



FAMILY CHILD CARE
— EXPERTS —

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Florida Family Child Care Home Association Presents



FAMILY CHILD CARE INSIGHTS: FLORIDA





Overview



FAMILY CHILD CARE EXPERTS

The following report was compiled using background information from the work of the Florida Family Child Care Home Association (FFCCHA), results of the Balance© Survey & Report conducted with FFCCHA membership, and anecdotal and survey information collected at the Family Child Care Listening Sessions held at the 2022 FFCCHA Annual Conference in Clearwater, Florida.



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This report was conducted on behalf of the Florida Family Child Care Home Association for the purpose of improving association and advocacy efforts on behalf of family child care providers in Florida.

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Background

In June 2022, Family Child Care Experts, LLC® (FCCE), on behalf of the Florida Family Child Care Home Association, collected data from members for the purpose of informing association and advocacy efforts of FFCCHA.



Family Child Care Experts, LLC

Family Child Care Experts, LLC is dedicated to designing systems that understand and support family child care using our unique *Balance® Survey & Analysis* to individualize supports and improve recruitment, retention and quality. We assist systems in going beyond the one-size-fits-all approach, collecting data and analyzing results to target funding and supports where they will have the largest impact on outcomes.

The Florida Family Child Care Home Association, in an effort to more clearly understand the challenges and motivations for providers, contracted with Family Child Care Experts, LLC® to collect data from Florida family child care providers and provide analysis and recommendations.

FCCE developed the Balance Report® to provide insight to family child care providers, their motivations, strengths and challenges, and that sheds light on barriers to recruitment and retention. The Balance Report® reflects data collected from a provider survey and is presented in the format of 3 Wheels: Business, Educator, and Personal.

The 3 Wheels are similar to riding a tricycle – when all three wheels have strong spokes, and are balanced, it is easy to move forward. However, when there are missing spokes, it creates weak and flat spots in the wheel, affecting all wheels, making it more difficult to move forward. The goal is to identify and strengthen the weak spokes, creating balance, strength and forward movement between all 3 Wheels.

By targeting support (and dollars) to create balance, stress is decreased for the provider, their families, and the families and children they serve. This expands the mental bandwidth for providers to move forward and be successful in quality improvements and ensures the success of the family child care business.

The Balance Report data can be used not only to give us information about specific providers, but allows us to identify trends at the organization, system or state level, and shed light on issues contributing to retention and recruitment issues.

The following report is a Organizational Level Balance Report completed on behalf of the Florida Family Child Care Home Association by Family Child Care Experts, LLC in order to inform and drive advocacy efforts of the association.



Florida Family Child Care Home Association

Florida Family Child Care Home Association, Inc. (FFCCHA) was established in June 1993, the mission of FFCCHA is:

“To represent a united voice on behalf of all children, to promote and encourage quality professional family child care through education, legislation, advocacy, mentoring, caring and love.”

As of August 2022, FFCCHA continues to be an Affiliate of the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and leads the nation with the highest number of NAFCC members (283). FFCCHA is also ranked #1 in the nation for the highest number of NAFCC Accredited homes in the state (178). FFCCHA also ranks #1 in the nation for highest number of members (664) in a state association.

Today, 30 Area Reps are aligned with the 30 Early Learning Coalition boundaries. These efforts have created a strong working relationship with state and local organizations.

FFCCHA supports family child care professional development and quality improvements through trainings, an annual conference, a NAFCC Accreditation project and a FCC Mentor training program.

The purpose of this brief is to raise awareness of the state of family child care in Florida in order to inform investments and legislative action that supports recruitment and retention of Family Child Care business owners, strengthening predominantly women-owned and operated small businesses, and securing this important early care and education option for children and families.



National Landscape:

Family Child Care (FCC) is professional care that happens in a family child care provider's home for one or more children of mixed ages for a fee. The small businesses can be designated as a large or small FCC home depending on the number of children in care and depending on the state, and may or may not need to be regulated or licensed to provide services.

Family child care is the most common form of child care in the US. Families choose this option for a variety of reasons: According to a national survey, "FCC educators, disproportionately care for children from low-income families and infants and toddlers compared to center-based programs (Barnett & Li, 2021; Data et al., 2021; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team [NSECE], 2015).

Family Child Care business owners come into the field for a variety of reasons, such as: caring for their own children while earning an income; service to their family, friends and neighbors; control over their own business and educational practices; and their joy in working with children. According to recent data collected by FCCE, approximately half of family child care providers had no experience in early care and education prior to opening their business. A recent multi-State study (Bromer, et al, 2021) found that "...those who engage in FCC work are not monolithic." FCC providers are a unique and widely faceted group and can not be authentically represented by data without differentiation with the field.

