

Creating the Conditions for Family Child Care to Thrive

Strategies for Increasing the
Supply, Quality, and Sustainability of
Family Child Care in States and Communities



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Family child care, or paid child care that takes place in the home of a regulated or licensed provider, is one of the most prevalent child care arrangements in the U.S., particularly for infants and toddlers, children of color, and children from low-income families. In fact, 40% of the 11 million young children with working mothers in the U.S. spend more time in family child care than in any other child care setting.ⁱ Yet, despite the fact that they are uniquely well-positioned to reach the children that face the greatest barriers to accessing care, family child care businesses are closing rapidly across the country; between 2005 and 2017, the number of licensed family child care homes decreased by 48 percent.ⁱⁱ

Increasingly, policymakers seek to address this decline, recognizing that family child care is a key piece of the puzzle when it comes to expanding access to quality, affordable, sustainable child care options in their communities. In response, All Our Kin has taken the best of what we know from our 20 years of working directly with family child care providers, combined it with the experience and expertise of our family child care network and national partners, and put it down on paper, developing a new framework for creating the conditions for family child care to thrive. In this publication, we answer the questions:

- What are the conditions that need to be present in every state and community for family child care, and the children and families it serves, to thrive?
- How do we create these conditions?
- Who has the power to create and/or influence these conditions?

The Conditions

All Our Kin believes that the following conditions must be present in every state and community to create a robust child care landscape that truly meets the needs of children from birth to five, their families, and those who care for them:

- Families have financial support that allows them to access quality child care options that meet their needs. Family child care providers have stable, fair compensation that allows them to run high-quality, sustainable child care businesses.
- Family child care providers have access to the high-quality resources, training and support they need to provide quality early care and education that lays children's foundation for success in school and in life.
- Family child care providers are recognized and supported in their role as entrepreneurs and economic drivers, and receive the resources they need to sustain their businesses and their own families.
- Family child care providers are supported in meeting licensing regulations that recognize their role as early childhood professionals, make sense in home-based settings, and are the first step on a pathway of quality.
- Family child care providers have access to safe, affordable housing where they can operate quality, sustainable home-based child care businesses.
- Key multi-sector stakeholders partner with family child care providers to offer accessible supports, services, and information to children and families.

The Recommendations

In order to create these conditions, our framework offers concrete strategies and recommendations—at the intersection of policy and practice—in six key areas:

- 1. Funding family child care programs.** Investing in high-quality, affordable, accessible child care for all children and families, starting at birth, is one of the most important investments that we, as a society, can make. State and local policymakers can leverage existing funding streams and bring in new funding streams to build robust, sustainable child care systems in which high-quality care, and a fairly-compensated workforce, exist across all child care settings—including family child care.
- 2. Supporting quality in family child care.** The first years of a child's life are crucial in developing the cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills they need to succeed in school and in life. High-quality child care can make a tremendous difference in these outcomes. Research has shown that a wide range of initiatives can improve quality in family child care, including training, professional development, consultation and coaching, home visits, and family child care networks.ⁱⁱⁱ In particular, a holistic, strength-based, relationship-based approach can transform quality in family child care.
- 3. Building sustainable family child care businesses.** Family child care providers are entrepreneurs and economic drivers, underpinning the economy of today, preparing the workforce of tomorrow, and building better lives for themselves and their own families—all while generating significant economic returns in the process. Given the rapid decline in family child care businesses, it is more essential now than ever to invest in the financial wellbeing of family child care providers and the sustainability of family child care businesses, allowing providers to continue providing the highest quality care for children at the time when that care matters most.
- 4. Family child care licensing.** Licensure (or, in some states, registration) is an entry point into the profession of family child care and plays an important role on a pathway of continuous quality improvement. But family child care licensing is about more than whether or not regulations exist. It is about the content of those regulations, the time and resources dedicated to partnering with family child care providers in meetings those regulations, and the way those regulations are enforced.
- 5. Housing, zoning, and family child care.** Too often, restrictions imposed by zoning laws, landlords, and residential associations force child care providers to operate unregulated child care businesses or dissuade them from providing care altogether. Every time a current or prospective family child care provider faces a housing or zoning related barrier to operating their child care business, a community's supply of high-quality, regulated child care is diminished. Luckily, there are steps that both state and local leaders can take to reduce these barriers and promote and protect family child care businesses.
- 6. Engaging stakeholders across systems in support of family child care.** Family child care providers build deep and reciprocal relationships with parents and families; some parents report that they are more likely to trust the advice of their child care provider than their pediatrician.^{iv} In order to create comprehensive

systems of support that promote wellbeing and prosperity for all children and families, it is important to include family child care providers as full participants, providing resources, information, and avenues for collaborative partnerships.

