About the Toolkit

Child care providers and other early childhood advocates are challenging policymakers to make babies a national priority. More than 3 million children — over a quarter of the 12 million children birth to age 5 in the United States — are served in paid, home-based child care settings, including family child care. That makes family child care — child care that takes place in the home of a licensed or regulated provider — critical to ensure that every family who needs it has access to quality, affordable child care for their infants and toddlers.

This toolkit is designed to complement ZERO TO THREE’s Think Babies toolkit, which helps people spread the Think Babies message and take action. This version is tailored for use by family child care providers and associations, parents, policymakers, advocates, and other allies in order to elevate family child care as part of a comprehensive mixed-delivery child care system that meets the needs of all babies and families.

Family child care providers play an important role in our child care system, but have unique needs and challenges. These include lack of access to the training, resources, and support they need and deserve, and low child care subsidy reimbursement rates, making it hard to offer high-quality care while earning enough money to support themselves and their own families, among others. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring that all babies have access to the quality early care and education that helps them thrive. This toolkit offers tools and messages for those advocating for a stronger, more sustainable child care system for infants and toddlers, their families, and their family child care providers.*

The toolkit includes:

1. Key messages about family child care.
2. Tailored talking points for elected officials, community partners, and family child care providers.
3. Social media sample content, including graphics.
5. A tip sheet for family child care providers about how to engage in advocacy.
6. An About Us section with background information on All Our Kin, ZERO TO THREE, and Think Babies.

We hope this toolkit will be useful to you in your advocacy. If you have any questions, please contact All Our Kin (policy@allourkin.org).

*The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted child care providers across all settings — including family child care. At the same time, it has provided a reminder for policymakers of the critical role child care providers play in supporting children, families, and the economy, and the essential role they will play in the economic recovery. Additional messaging and resources related to family child care and COVID-19 are available here as a supplement to this toolkit.
Below are key messages about family child care that you can use in your outreach to policymakers and others to help them better understand how family child care supports a comprehensive child care system that meets the diverse needs of all babies and families. Remember that these messages are not a script — they’re intended to be flexible so you can use the ones that are relevant based on your outreach and audience. This may mean that you use all of them or just one or two of them at a time.

We’ve layered the messages onto the existing Think Babies toolkit key messages (noted in grey) so those using them can seamlessly integrate the family child care messages into existing outreach.

### The Science

- The science is clear. Our brains grow faster between the ages 0 to 3 than any later point in life, forming more than 1 million new neural connections every second.
- When babies have nurturing relationships, early learning experiences, and good nutrition, those neural connections are stimulated and strengthened, laying a strong foundation for the rest of their lives.
- When babies don’t get what their growing brains need to thrive, they don’t develop as they should. This leads to life-long developmental, educational, social, and health challenges.

### About Think Babies

- ZERO TO THREE created Think Babies to bring attention to what babies and their families need to thrive. Its priorities include: quality, affordable child care; time for parents to bond with their babies; healthy emotional development; and strong physical health and nutrition.

### Support Systems to Ensure Families Thrive

- **Quality, Affordable Child Care.** We need to make sure every family who needs it has access to quality, affordable child care for their infants and toddlers that offer one-on-one relationships with caring adults and strong early learning experiences.

- **Family child care makes quality care affordable and accessible for millions of children and their working families.**
  - Family child care is a critical part of a comprehensive child care system that meets the diverse needs of all families.
  - More than 3 million children — over a quarter of the 12 million children birth to age 5 in the United States — are served in paid, home-based child care settings, including family child care.
  - High-quality family child care providers offer the building blocks that are so critical to infants and toddlers, supporting their healthy growth and development, fostering strong, caring relationships, and providing key early learning experiences.
  - Family child care allows parents to enter and remain in the workforce knowing that their children are safe, loved, and learning — generating significant economic returns for families and communities in the process.

- **Family child care is responsive and culturally-relevant.**
  - Family child care is home-based, offering an intimate, family-like environment that many families prefer for infants and toddlers.
  - Family child care providers make quality care available right in working families’ neighborhoods.
Family child care providers often mix age groups, so siblings can stay together during the day and children learn to socialize with others of different ages.

And because many family child care providers offer care beyond the traditional 9-5, family child care is often the best solution for parents with long commutes, who depend on transit, or who work nights or weekends.

Family child care settings often offer care that is culturally and linguistically familiar to children and parents.

