providers.

Within this context, three recommendations emerged from the Family Child Care Licensing Work Group.

1. Find Out the Language Preference of the Provider

Providers value an application for a license that includes the opportunity for the provider to indicate their preferred language.

For providers who are not adept at communicating in English, whether oral or written, states are urged to gather information about the languages of their family child care providers potentially via licensing or renewal applications. This is a first step in working to examine the language needs of the family child care provider community.

2. Use Multiple Languages for Written Communication

Providers value the provision of all written information — regulations, interpretation guides, directions, checklists, notices of violation — in their home language.

Family Child Care Licensing Work Group members are concerned about providing clear information to providers. When there are significant language barriers, this can interfere with the provider's ability to successfully participate in licensing, especially for monitoring and enforcement. As a provider noted, "I know many [providers] who have signed violations without understanding that they are signing something, that seems unfair to me."



3. Use Multiple Languages for Oral Communication

Providers value communication that respects their primary language when interacting with licensing inspectors.

There are multiple ways this could occur: for example, having licensing staff who speak the primary language of the providers, or implementing the use of professional interpretation services.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on Language Access:

“These are long-overdue recommendations. Equity demands that educators are able to clearly understand and pass on the information they are being given to successfully do their jobs.”

“Not receiving information in my native language was a barrier for me, even though I'm bilingual. It's hard to find information in Spanish, for example. Right now we have the option to translate any information in any different languages, but it's so many people that don't know how to use that technology. It would be nice for me to see that other people can find the information in their own language. Right now it's available in English only.”

IV. Monitoring and Enforcement

Monitoring and enforcement is central to the child care licensing system. According to the National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations, 24 states perform routine inspections annually; another 12 perform them twice a year; and five perform them three or more times a year. The Family Child Care Licensing Work Group is seeking additional improvements that contribute to a system built on consistency and impartiality. The first cluster of recommendations (part A) centers on opportunities to strengthen the work before and during routine monitoring visits. These recommendations stem from the unique situation of family child care providers who are working by themselves and do not have other staff on hand to support them and the children in their care during monitoring visits. The second cluster of recommendations (part B) looks at opportunities related to the conclusion of and recording of monitoring visits.

A. Before and During Routine Monitoring Visits

The first two of these four recommendations are explicitly related to the unique situation of family child care in which one person is fully responsible for providing care, even during monitoring visits. Implementing these suggestions will contribute to the overall efficiency of the licensing system. The last two recommendations focus on the need for clear, consistent and advance communication from the state licensing staff to the family child care providers.

1. Gather Provider Input on Best Times for Licensing Visits

Providers value sharing information on the time of day that works best for routine inspections and being provided with timeframes for routine visits in advance.

Family child care providers face a unique staffing situation within the child care system. Family child care programs are typically one-person operations, which makes the issue of scheduling for routine state licensing visitors complex as the providers must stay focused on their number one responsibility of supervising and caring for children during these visits.



Gathering information about times of day that work best for routine inspections is one way that states can recognize the unique situation of family child care providers. Another option to ensure that the state licensing staff visits at a time that makes it easier for the home-based provider to balance their responsibilities to the state with their duties for the children is for the state to allow the designation of black-out times when visits won't be scheduled.

2. Gather and Review Licensing Paperwork Prior to In-Person Licensing Visits

Providers value submitting required licensing paperwork in advance of the visit so that the focus can remain on the children, supervision and their needs.

Additionally, providers raised concerns that providing access to paperwork during a licensing visit contradicts their responsibilities for child supervision. Instead, they would like to be able to get paperwork to state licensing staff prior to the visit so that they can most efficiently fulfill their dual responsibility of overseeing and supervising the children in their care and ensure that they are working cooperatively with the licensing staff during the visit.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Monitoring Visits:**

“I had a personal experience where a consultant [licensing representative] arrived during a special holiday party, which happened to be on Valentine's Day. Luckily, it was after the parents had left, but the children were still excited about their donuts and the party. I felt that adding an additional “new” person to the day was a bit overwhelming for both the kids and me. To make matters worse, it was also my annual compliance visit.”

“My subsidy support has me turn in paperwork early. Her visits are fast and stress free.”

3. Provide Checklists in Advance of Licensing Visits

Providers value checklists of what the licensing staff will review and observe during visits, and value receiving outlines of the expectations of licensing staff during visits.

Family child care providers are committed to their partnership with state licensing staff, and especially value how these partnerships can support successful implementation. A core principle of the Work Group relates to consistent, clear communication. As part of monitoring, providers value having checklists or other materials that they can use to fully prepare for regular licensing visits that outline expectations. This would be a checklist of items a licensor may want to review or observe during their visit and would clearly outline their expectations. Documentation requirements should be clearly outlined (e.g., sample forms or list of information required). Providers can then use those tools to record the information and better implement the state's standards.

4. Allow for Providers to Check in Advance About What Is Acceptable to Meet Licensing Requirements

Providers value penalty-free opportunities in advance to discuss whether their approach to licensing meets the state's expectations.

Providers would like opportunities to reach out to state licensing staff to discuss expectations. Providers particularly would like to see a process to confirm that their implementation approach will meet the state's expectations.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Monitoring Expectations:**

“We are expected to be in compliance but have no formal way to seek approval for our methods to stay in compliance. It is only upon a site inspection with a licensor that we may find out that we do not have adequate documentation. Furthermore, this finding may be dependent upon the licensor. One may find that you are in compliance and another may say you are not in compliance. There should be NO room for interpretation of a regulation and what it takes to be in compliance.”