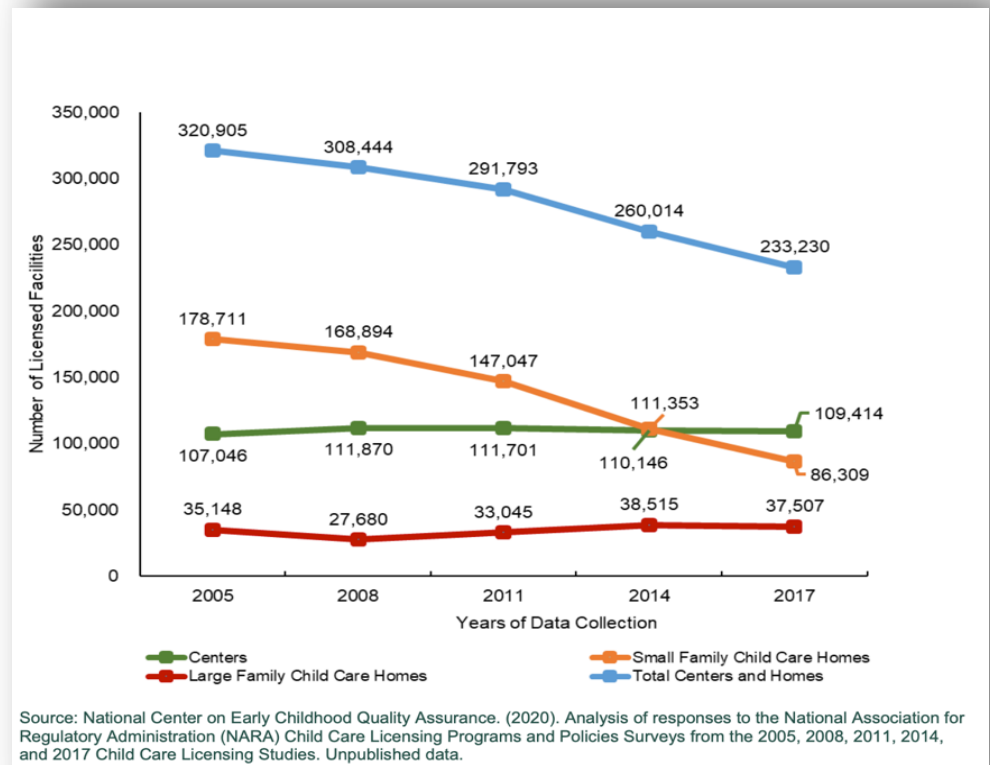
Families choose family child care for a variety of reasons: FCC is generally more affordable than centered-based care; FCC offers smaller grouping of children that often includes siblings; and parents like the home-like environment that shares their culture and language. Family Child Care homes can be geographically closer to where families live, particularly in rural areas, and often provide the flexibility needed by shift and weekend workers.

However, the availability of this viable option for families has suffered a serious decline.



What we do know is that between 2005 and 2017 there was a 48% decrease in the number of small family child care homes nationally. During that same period large family child care homes had a slight increase (NCECE, 2020).

What we don't know is how the pandemic may have exacerbated this decline.



In some localities, a decrease in FCC homes will result in:

- Lack of parental choice that fits the family's language, culture, backgrounds, and values.
- Hardships on families who need non-traditional care such as night and/or weekend.
- An increase in child care deserts, especially for rural communities where FCC may be the only option.
- A dramatic decrease in the availability of care for infants since few centers offer infant care and given that FCC is the predominant choice by families for infant and toddler care.
- States failing to meet their CCDF requirements to permit parents to choose from a variety of child care categories to include family child care.



There are many reasons why family child care may be declining, and there is no one solution. A recent study (Bromer, Porter, Melvin & Ragonese-Barnes, 2021), that focused on why family child care providers leave and stay in the field reported:

- 80% left the field due to challenges within the early care and education systems such as monitoring and licensing, subsidy pay, and quality rating and improvement systems;
- 63% reported challenges related to the economics of operating a family child care business; and
- 53% left due to working conditions such as isolation, long hours, with little to no benefits, and managing the dynamics of the family child care and their own family.

The same research also reported that providers were more likely to stay in the field because of relationships with families and connections to other family child care providers.