For these reasons, family child care is often uniquely well-positioned to meet the needs of the children and families that face the greatest barriers to accessing care.

**Time for Parents to Bond with Their Babies.** We need to give parents dedicated time to bond with their babies in the earliest months, when so much of their development is at stake.

**Healthy Emotional Development.** We need to reach parents with resources and services they want and need to nurture their baby’s healthy development and set them up for a healthy life.

Many family child care providers get to know the children in their care, so parents often trust providers for health and developmental advice and connections to supportive programs and services.

**Strong Physical Health and Nutrition.** We need to ensure families have access to nutrition and other health services that can give them a healthy start in life.

Family child care providers often help parents keep their kids healthy and growing by providing nutritious meals and snacks, sharing developmental screening tools, and getting kids moving and playing.
Tailored Talking Points
For Talking About Family Child Care With Priority Audiences

Persuasive messages are concise statements intended to motivate action. Good ones are informed by an understanding of the audience’s priorities, focused on four questions:

1. Who is your audience?
2. What action do you want them to take?
3. What do they care about?
4. What is their best reason to say no?

The key messages can be tailored to tap into the values and concerns of your key audiences. Below, we’ve included tailored talking points for a few audiences you may be reaching out to. Similar to the key messages, these talking points are not a script. You can tailor them based on who you’re talking to, using all of them or just one at a time.

Elected Officials
>
Family child care is a critical part of DISTRICT/STATE’S vision for a comprehensive child care system that meets the diverse needs of all families.

Family child care providers make quality child care affordable and accessible for millions of children and their working families — including NUMBER in your DISTRICT/STATE. [Note: You can adjust the second part of this message to align with the data you have.]

Family child care providers help meet the needs of COMMUNITY/REGION families by providing child care that is accessible in their own neighborhoods, responsive to working parents’ busy schedules, and culturally relevant to the diverse families in our community. [Note: You can mix and match here — in some communities, cultural relevance will be more important than accommodating hours, so feel free to tailor so your message reflects your reality.]

Family child care providers are also small business owners that create economic opportunity where it is badly needed — family child care businesses:

> Are more likely to be woman-owned.
> Account for one-tenth of the nation’s 2 million child care jobs — overwhelmingly held by women and disproportionately by persons of color.

Have an economic impact of $9 billion (for all home-based care) nationwide.

In STATE mean NUMBER OF JOBS jobs and an economic impact of $IMPACT.

The problem in our state is that PROBLEM. [Example of problems to highlight include family child care is often overlooked in policy and practice; family child care providers do not have access to the training, resources, and support they need and deserve; or the child care subsidy reimbursement rates are too low, straining family child care providers ability to offer high-quality care while earning enough money to support themselves and their own families.]

You can help increase access to affordable, high-quality child care for babies and their families by supporting policies and investments that will ensure family child care providers and the children in their care thrive. [Example of actions include supporting legislation; meeting with local providers; or reading a resource or research brief.]

Community Partners
>
We all believe that every family who needs it should have access to quality, affordable child care for their infants and toddlers — and family child care is key to meeting that goal.
Family child care providers make quality care affordable and accessible for millions of children and their working families — including NUMBER in COMMUNITY/REGION — meaning that family child care is a critical part of a comprehensive child care system. [Note: You can adjust the second part of this message to align with the data you have.]

Family child care providers are also small business owners that create economic opportunity where it is badly needed — family child care businesses:

- Are more likely to be woman-owned.
- Account for one-tenth of the nation’s 2 million child care jobs — overwhelmingly held by women and disproportionately by persons of color.
- Have an economic impact of $9 billion (for all home-based care) nationwide.
- In STATE mean NUMBER OF JOBS jobs and an economic impact of $IMPACT.

Engage family child care providers in your outreach, to make sure that their needs are addressed in broader conversations about how to ensure access to high-quality, affordable child care and when advocating for policy change. [Example of needs include making sure you consider family child care providers in your advocacy; or considering potential unintended consequences for family child care providers in the policy or changes you are asking for.]

Family Child Care Providers

As a provider, you know better than anyone that family child care makes quality care affordable and accessible. You offer caring relationships and quality early learning experiences while supporting the healthy growth and development of the infants and toddlers in your care. And, you serve as a trusted messenger for families.

As a family child care provider, you are best-positioned to help identify the resources and policies that can create a strong foundation for continuing success for your business and the children you care for.