B. Concluding and Recording Monitoring Visits



Family child care providers appreciate the effort to be transparent by posting licensing information online and understand that federal law requires states to do so. With the understanding that these public reports are intended to inform families and assist them with making decisions about child care, family child care providers have three recommendations to strengthen the public posting process. In addition, providers are concerned that things that are out of their control may result in licensing violations. These recommendations address this concern.

5. **Allow Provider Review of Inspection Reports Before Posting**

Providers value an opportunity to review inspection reports for accuracy before public posting; these should not be posted during the appeals process.

6. **Incorporate Provider Comments in Posted Reports**

Providers value opportunities to provide factual details on violations “on the record” and for this information to be included in the final report for posting.

7. **Include Provider Licensing Strengths in Posted Reports**

Providers value posted inspection reports that include the strengths of the provider (and not just deficits) and use plain language that families can understand in all aspects of all public reports.

States have varying approaches to how they share the result of licensing inspections. Public reports may be hard to understand and read, and often use a lot of technical language. Family child care providers would value the opportunity to review the inspection reports before posting and provide feedback as part of their review, with their review included in the public posting. They would like to see that states wait to post inspection reports if there is an appeal going on. Finally, providers would like to see all states provide information on the strengths of the providers in the public report. Connected to this, while the federal law requires states to use plain, easily understood language in these reports, providers report that this is not always the case. This is particularly important as Work Group members experienced families using these reports to help them make decisions about their children’s child care experience.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Concluding and Recording Monitoring Visits:**

“I had a violation that read ‘Violation – Program must keep poisonous materials out of reach of children.’ The facts of the inspection were not given. Facts included: Time of inspection occurred while all children were napping. I was cleaning the children’s bathroom and disinfecting the sink area when the inspector arrived. I left the cleaning supplies on the sink top while I answered the door. The bathroom is within view of the door. I explained to the inspector that I was disinfecting the bathroom while the children napped. I retrieved the supplies and completed the rest of the visit. The inspector wrote up the violation even though she verified that all children were napping, and that no children had used the bathroom without an adult since no children were potty trained at the time. This violation remained on public record for several years. I had to explain to concerned families the factual basis as well as defend the accusation that children are allowed access to poisonous materials.”

8. **Problem Solve Insurance and Other Requirements That May Be Out of the Home-Based Provider's Control**

Many states have insurance requirements. The National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations indicates that 28 states have general insurance requirements, nine have specific liability insurance requirements, and 27 have car insurance requirements. However, the Work Group's overall experience is that states have more work to do around problem solving when challenges arrive on obtaining insurance. They recommend that state licensing agencies engage more to understand the current insurance landscape and how to assist providers when challenges arise in obtaining required insurance. These steps may involve assisting providers with waivers while they are searching for options, working collaboratively with insurers and their regulators to problem solve, or potentially providing financial resources to assist family child care providers with escalating costs.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Insurance and Other Requirements:**

“In my state, if we are caring for special needs children, we are dropped and cannot get business liability insurance.”

V. **State-Provider Engagement**

Consistent with the Family Child Care Licensing Work Group's view that licensing is part of their professional status, the Work Group has five recommendations that support the ongoing professionalism of the state's licensing team (found in section A). These are followed by recommendations about how the state staff and the home-based provider community can work together during the entire life cycle of development, revision and implementation of licensing standards (section B). The final section addresses interactions between licensing and other components of the state's child care system (section C).

A. **Supporting the Professionalism of State Licensing Staff**

The work of the state licensing staff and its impact on the provision of family child care cannot be underestimated, and these four recommendations focus on the knowledge and accessibility of the state licensing staff to family child care providers.

1. **Ensure Consistent, Knowledgeable, Stable Licensing Staff**

Providers value having a consistent, knowledgeable, stable licensing representative for each family child care provider.

The Work Group sees the benefit of having a consistent, stable licensing staff representative assigned to each family child care provider. They recognize that this is not always possible, due to staffing limitations or state rotation policies. The Work Group recommends that



states engaging in a rotation process create buddy systems so that a second person is developing knowledge about the provider.

To support knowledge of family child care, states are encouraged to amend existing job descriptions and to develop recruitment pathways that put a premium on having state licensing staff who have had the lived experience of working as a family child care provider. According to the [Child Care and Early Education Front-line Licensing Staff Snapshot](#) issued by Child Trends through OPRE, approximately one-third of states require experience working with children but do not specify provider-level experience. [Strengthening Home-based Child Care Networks: An Evidence-based Framework for High-Quality](#), a publication of Home Grown and the Erikson Institute, provides benchmarks for staff competencies for working with family child care that can assist states with this work.

Family child care is its own unique approach and contribution to the child care system, separate and apart from center-based child care services. For states that are not able to recruit from the family child care community, the Work Group suggests that on-the-job training be provided that includes meaningful placement within a home-based setting so that the licensing representatives are able to gain lived experience of the work. This will assist in improving their understanding and better equip them to work in partnership with family child care providers.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Licensing Staff Continuity:**

“I believe the value of a long-term relationship with a licensing representative is a healthy way to establish good communication and would lead to better compliance. It would certainly help with continuity and would be less stressful to the provider. Continuity should be considered of the utmost importance. Providers should not be left to feel that the regulations are up for interpretation. When a provider states that it was OK with the other licensor but not this one, the trust is broken. A trusting, safe, supportive relationship will yield better results.”

2. **Provide Proactive Information When the Family Child Care Provider’s Licensing Representative Changes**

Providers value getting information proactively if their licensing representative changes.