Opportunities for Technical Assistance

State and local policymakers who are eager to implement the recommendations outlined in this publication, but want support in order to do so, may be interested in All Our Kin's technical assistance opportunities. Through technical assistance, All Our Kin builds the capacity of agencies and organizations across the country to effectively increase the supply, quality, and sustainability of family child care. Our approach is one of partnership and collaboration: we value the relationships that technical assistance partners have with the family child care providers in their communities, and leverage the deep knowledge that partners have about the challenges and opportunities in their local early childhood landscape. All Our Kin offers several strands of technical assistance:

- **Policy Advising:** Individualized consultation and support to state and local leaders who want to implement family child care supportive policies and practices in their communities.
- **Business Train-the-Trainer:** Training agencies to deliver All Our Kin's proprietary 30-hour family child business series to build family child care providers' knowledge and practice as small business owners.
- **Educational Coaching:** One-on-one and peer group training and support on strategies for strength-based coaching, professional learning, and relationship-building with family child care educators.
- **Network Development:** Supporting agencies and communities in developing and launching staffed family child care networks.

About All Our Kin

All Our Kin is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains family child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. Through All Our Kin's programs, child care professionals succeed as early childhood educators and as business owners, building better lives for themselves and their own families; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond.

Beginning with the Tool Kit Licensing Program, All Our Kin helps unlicensed family, friend, and neighbor caregivers meet health and safety standards, fulfill state licensing requirements, and become part of a professional community of child care providers. Upon licensure, providers transition to All Our Kin's Family Child Care Network, which offers educational mentorship, business support, professional development, advocacy and leadership opportunities, and a network of relationships with other family child care providers. All services are bilingual and are rooted in a holistic, strength-based, relationship-based approach. All Our Kin currently supports over 875 family child care providers, who have the capacity to educate and care for more than 5,200 children, in some of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in the Bronx and Connecticut.

All Our Kin has a proven track record of success in raising the quality, supply, and sustainability of family child care:

- **All Our Kin increases the quality of family child care.** Findings from a rigorous external evaluation examining All Our Kin's impact on program quality found that All Our Kin providers score more than 50% higher on research-based measures of quality than non-All Our Kin providers.^v
- **All Our Kin increases the supply of licensed family child care in the community.** Though Connecticut lost nearly 35% of its family child care programs from 2000-2011, the number of licensed family child care programs in New Haven increased by 74% during the same period, thanks to All Our Kin.
- **All Our Kin promotes health and safety in family child care programs.** A recent assessment comparing rates of health and safety violations between All Our Kin and non-All Our Kin family child care providers indicated that All Our Kin providers had significantly lower risk of violations overall than non-All Our Kin providers.
- **All Our Kin increases provider earnings and generates significant economic returns for communities.** A study by the University of Connecticut's Center for Economic Analysis found that All Our Kin graduates reported earning 10.4% more, on average, than the average wage for industry counterparts in New Haven and that each newly licensed provider made it possible for four to five parents to enter the workforce. The combination of the program's impact on parents and providers resulted, according to the study, in \$15-\$20 of macroeconomic benefits for every dollar invested.^{vi}
- **Most important, through All Our Kin's work, children build the foundation for lifelong learning and future success.** Following the research on All Our Kin's impact on program quality, the organization conducted an evaluation of its impact on children's outcomes. The results indicate that children in All Our Kin providers' care significantly outperform their peers on math and language assessments and in social-emotional measures.^{vii}

To learn more, please download the full publication at www.allourkin.org/policy or contact policy@allourkin.org.

ⁱ U.S. Administration for Children and Families. *Family Child Care Brief*. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/occ_fcc_brief.pdf

ⁱⁱ National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (2019). *Addressing the Decreasing Number of Family Child Care Providers in the United States* (2). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Office of Child Care, and Health Resources and Services Administration.

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

^{iv} Graber, Lauren Kathleen, "Family Child Care Providers As Health Educators & Advocates: Perspectives Of Parents, Health Care Providers And Community Service Providers" (2012). Yale Medicine Thesis Digital Library. 1722. <http://elischolar.library.yale.edu/ymtdl/1722>

^v Nelson, C., Porter, T., & Reiman, K. *Examining Quality in Family Child Care: An Evaluation of All Our Kin*. (All Our Kin, 2016).

<http://allourkin.org/sites/default/files/ExaminingQualityinFCC2016.pdf>
^{vi} Carstensen, F., Coghlan, J., Graziano, M., Parr, K. & Waite, W. *The Economic Impact of the All Our Kin Family Child Care Tool Kit Licensing Program*. (University of Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis, 2011). http://allourkin.org/sites/default/files/All%20Our%20Kin_CCEARreport.pdf

^{vii} Porter, T. & Reiman, K. *Evaluating Quality in Family Child Care: A Study of Quality and Child Outcomes in All Our Kin*. (All Our Kin, 2016). <http://allourkin.org/sites/default/files/final%20AOK%20Phase%202%20report.pdf>

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