You know firsthand the challenges you face, such as PROBLEM. [Example of problems to highlight include low compensation; lack of access to training, resources, and support that are tailored specifically to home-based child care settings; being left out of policies and programs that are available to center- and school-based programs; or combating assumptions about the quality and professionalism of family child care.]

As a family child care provider, you play two critical roles: early childhood educator and small business owner. You know that when policymakers invest in family child care businesses, they are supporting children, families, and the economy.

Your voice has power! Share your experiences about what it takes to deliver the quality care babies need to thrive, and help us show policymakers and advocates how they can make quality child care accessible to more STATE families by supporting family child care.
Social Media Content

Sample Posts and Graphics for Facebook and Twitter

Sharing messaging about family child care through social media can help you reach key audiences and create buzz about the critical role family child care providers play, the challenges they face, and how policymakers can help.

Below are sample posts for social media. These samples can be tailored to meet your needs, whether it’s sharing information about local meetings, tagging your local and statewide policymakers, or linking to statewide sources of news or data. While we’ve included sample posts for Facebook and Twitter, this content could easily be tailored for other social media channels like Instagram, LinkedIn, or others.

Many of the posts below use the #ThinkBabies hashtag. Using this hashtag, started by Think Babies, will help others easily find your posts and help create a steady drumbeat and generate buzz about what babies and families need to thrive.

We’ve also provided some graphics you can use in your social media outreach or on your website. These are also customizable, and they can be paired with the sample content below or other posts you create about family child care.

Facebook

➢ High-quality family child care supports healthy growth and development and offers the caring relationships and early learning experiences that are so critical to infants and toddlers.

➢ Want to see what a day in the life of a high-quality family child care program looks like? #ThinkBabies and check out this video! [Note: You can share one of the videos below, or link to another one if you have them:]
  ➢ Gilda Mecca, Teddy Bear Child Care
  ➢ Maria Carrillo, Pili’s Day Care
  ➢ Emily Mingia-Lewis, Mingalew Family Daycare
  ➢ Doris Lopez, Doris Lopez Day Care
  ➢ Bernadette Ngoh, Trusted Care
  ➢ A Glimpse Into an Early Head Start Family Child Care Program

➢ More than 3 million children in America are served in paid, home-based child care settings — including NUMBER in STATE. But are they getting the support they need? The State of Babies analyzes how children in our state are doing and offers the data policymakers need to develop good policies. Read the report now to learn more! #ThinkBabies [Link to https://stateofbabies.org/]

➢ Family child care makes quality care affordable and accessible for NUMBER children in DISTRICT/STATE — but home-based child care providers need the support of our legislators. Contact MEMBER OF CONGRESS/STATE OR LOCAL POLICYMAKER to urge them to #ThinkBabies by prioritizing family child care! [Link to policymaker’s contact us website page]

➢ Family child care is a critical part of a comprehensive child care system that meets the diverse needs of all families — and it’s time to hear from providers about what they need to help children in their care thrive. Join us at a town hall meeting to share your story and #ThinkBabies. [Link to site or Facebook event]

➢ ¼ of children under 5 are served by home-based child care providers like me. Family child care providers help make quality care affordable and accessible — ask me how! [Include picture of you and/or your family child care program, if you feel comfortable]

Twitter

➢ #Familychildcare makes care affordable and accessible. See what a day in the life of a high-quality family child care program looks like in the video below! #ThinkBabies [Note: You can share one of the videos below, or link to another one if you have them:]
  ➢ Gilda Mecca, Teddy Bear Child Care
  ➢ Maria Carrillo, Pili’s Day Care
  ➢ Emily Mingia-Lewis, Mingalew Family Daycare
  ➢ Doris Lopez, Doris Lopez Day Care
  ➢ Bernadette Ngoh, Trusted Care
  ➢ A Glimpse Into an Early Head Start Family Child Care Program

➢ More than 3 million children in America are served in paid, home-based child care settings, including NUMBER in STATE. Check out #StateofBabies to see if kids are getting the support they need #ThinkBabies [Link to https://stateofbabies.org/]
Family childcare makes quality care affordable & accessible for NUMBER kids in DISTRICT/STATE — but providers need the support of legislators. Tell Congress how important this support is to include family child care when they #ThinkBabies: [Link to policymaker’s contact us website page]

Family childcare is a critical part of a comprehensive child care system — it’s time to hear from providers what they need to help their kids thrive. Join us at a town hall meeting to share your story.