Family child care providers note that the state’s licensing representatives may not be able to achieve continuity for the licensing staff. When there is a change of licensing representative, states should proactively notify the provider. Whenever possible, it is important to provide an opportunity for a transition meeting with the “previous” and “current” licensing representatives, upon request of the provider. This could be virtual or in person, at a time that is

convenient for the provider and the licensing staff. Allowing for a meaningful transition helps to facilitate uniform interpretation of the rules, which is an ongoing concern for providers.

Family child care providers would also like the state to provide a photograph of the licensing representative who will be entering their home.

3. **Ensure that State Licensing Staff Can Be Reached On a Daily Basis**

Providers value having a live person available on a routine, daily basis to ask questions if the assigned licensing representative is not available.

The licensing system can only be effective if family child care providers are implementing the expectations on a continuous basis. Members of the Work Group shared very different experiences about being able to reach a “live” person with time-sensitive questions and concerns, and suggested that every state find a way to have a live person available. Even Work Group members whose states had set up systems reported that they were not always reliably available.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Accessibility of State Licensing Staff:**

“In my view, there should be one Licensor-on-Duty ticketing system so that calls and emails do not fall through the cracks or stop the rotation of licensors. In my state, they rotate the licensors who are on duty to take questions, and I believe the rotation of licensors is what allows for many, many messages to go unanswered. If there was one Licensor-on-Duty, this would help establish a positive more supportive type of relationship with CDD.”

4. **Provide Ongoing Training and Support to Help State Licensing Staff Resist Implicit Bias**

Providers value working with licensing staff who have training and ongoing support to resist implicit bias.

People’s implicit biases can impact their behaviors and beliefs. People may think of themselves as fair-minded, but may still have implicit bias. Family child care providers may be seen as less skilled, for example, compared to a center’s program administrators and teachers. To ensure that the system as a whole focuses on a fair and impartial approach to the design and implementation of the state’s family child care licensing system, the Work Group recommends that states consistently and regularly provide their licensing staff with training and support to resist implicit bias.



B. Engaging Family Child Care Professionals in the Licensing Life Cycle

The development and revision of state licensing standards is part of establishing a well-functioning family child care licensing system. These four recommendations focus on the value of regular review cycles, the importance of inclusion of family child care professionals in these review cycles, ensuring that feasibility is considered as part of standards development, and the establishment of an ongoing Family Child Care Provider Review Panel that would add in effective implementation and inform licensing revision.

5. Establish Regular Review and Revision Cycle For Licensing Standards

Providers value states that establish and follow regular cycles to review and revise licensing standards.

Family child care providers recognize that new information and research has implications for home-based licensing standards. Further, as part of a partnership between the state licensing system and the child care provider community, establishing predictable, regular cycles for reviewing and updating licensing allows all parties to plan for the work and gather information to inform the review. Providers report that it is frustrating and erodes trust when it is not known when the state will review their licensing expectations.

6. Ensure Family Child Care Providers Are Meaningful Contributors to Review and Revision of Licensing Standards

Providers value having a work group with enough family child care providers to contribute expertise and experience with this type of care during review and revision cycle for licensing standards.

At the same time, meaningful engagement of family child care providers is essential when states are reviewing and revising their standards. Providers report that they have experienced tokenism in state-constituted committees for this work. For example, they may find that there are 10 providers in a review group, but that family child care providers make up 20% of those participating and center-based providers make up 80% of those participating. It is difficult to have an equitable voice in this situation as representation alone, without sufficient numbers from family child care, is not likely to support family child care providers in being heard. Scheduling work in advance and at times that are accessible to family child care providers is also essential to ensuring their meaningful contribution. Providers report that meeting only during standard Monday to Friday business hours is often exclusionary as these one-person operations are offering services to children at these times.

Other considerations for meaningful inclusion of family child care providers in standards review and revision include broad-based engagement strategies through focus groups, surveys and community discussion so that the entire home-based community can contribute. This is important to capturing the breadth of experience of the community, as well as providers who are contributing at varying quality levels.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Inclusion in the Licensing Life Cycle:**

- “Timing of meetings matters: Give consideration to nights, weekends, and do not just assume we can get away during naptime. Create a survey for a panel to gain input on times to meet that work for the providers.”*
- “Having input from providers helps to understand what is achievable within the home-based environment of one person. FCC do not have the income, time and manpower to always achieve what is being asked, and yet sometimes do as much if not more work than centers, as there is no other staff.”*

7. Confirm Feasibility of Implementation

Providers value ensuring the feasibility of implementing licensing standards in the home-based setting.

Careful consideration should be given to the feasibility of implementing licensing standards, as well as standards that come from other government agencies that may be required by licensing.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Implementation Feasibility:**

- “In my opinion, it is essential for state licensing bodies to carefully examine and evaluate the feasibility of external regulations before incorporating them into their policies for family child care providers. This proactive approach will not only help to streamline the services provided but also ensure a smoother and more efficient process for everyone involved. Ultimately, this will lead to better outcomes for both providers and licensing bodies alike.”*

8. Create a Standing, Permanent Family Child Care Provider Review Panel

Providers value a family child care provider review panel made up of providers and state agency staff to routinely review the patterns of violations, how to better address areas in which there are frequent violations, and to contribute to the development of licensing standards and their implementation.

