



Building Belonging: Valuing Family Child Care Via Licensing Systems

A State's Guide to Approaching Licensing Support for Family Child Care

Within the child care system, licensing is one of the most critical pieces of infrastructure; it ensures that child care providers are seen as professionals, provides a standard of care for all children, and offers families and providers a peace of mind.

Child care licensing requirements drive many of the operational costs of care and changes to these requirements have significant impact on provider business approaches.

In recognition of the important impact of state licensing policy and practice on family child care, Home Grown assembled its first-ever Family Child Care Licensing Work Group, made up of family child care professionals who developed Home Grown's understanding of state licensing for family child care and created recommendations for these licensing systems. The report's recommendations are split into seven categories: Principles, Licensing Standards and Expectations, Language Access, Monitoring and Enforcement, State-Provider Engagement, Provider Support, and Costs. To read the full report of recommendations, [click here](#).

The Family Child Care Licensing Work Group identified multiple ways states can support family child care providers in receiving or maintaining their license. Here are three of the ways:

1. Provide providers with **pre-licensing assistance and support**
2. Provide opportunities for **peer-to-peer mentorship**
3. Improve current and create additional **professional development** opportunities

Pre-licensing assistance

Family child care professionals see many opportunities to foster support for licensing of family child care professionals, both in the critical startup phase when the foundation is set for the operation of a family child care home and during the years as family child care standards evolve, the family child care professional's experience and expertise increases, and support needs change.

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 they are knowledgeable about all of the requirements (e.g., licensing, zoning, fire, insurance). This should take place prior to the home being ready for inspection.

“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.”

— Family child care provider

Peer-to-peer mentorship

Other ways to support family child care professionals involve the power of peer-to-peer influence and expertise. To this end, two avenues stand out to family child care professionals. One is **the development of family child care networks** that include a strong peer-to-peer component and a licensing component. 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 providers whose states encourage peer support but assume that peer support should be volunteer service.

Specific to licensing standards, when states are implementing new standards, family child care professionals note the importance of providing tangible resources to assist with the costs of implementing new standards. In addition, phasing in new standards is critical to ensuring that family child care professionals are prepared and able to implement the new standards effectively.

“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 [caregivers], 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”

— Family child care provider

Professional development

Professional development is one area where professionals would like to see states consistently contribute to costs and to provide grants (or their equivalents) directly to family child care professionals. This will allow providers to remain up-to-date with best practices in the field and continue learning and growing as they continue. Family child care providers often require 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.

“When a family child care provider has 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 increasing their knowledge and their professionalism in the field that they work in.”

— Family child care provider

Learn more about the recommendations of the Licensing Work Group and how they can be used on a state level to improve child care and recruit and retain providers in the [full recommendation report](#).