#ThinkBabies [Link to event page or include image with details]

¼ of children under 5 in America are served by home-based child care providers like me. #Familychildcare providers help make quality care affordable and accessible — ask me how! #ThinkBabies [Include picture of you and/or your family child care program, if you feel comfortable]

Graphics

Image files for these graphics and others can be found here.

Facebook

Family child care is a critical part of a comprehensive child care system to meet families’ needs

Instagram

More than 3 million children are served in paid, home-based child care settings— including family child care.

Twitter

Family child care providers often help parents keep their kids healthy and growing by providing nutritious meals and snacks, sharing developmental screening tools, and getting kids moving and playing.
We need to make sure every family who needs it has access to quality, affordable child care for their infants and toddlers — and family child care is key to meeting that goal. More than 3 million children — over a quarter of the 12 million children birth to age 5 in the United States — are served in paid, home-based child care settings, including family child care. That means that family child care is a critical part of any conversation about child care.

Engaging family child care providers as key stakeholders, partners, and experts can help make sure that their needs — and the needs of the children and families they serve — are addressed in broader conversations about how to ensure access to high-quality, affordable child care. But there are some specific considerations that partners and advocates should keep in mind in order to meaningfully engage family child care providers.

Below are some tips and best practices for engaging family child care providers in your early childhood policy and advocacy work:

- **Understand the unique needs of family child care providers, and find ways to overcome barriers to engaging.** Family child care is widely relied on due to the flexibility it offers families — from hours to locations to languages and cultures. However, this also means that organizers must think through the unique needs of the providers you’re looking to engage and get creative in how you meet these needs. Below are a few key questions to consider as you think about how and when to engage family child care providers:
  - What is the best way to communicate with them? Can you connect with them through email, flyers, and/or text? Can they attend events in person, or is it better to connect digitally? Are there trusted partners (e.g., unions, staffed family child care networks, etc.) that you can engage to reach providers?
  - What are potential schedule constraints you need to accommodate? Can you schedule events in the evenings or on the weekend to make it more likely that family child care providers can attend?
  - If you can’t schedule events or meetings when family child care providers can join, how can you make sure you’re bringing their voices into the process? Are there ways to engage them in advance?
  - Are there unique language needs you should be aware of? Do you need to offer information in other languages, or ensure you have translators available if needed?

- **Focus on diversity and equity.** There is no one type of family child care provider — they each have unique perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Engage a range of providers who reflect your community — with consideration given to engaging providers of different ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, experience levels, and regions (including urban and rural) — who can help lift up the range of experiences and needs of the family child care community as a whole. And, make sure that you’re providing the resources necessary to help providers from historically marginalized groups participate fully. Once you’ve identified needs using the questions above, look for ways to meet them. For example, if you find there’s a language barrier, provide simultaneous interpretation at your events.

- **Put relationships first and build trust with those you’re engaging.** It may take time for providers who are often left out of important conversations to trust that their voices and needs are being considered and prioritized. Focus on building an authentic relationship with those you’re connecting with, so you can work cooperatively and collaboratively.

- **Consider confidentiality concerns.** Family child care providers offer an intimate, family-like environment to their children — creating a unique relationship between providers and the children and families they care for. This means that they may want to maintain a certain level of anonymity when telling their stories or talking about children in their care. When you’re engaging family child care providers, make sure to discuss their comfort level around sharing anecdotes, stories, names, or pictures — and find ways to share their stories that fit within these boundaries.

- When you host events or meetings, are they in locations that are easy to get to? Are they accessible via public transportation? Are they held in warm, welcoming, trusted community spaces?
- How are family child care providers being compensated for their time and expertise? Are you offering stipends for substitute providers or transportation costs?
- Focus on diversity and equity. There is no one type of family child care provider — they each have unique perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Engage a range of providers who reflect your community — with consideration given to engaging providers of different ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, experience levels, and regions (including urban and rural) — who can help lift up the range of experiences and needs of the family child care community as a whole. And, make sure that you’re providing the resources necessary to help providers from historically marginalized groups participate fully. Once you’ve identified needs using the questions above, look for ways to meet them. For example, if you find there’s a language barrier, provide simultaneous interpretation at your events.
- Put relationships first and build trust with those you’re engaging. It may take time for providers who are often left out of important conversations to trust that their voices and needs are being considered and prioritized. Focus on building an authentic relationship with those you’re connecting with, so you can work cooperatively and collaboratively.
- Consider confidentiality concerns. Family child care providers offer an intimate, family-like environment to their children — creating a unique relationship between providers and the children and families they care for. This means that they may want to maintain a certain level of anonymity when telling their stories or talking about children in their care. When you’re engaging family child care providers, make sure to discuss their comfort level around sharing anecdotes, stories, names, or pictures — and find ways to share their stories that fit within these boundaries.
As a family child care provider, you know better than anyone that family child care is a critical part of a comprehensive child care system that meets the diverse needs of all families. Family child care providers offer caring relationships, provide quality early learning experiences, support healthy growth and development, and do so much more for the infants and toddlers in their care.