Involving family child care providers in the ongoing work of the state to improve its licensing policy and implementation is a benefit to all. The Family Child Care Licensing Work Group recommends that all states develop a family child care provider review panel that would come together to review patterns of compliance and violations, and provide practical advice about how to better address areas in which there are frequent violations. Research in both health care and airline safety makes clear that the culture surrounding reporting impacts the

degree of reporting. This panel would be able to help probe for how culture, compliance and violations interact. In addition, this panel could assist with the review and development of licensing revisions, provide insight for materials (such as checklists, interpretation guides, etc.). In short, the panel could look at design and implementation, noting areas in which further clarification or change is needed.

C. Interaction Between Licensing and Other State Child Care Components

Family child care providers recognize the connection between licensing and other systems' components for child care such as training and professional development and quality improvement as well as child care work overseen by other government agencies, such as fire, building, or public health requirements. When the government acts in a siloed manner, this creates inefficiencies in public systems and burdens family child care providers. The first two recommendations focus on breaking down silos within the "traditional" child care systems of professional development and quality improvement while the last three focus on ways to connect the work between other government agencies and the child care licensing agency. State licensing standards may incorporate requirements from other government agencies. Family child care providers seek opportunities to ensure that the child care licensing agency consult with them when this occurs, that states go beyond informal collaboration across multiple government agencies who are regulating family child care, and that all of these government agencies address issues of feasibility of implementation as they continue to develop and refine their standards and expectations. These practical recommendations are intended to assist in breaking down silos and assuring a more systems-oriented approach.

9. Provide Training and Professional Development Geared to Unique Needs of Family Child Care

Providers value training and professional development that is offered when they are available, which is largely outside of traditional business hours, and value advanced versions of required training.



Family child care providers are primarily running one-person operations and frequently offer their services during traditional business hours. Training and professional development, which family child care providers see as vital to their business, can be difficult to access when offered only during regular business hours, whether provided in person or virtually. Providers also are interested in having states provide advanced versions of required training content so that they are not repeating the basics for mandated training. If states are not able to provide more advanced training, perhaps the frequency of training could be reduced for providers with more years of experience after basic courses are taken. Family child care providers are also interested in seeing states provide additional "credit" for training and professional development through national organizations.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on Training and Professional Development:

“There are many trainings that must be attended to obtain and continue to be a licensed provider. Many of those trainings do not change from year to year. Providers with years of experience should be allowed to attend the training sessions less frequently than new providers. Though I feel CPR and first aid should continue to be required every two years because it’s good to get refreshed on these lifesaving techniques.”

10. Place Standards in Only One Place: Do Not Duplicate Licensing Standards in Quality Improvement Requirements and Expectations

Providers value consistent and clear interpretation of standards across agencies.

Family child care providers can experience overlap between licensing and quality improvement standards. This is difficult from an implementation and interpretation viewpoint, as the assigned representatives from licensing and quality improvement may not have a consistent interpretation of what the standards mean in practice. The Family Child Care Licensing Work Group recommends that a standard is articulated and monitored either in the licensing system or in the quality improvement system, but not in both.

11. Include Family Child Care Providers When Incorporating Other Agencies' Requirements

Providers bring valuable expertise that should be leveraged when the state is incorporating requirements by other governmental agencies.

States licensing standards may incorporate requirements that other government agencies set. Family child care providers value being consulted as part of this process so that their unique setting is taken into account. As noted previously, in recommendation six in this section and elsewhere, if there are options to meet requirements of other government agencies, including the potential for variances or waivers, these should be clearly addressed and this information should be made widely available to the family child care community.

12. Require Other Government Agencies to Consult With Family Child Care Providers and State Licensing Agency

Providers value coordination and consultation with other government agencies, outside of licensing.

Family child care providers interact with many government agencies. These other agencies, which provide important oversight in areas such as building and fire safety and public health, are not always attuned to the unique situation of family child care. To that end, we recommend that states take steps to proactively require consultation with both state licensing and with family child care providers by these government agencies as they develop

and implement their own requirements for family child care. While voluntary cooperation has been a recommended regulatory best practice, given the high stakes for family child care, states should consider requiring this type of mutual collaboration, whether achieved through an administrative memorandum of understanding, executive order or state statute. We note, consistent with other recommendations, that for family child care providers to successfully contribute to this work, it is necessary to consider the times of day, days of the week and place for consultation to occur.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Other Government Agencies Consulting With Family Child Care Providers and State Licensing Agencies:**

“In my state, a change was made to state licensing law that allowed more children to be included in family child care homes, and providers were notified of the change by the state child care licensing agency. However, another state agency noted that the state’s building code would require a change in the occupancy permit [required] for family child care homes that opted to go to the top levels of the increase. The new occupancy permit requires a lengthy and costly process for licensed providers. Due to the outdated city ordinances and building codes, we are unable to expand our business and increase slots for children and families. Many of us would love to take advantage of the new law, but due to financial restraints, many of us live in older homes and won’t be able to afford the requirements on top of the daily expenses we make to operate.”

VI. Provider Support

Providers value a variety of supports so that they can be successful in participating in the state licensing system for family child care, and offer five complementary support strategies.

1. **Ensure Family Child Care Provider Networks That Support Licensing Are in Place**

Providers value provider support networks and groups that bring people together to focus on licensing.

Home-based provider networks with a strong peer-to-peer component are valuable for family child care providers. Whether family child care providers are “newbies” or “veterans,” they have much to learn from one another and value opportunities to support each other. These groups help everyone advance. The Family Child Care Licensing Work Group recommends that states provide incentives for providers to join provider support networks, and that state licensing representatives promote participation. Within the Work Group, providers whose states help finance these networks were considerably less frustrated than those providers whose states encourage peer support but assume that peer support should be volunteer service. More information on networks is found in [Home-Based Child Care Networks: Making Connections to Make a Difference](#).

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Provider Support Networks:**

“In the past year and a half, I have faced various challenges that have tested my resilience. These challenges include dealing with licensing issues, consultants, parents, FCCRS/QRIS ratings, and logistics. It has been a massive undertaking, and it's only the first couple of years. Like many others, I, too, felt the effects of isolation and the need for a home-based support group. Hence, I have started a Self-Care Support group exclusively for family child care home providers. Our group of providers is unique due to their varying levels of experience and education. Some have been in the field for as long as 26 years and are nearing retirement, while others have been practicing for almost eight years. We organize various events such as dinner meetings to discuss ideas and share resources and day trips to local salt caves to celebrate our hard work. It is extremely crucial for both newer and older providers to have a network of people they can relate to call on and help provide confirmation and resources. This is important for both our mental health and sustainability of our businesses. If it wasn't for the group and having that outlet I would have closed down by now.”

2. Sponsor Peer-to-Peer Licensing Mentoring

Providers value peer-to-peer licensing mentors of new and continuing providers, with state financial support.

Family child care providers recognize the need for specific, targeted licensing mentoring that complements technical assistance provided by state licensing representatives or by resource and referral agencies. New providers, as well as those who are more experienced but could be having significant difficulties with licensing compliance, can benefit from a knowledgeable peer with whom to problem solve. This short-term peer support should be voluntary, with resources available to the peer who assists a new provider.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Peer-to-Peer Licensing Mentoring:**

“It's easy to feel all alone and isolated in your home full of kiddos just as any mother would.”

“I primarily serve Black and Brown babies. Minority Black and Brown women make up a majority of family child care homes and/or family, friend and neighbor [care-givers], but we sometimes feel like the stepsisters of the child care professional community. Being able to have the support of people who look like you, who share the same value system, culture, live in your area, your neighborhood is very, very, very huge.”

3. Provide Navigation Assistance for New Providers

Providers value navigation for new providers to help them successfully enter the licensing system and be successful.



Family child care providers would like to see states provide early assistance for new providers who are seeking their first family child care license. Specifically, the interest is in providing someone who can do a deep dive with the provider so that they are knowledgeable about the requirements (e.g., licensing, zoning, fire, insurance). This should take place prior to the home being ready for inspection. States can offer this support in many ways. For example, in one state the resource and referral agency plays this role and provides start-up grants as well. In another state, a nonprofit is available to help people get through the licensing process and provide consultation. The work could also be embedded directly in the state government.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on Assistance for New Providers:

“When my son was 2 years old, I couldn't find any available child care for him, so I had to turn his playroom into a classroom. I went through the state orientation process. I also contacted my local zoning department. Unfortunately, I found out that my county required me to have a fence as per their ordinance. I wish I had known to check with my county and city before starting the process, as there are discrepancies between what the state requires and what the county/city requires. I had to pay around \$5,000 for the fence, which was a lot since it was all my savings. It took several days for the fencing equipment to arrive. I had to call the fencing company every day because it was the only thing preventing me from getting approval from zoning and my licensing consultant from the state from giving me my license. I waited for weeks without any income, and families who were ready to enroll their kids into my program had to wait as well. It was a very stressful time for me and for families.”

4. Provide Clear Information About How to Find Representation During Appeals

Providers value being given information about how to find representation during an appeal.

Providers may appeal violations. When a violation is under appeal by a provider and the provider is uncertain about the reasons for the violation, or concerned that the citation is unjust, securing a non-biased representative to assist the provider benefits the system as a whole. Family child care providers would like to see the state licensing agency provide widely available, clear information about how to find legal assistance.

5. Provide Licensing Technical Assistance and Licensing Resources

Providers value a variety of supports that help ensure providers understand and are successfully implementing licensing standards.

Family child care providers value direct technical assistance (TA) support from state licensing staff that is non-punitive and strength-based in its approach. This type of TA should be provided during routine visits and should be available proactively upon request from providers. Of particular concern is assistance if a waiver or variance could be a solution. Family child care providers would like to see more upfront discussion by licensing staff of opportunities for variances and waivers, along with clear information about requirements and how to meet them.



In addition, family child care providers, as has been noted in other sections of this report, are concerned that written resources be clear, concrete and widely accessible. Providers appreciate standards and interpretive guidebooks that spell out what is acceptable to the state and different options for demonstrating compliance. When policies and protocols are required by licensing, providing samples is highly valued.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on Licensing Resources:

“New regulations were put into place that we needed to implement a special type of interconnected smoke/fire alarms within a certain time frame. I had recently spent close to \$200 purchasing and installing 10-year lithium battery smoke/fire alarms throughout my business and home. They were not interconnected. I understand the philosophy behind the interconnected ones. However, the parameters and descriptives around the new regulations had me in a quandary. I reached out to my new inspector as I had several questions about the ones we were supposed to implement. I feared that I would purchase the wrong ones and not only be non-compliant, but also have to “eat” the cost of the ones I purchased. I am on several Facebook groups of other providers in my home state. We shared what we thought was compliant. There were mixed opinions, and we still had not heard from my inspector. Eventually, I did just purchase another set of 6 (so my home, every floor, bedrooms and my business would be interconnected) at a cost of less than \$200. This may not seem like a lot, but we have a budget and these extra expenses are not usually accounted for. My inspector did get back to me eventually (apparently we only have two to monitor all of my county), and “suggested” I purchase what worked best for me. The cost, the concern of whether or not my choice would be in compliance, installing, etc. raised my already high anxiety level ... AGH!”