That’s why hearing from family child care providers like you is so important. As a family child care provider, you are best-positioned to talk about what supports can be provided and what challenges need to be addressed to ensure that you have everything you need to keep the children in your care thriving.

Your time is limited, and providing top-notch care for your kids comes first. To help you make the most of your valuable time, there are lots of existing resources you can use to make your voice heard — toolkits like this one can give you a starting point on messages, talking points, and social media content. Below are some tips and best practices for taking your real-world experience and using it to advocate for yourself, the children and families you serve, and other providers like you:

➤ Tell your story. Your outreach will be most effective when you can share stories of your day-to-day experience as a provider. Talk about the benefits and the challenges of your work as a provider — the moments that make it worthwhile and the progress you see in the children you care for, and also the challenges you might face around filling your home, compensation and covering costs, professional development, accessing resources, or meeting licensing requirements. One great way to do this is to submit your story through the Think Babies story form, which will help Think Babies advocate for better policies.

➤ Get creative. Every family child care provider is different — and you know the best way to use your voice. Sometimes, this may be through traditional activities like attending a meeting, writing to your local paper, or calling a legislator’s office. Other times, it may be by sharing videos of your daily life as a provider on social media, sending children’s artwork to legislators, or sharing information with the families in your program about how they can tell policymakers about what family child care means to them. Be creative in the ways you use your experience to advocate for yourself and providers like you.

➤ Get connected. There are organizations and advocates in your state that can help you amplify your voice — doing an online search for local advocacy organizations, early childhood councils, or other groups or exploring the list of Think Babies partners can be a great starting point. Start by getting on their email lists and following their social media accounts to learn more. These organizations may offer listening sessions or trainings, or can even coordinate meetings with policymakers or media contacts on your behalf to ensure you have the ear of those who can drive change.

➤ Think about what you’re comfortable sharing. Telling your story is important — but so is finding the right balance with maintaining confidentiality for those in your care. Reflect on what information you’re comfortable sharing — whether you want to maintain privacy by sharing only anonymous anecdotes or are open to sharing stories and photos to illustrate your experience. Then, make sure you communicate openly with the families in your program about what they can expect from you. And, if you want to share personally identifiable information, ensure you have their permission.

➤ Communicate through your existing channels. You’re communicating every day, whether it’s through email or social media, putting a flyer in a child’s backpack or talking with a mom or dad in person. And when you’re ready to take action, there’s no need to look for new channels — you can rely on the ways you already communicate. Take stock of the ways you communicate and look for ways to integrate the messages and talking points into them. That might mean in emails with the families you care for, on your child care informational page or site, or in your personal social media posts.
This toolkit was developed by All Our Kin with the support of ZERO TO THREE and Think Babies.

All Our Kin 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; 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. The organization has a track record of success increasing the supply, quality, and sustainability of family child care. Learn more at www.allourkin.org.

Today, All Our Kin partners with more than 1,100 family child care educators across Connecticut and in the Bronx; these educators are caring for more than 6,000 of our youngest children. In addition, All Our Kin offers technical assistance to agencies and communities across the country on educational coaching, business training, network development, and family child care policy. To learn more about technical assistance opportunities available from All Our Kin, please email technicalassistance@allourkin.org.

ZERO TO THREE works to ensure that babies and toddlers benefit from the early connections that are critical to their well-being and development. ZERO TO THREE created Think Babies to make the potential of every baby our national priority. Early experiences shape how a baby’s brain develops, laying the foundation for future learning, behavior and health. Think Babies brings nationwide attention to what babies and families need to thrive. Learn more at www.thinkbabies.org.