VII. Costs

Family child care providers who participated in the Family Child Care Licensing Work Group take pride in their professionalism and their status as business owners. These recommendations focus on financial disclosure, phase-in, and support for new standards; state investment in required comprehensive background checks and referrals for expungement assistance; and state investment in professional development.

1. Provide Funding Support for New Licensing Standards

Providers value having access to funds to assist in implementing new licensing standards, particularly when there are significant costs involved.

Having funding available to assist with new standards, particularly high-cost changes, will help ensure that changes in licensing do not result in family child care providers giving up their licenses. Family child care is uniquely positioned as both a business and a public good, so public investment when licensing standards change is appropriate because of the contribution family child care makes to the overall economy alongside the education and care of children.

2. Phase-In New Standards

Providers value a phase-in period for new licensing standards.

For implementation, provide a phase-in period so that providers can make the necessary changes.

3. Provide Accurate Information about Family Child Care Provider Costs for Implementing Standards Prior to Their Approval

Providers value accurate information about provider cost of implementation for new standards as part of the approval process for new standards.

Family child care providers appreciate that licensing standards may change. But when they do change, they would like to see forthright, realistic information being provided about the cost for them to implement changes.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Costs**:

“All businesses have operating costs and as such home providers should expect them. The exception would be when a new regulation is put into place that is going to require funding to be implemented. When this occurs, I think that the state should pay for the initial expense.”

4. **Cover the Costs for Required Comprehensive Background Clearances**

Providers value state payment for all required clearances and all aspects of comprehensive background/fingerprint checks that are required by the state and federal government.

Family child care providers undergo an extensive series of comprehensive background and fingerprint checks, as required by the federal government. These costs should not be passed on to the individual provider but included in the state agency's budget so that there is no direct charge to the home-based provider.

5. **Provide Information About Expungement Opportunities & Assistance**

Providers value information about where there are opportunities for expungement and information about legal services to assist.

Family child care providers may find that they do not meet certain background check requirements but could be eligible for expungement. State licensing should provide information to providers about expungement and information about legal services to assist providers who are seeking expungement.

6. **Invest in the Professional Development of Family Child Care Providers**

Providers value state investment in their professional development.

Family child care providers see the connection between their professional development and success in the child care and licensing system. There are many options for states to help cover professional development and training costs, and many states do seek to minimize costs for family child care providers. But this is an area where investment can assist with creating enough home-based supply and with stabilizing the existing supply of family child care providers.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Professional Development**:

“Receiving grant opportunities for required training as well as professional development to improve our performance is a win-win.”

“When a family child care provider has to close to attend a training or to travel to a conference, they have to close their facility. They are not receiving any income for that day. They're paying for this training and possible travel time out of their own pockets. And they've caused hardship for those families who thought they had care for that day. And if they don't have back-up child care or family support, then those families also have to take that time off. My recommendation around this would be that states offer some kind of substitute program that is either funded by the state or is set up as some kind of reimbursement to that provider for attending those trainings and, and increasing their knowledge and their professionalism in the field that they work in.”

Appendix: Additional Voices from the Field

II. Licensing Standards and Expectations

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Health:**

“[My] state has a mandatory medication administration training and the procedures to follow when administering medication require double checking for appropriate child, medication, dosage, time, route, etc. ... Leaves little room for error.”

“Our state has a required six-hour course for providers to take for health and safety, with a renewal course every three years. As for screenings: Only Stars providers level 4 and 5 are required to utilize some type of screening. For example, I use Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ®-3) and Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ®:SE-2) but this is not part of licensing.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Infant Sleep:**

“The state has taken proactive steps to provide essential training to staff and caregivers regarding Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). This training is critical to providing safe and effective care to infants and toddlers. Additionally, staff members are required to maintain a meticulous record of infants' sleep patterns, with regular checks carried out every 15 minutes to ensure their well-being. Such measures demonstrate the state's unwavering commitment to ensuring the health and safety of all children in child care facilities.”

“There used to be a 60-hour course that covered infant/toddler development but that is a college-only course now. Safe sleep training is required prior to opening your facility.”



Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Transportation:**

“There are several requirements to operate a vehicle: must be 18 years old, only move when doors are locked, all children in age-appropriate seats, kids never left in the car by themselves.”

“Our state is very thorough on the safety of transporting children. They have many guidelines that must be followed including proper car seats, special insurance, children's records and emergency releases in the vehicle, and a first aid kit. Vehicles are checked by surveyors annually.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Child Abuse and Neglect:**

“Our laws and regulations handbook is very informative on the recognizability of abuse and neglect. It also explains the importance of mandated reporting. We have an organization that offers a free class that covers the process a provider needs to follow after spotting abuse. It’s a sad subject but one that needs attention.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Behavior Guidance and Discipline:**

“When speaking about the discipline section of our regulations, I believe the state has clearly outlined what is best for the child—primarily the child will never feel belittled or chastised.”



Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Language Around Best Practices:**

“I am in a quandary with our new fire alarm decision. I reached out to my state licensing, and I am frustrated with the answer that I am ‘suggested’ to do what fits best in my situation. Perhaps more thought should be put in place before the newly adopted regulation is implemented. I know the need and I agree with the need, but how it gets mandated makes me, as well as others, feel that being unlicensed may be the best option.”

“Our state regulation on insurance coverage requires us to carry liability insurance of a reasonable amount for our own protection and for the protection of children attending the family child care home. Evidence of insurance coverage shall be provided to the state. This vague reference to a ‘reasonable amount’ is not helpful. I have no idea if I have enough coverage or if I went overboard. Being required to have this insurance forced me to get a million-dollar umbrella policy through my insurer and this purchase/policy affected the rates on ALL of my policies. This is a very costly requirement. While I agree we should all have coverage I think the state should have a program that we buy into. This program should provide the ‘reasonable amount’ of coverage at an affordable group rate. In addition, if a provider can find comparable coverage from another agent at a cheaper rate they can make the choice to meet that regulation through them.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Provider Rights:**

- “Making sure all regulations are clearly outlined and [that there’s] a pathway for when a provider disagrees is so important.”*
- “It would be beneficial if all information regarding provider rights, including support avenues, was compiled and easily accessible. I often get calls from local providers with licensing questions because they feel if they reach out to the surveyor, it will trigger an unannounced visit.”*
- “While having a technical assistant here to help me improve my program, we were sitting down for snack and the children were just finishing up. We were about to carve a pumpkin outside and explore “the guts” and how we can use seeds, etc. I left the carving knife upstairs in my kitchen, to keep the children safe. The TA offered to go up and grab the knife. I told her I would be back because, quite frankly, I did not want her roaming about in MY HOME. I ran up and grabbed it, 15-30 seconds later, I was back. We went outside, carved, chatted, and eventually the TA left. She later called me and HIGHLY SUGGESTED that I call CPS on myself because I ran upstairs and left the children unattended while she sat with them. Instead of finding out my rights, I did as I was told and self-reported. CPS did come out and investigate. I told them the whole story and had to take another class on supervision, and check in with them with a head count, etc. For me to get investigated by CPS because I ran upstairs was a bit much, in my opinion. It could have been easily avoided if the TA just said that she was not permitted/recognized to sit with children for the 15-30 seconds. That way I could have postponed the activity until the following day.”*

III. Language Access

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Language Access:**

- “I feel strongly that state administrators should ask for the providers' language preference on the license applications and use multiple languages for both oral or writing communication. When information and training are only offered in English to a Spanish-speaking provider, providers don't receive what we need to understand the licensing process and to improve our qualifications.”*
- “There is nothing more difficult than trying to read and comprehend regulations that are not in the language that you are familiar with, that you understand, that you comprehend. And especially if you have questions, where are you going to ask those questions? Ensuring that every provider is supported in their home language and can ask questions so they are compliant is important to keeping the children healthy and safe.”*

IV. Monitoring and Enforcement

A. Before and During Routine Monitoring Visits

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Monitoring Visits:**

“My family child care program [is] in my basement. I am blessed to have my office upstairs so I have more room for materials within my family child care home. During my last visit from the state, my newly obtained printer that I keep in the family child care space decided not to work. Technology and I are not friends! The licensing inspector asked for something that I had already submitted. As the printer in my upstairs office does work, I had to bring all of the children upstairs (something that I do not usually do as EVERYTHING we need is downstairs), have them sit in my home (once again, NOT a USUAL practice), while I had to search and print the document. If everything that was needed to be viewed was asked for, and I had a chance to submit it with the caveat of ‘please inform me if this is NOT what you are looking for, or if I omitted anything’ ahead of time, we would not have had to go up and down the steps several times ... six children on the steps, in my home (not childproofed as I am an adult), and then trying to supervise and look for things is not conducive to a single staffed business.”

“This recommendation is one that I value most. Children sense change. When someone different is in their setting, things change. It can be quite chaotic during surveyor visits. With the paperwork taking the longest part of the inspection, it is most difficult to properly monitor the children. Sending paperwork in advance would be so beneficial. I know when my surveyor [licensing representative] comes, my home becomes a circus.”

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Monitoring Expectations:**

“In recent years, our state agency has done an excellent job of putting all the information online and the specialists send emails with the regulations they will review and the necessary documents.”

“What would be of great help is for the agencies to tell us if there are changes in the regulations. They should send us the information in advance so we can be ready for the inspection.”

“From my perspective, it would be easier to implement if I feel that I can voice my questions and concerns without the fear of retribution, and can do this with a timely response [from licensing].”

“I have a good relationship with my surveyor [licensing representative] and feel comfortable reaching out to her with questions, but I know that this is not the same for others. I often receive calls from other providers with licensing questions because they are worried that contacting the surveyor will trigger a visit addressing their questions and concerns. Having a checklist would be ideal for so many.”

B. Concluding and Recording Monitoring Visits

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Concluding and Recording Monitoring Visits:**

- “When violations are posted often it looks worse than it is for something simple, and it can cause undue stress.”*
- “It would be better if the reports would include strengths that the provider has and their years of experience and their years of no violations. This would show a more balanced view of who I am and how I care for kids than focusing on one minor and unrepresentative violation.”*

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Insurance and Other Requirements:**

- “In my state, the homeowner’s insurance will drop you if you have child care. Unintended consequences must be looked at.”*
- “I remember when I started my child care program, I had a tough time finding insurance that would cover home-based child care. We recently started shopping again for new insurance and 27 years later, have run into the same problem.”*

V. State-Provider Engagement

A. Supporting the Professionalism of State Licensing Staff

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Accessibility of State Licensing Staff:**

- “I would like to have a live person that is knowledgeable of my state’s licensing standards, and can answer any/all questions in a timely manner ... kind of like a hotline for child care providers. As I have stated, I love my current representative as she has never done the “gotcha” approach. However, she is responsible for my whole county and it is difficult to reach her and have questions and concerns addressed. I just give up and ‘wing it.’”*



B. Engaging Family Child Care Professionals in the Licensing Life Cycle

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Inclusion in the Licensing Life Cycle:**

- “I strongly believe that state licensing agencies should involve family child care providers in the development of rules that are incorporated into licensing regulations. As experts in this field, we are the ones who take on various roles and carry out multiple tasks throughout the day, and therefore, we know what is best. It is only fair that we are given a chance to have a say in decisions that directly affect us. Hence, we should be invited to sit at the table with decision-makers.”*
- “The group that works on the development of any new licensing standards should be composed of members that will allow for home providers to NOT be overruled by the majority of its other members. My thought is if only two of 10 members are home[-based] providers, they are likely to always be overruled, which means the home[-based] provider has no voice.”*
- “In my state, we have yet to be considered when deciding standards.”*
- “When crafting licensing rules and standards it is very apparent to me that the people who are making these rules have never done [child] care. There are too many unintended consequences to rules that don't work. Case in point, a new rule was put into effect saying pack and plays could no longer be used in daycares. Only traditional cribs. The result was home daycares did not have room to keep cribs up full time and so spots for infants vanished almost overnight. The rule was rescinded in less than a year. Any provider could have pointed out that a family using their home as a child care rarely has the room to have extra cribs up full time when their family also uses the spaces.”*
- “I feel a panel of home providers should be established and given a voice to help with the design. Some committee members have never done home child care and don't necessarily understand the home-based operations.”*
- “In our state, for three years now, in all meetings aimed at making decisions that affect regulations and benefits for providers, the participation of providers and employees at all levels is requested, in order for them to share their opinions and experiences.”*
- “I think licensing reps would better support child care providers if states were to form a coalition that was made up of state representatives and public providers ... and the group would be responsible for reviewing the most frequent violation that they see. The question would be whether or not the regulation is attainable. Should the regulation be rewritten in some way? Or possibly should the regulation just be clarified?”*

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Implementation Feasibility:**

“It is integral to have input from home providers before unilaterally mandating regulations, as they are sometimes just not feasible.”

“A new regulation needs to work for the majority, not a few.”

C. Interaction Between Licensing and Other State Child Care Components

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Training and Professional Development:**

“States need to do a better job on a progression so that course content is geared to experience and existing knowledge.”

“Online professional development is a good idea but when there are required in-person trainings, the offerings need to take into account the hours of service of home-based child care, which means that classes during the day are not provider-friendly for people running one-person operations! They also need to take into account the commuting time if it is offered after work, especially in rural communities, but it also can be true in suburban and urban communities. 6 p.m. may not be a realistic starting time. Our bigger question is always: What can work for family child care?”

“Zoom and online options are important components of continuing education and professional development—we open very early in the morning and we close later, and after hours is difficult in person as well.”

“The ‘required’ courses are repetitions of what we have learned. So for some content, there is a refresher element that is important for health and safety but in other areas, the classes never change. I would rather have more opportunity to pick and choose on our own, and not necessarily be told which ones we have to have over and over again. I could teach some of these classes – they are the same thing every year. I am taking classes to be OK with my licensing, but I’m not learning a ton.”



Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Other Government Agencies Consulting With Family Child Care Providers and State Licensing Agencies:**

“In our state, the state pre-k program has gone beyond the liability insurance requirements of the child care licensing agency. The insurance oversight entity for the state pre-k program has indicated that private providers, which includes family child care, include coverage for sexual abuse claims in their insurance. Family child care providers were not consulted prior to the change. Family child care providers are finding it challenging to feasibly implement.”

“A group of us, with advice from a nonprofit in the state, have scheduled a meeting with the State Fire Marshal to present some of the barriers we have in helping complete the application requirements for licenses. We plan to share that each county has its own requirements and they are different from the state requirements. We need two inspections, one for the modifications we need to make and another for approval. For example, new houses do not have to modify many things, but in older houses there are modifications to be made in the electricity and that takes a lot of time and money, so there is no point in going through the entire licensing process if it is not going to be possible to get it. The licensing process takes more than 6 months. If an inspection is done first, the providers can make the modifications that the Fire Marshal requires during the licensing process timeline. The state should also provide information and inspections in other languages.”

VI. Provider Support

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Provider Support Networks:**

“I am one of the two volunteer leaders of a support group and we are passionately dedicated to promoting quality child care and education. Our mission is to create a space where caregivers, professional child care educators and organizations can connect, share resources and raise the quality of education for children ages 0 to 5 in our communities. We actively work to provide information, connections and materials for free. We believe in unity and collaboration with diverse organizations to maximize our impact and ensure a bright future for the little ones in our communities. What do we offer? Support in the process of obtaining the state license; support for license-exempt home child care providers (unlicensed, with three children and taking training); valuable information about best practices in education and child care; meaningful connections with professional educators, agencies and organizations; educational materials and resources to enrich learning; and information on specialized training for child development.”



Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Assistance for New Providers:**

“Obtaining the license is an advantage and protection for us. However, the process is complex and navigating the state system is difficult, despite the great technological advances in recent years. Therefore, it is crucial to have the support of experienced people who have gone through this process. Accompaniment of at least six months is required before applying, as well as another six months after, to adapt to all the changes and procedures necessary to become a professional child care educator, and not simply a caregiver who feeds them and sits them down to watch television. Additionally, there are additional barriers such as language, lack of technology skills and limited access to computers and printers.”

VII. Costs

Family Child Care Professional Perspectives on **Costs:**

“There should be start-up grants that actually pay for ... the costs of starting a licensed program. For example, hard-wired smoke detectors alone cost around \$6,000, but the start-up grants are only \$5,000. It won't even cover that one requirement, much less everything else.”

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