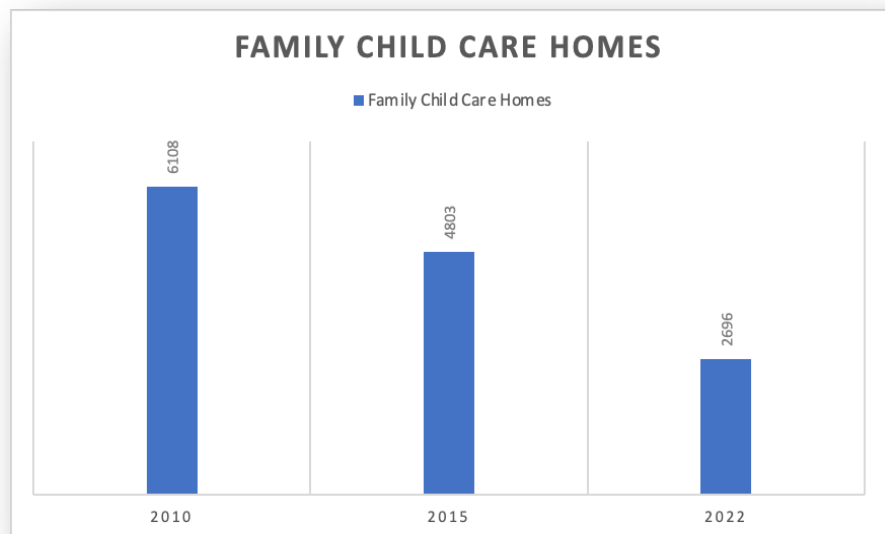


Florida Landscape:

Florida has proven to be no exception to the national trend of declining family child care businesses.

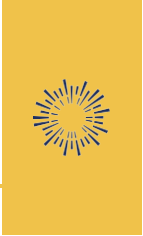
As of January 2022, Florida had a total of 2,696 family child care providers (594 registered and 1,678 licensed).

The total number of family child care providers represents a devastating 56% decrease since 2015 (Child Care Aware State Fact Sheets, 2010, 2015, 2022).



The child care licensing program is a component of the services provided by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). Currently, DCF child care licensing staff is responsible for the inspection and licensure of child care facilities and homes in 62 out of 67 counties in the State of Florida as well as registration of family day care homes in those counties which do not require licensure. Five counties have elected to regulate licensing of child care facilities and homes as provided in §402.306, Florida Statutes. Those counties are Broward, Hillsborough, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and Sarasota.

In addition to licensing and regulation through DCF, the Florida Division of Early Learning (part of the Florida Department of Education) supports quality initiatives in early care and education through School Readiness (SR) which is the state subsidy program, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and 30 Early Learning Coalitions.



However, while Family Child Care providers are eligible to participate in these initiatives, sadly, few choose to do so. Recent data gives us a very bleak picture:

Initiative	% of Providers who participate
Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK)	1.5%
School Readiness	50%
NAFCC Nationally Accredited	6%





Results

Using data collected from the Balance© Report, demographics in the Balance© Survey, background information from FFCCHA, Department of Early Learning, and the Department of Children and Families, FCCE provided analyzation for trends, challenges and opportunities.



Who Participated:

The Balance Survey® was sent to 567 FFCCHA provider members, of which 106 (19%) responded (which is within the typical response rate of return for surveys). The survey was sent in both English and Spanish and included demographic questions. In addition to the survey, two Provider Listening Sessions were held at the 2022 FFCCHA Annual Conference in Clearwater, Florida.

It should be noted that this data reflects a sector of the family child care field in Florida that has chosen to be a member of FFCCHA. DeBord and Sawyers (1995) reported the “quality of family child care was higher for providers who were members of professional child-related organizations.”

It is imperative that data be collected from providers throughout the State who do not belong to FFCCHA to truly understand the landscape of providers in the State of Florida.

Demographics

- **Gender: 100% of Participants were Women.**
- **Marital Status: 65% were Married, 32% Single, 3% Prefer not to say.**
- **First Language: 79% English, 18% Spanish, 3% Prefer not to say.**
- **Ethnicity: 50% African-American, 29% Caucasian, 18% Latino or Hispanic, 3% Prefer not to say.**
- **Years of Service: 6% less than 1 year, 6% 1-3 years, 9% 3-5 years, 15% 5-10 years, 44% 10-20 years, 21% over 20 years.**
- **Only 8.2% reported highest level of education as high school. In fact, 58% of respondents hold some type of higher education degree (Associates, Bachelor's, Masters), and 36% have some college.**

58% of Respondents Hold Some Type of Degree



Participants reported three primary reasons for opening their family child care businesses (75.5%):

- **To care for family, friends and neighbors in need of child care**
- **To care for their own children**
- **To have control over their early care and education business practices**

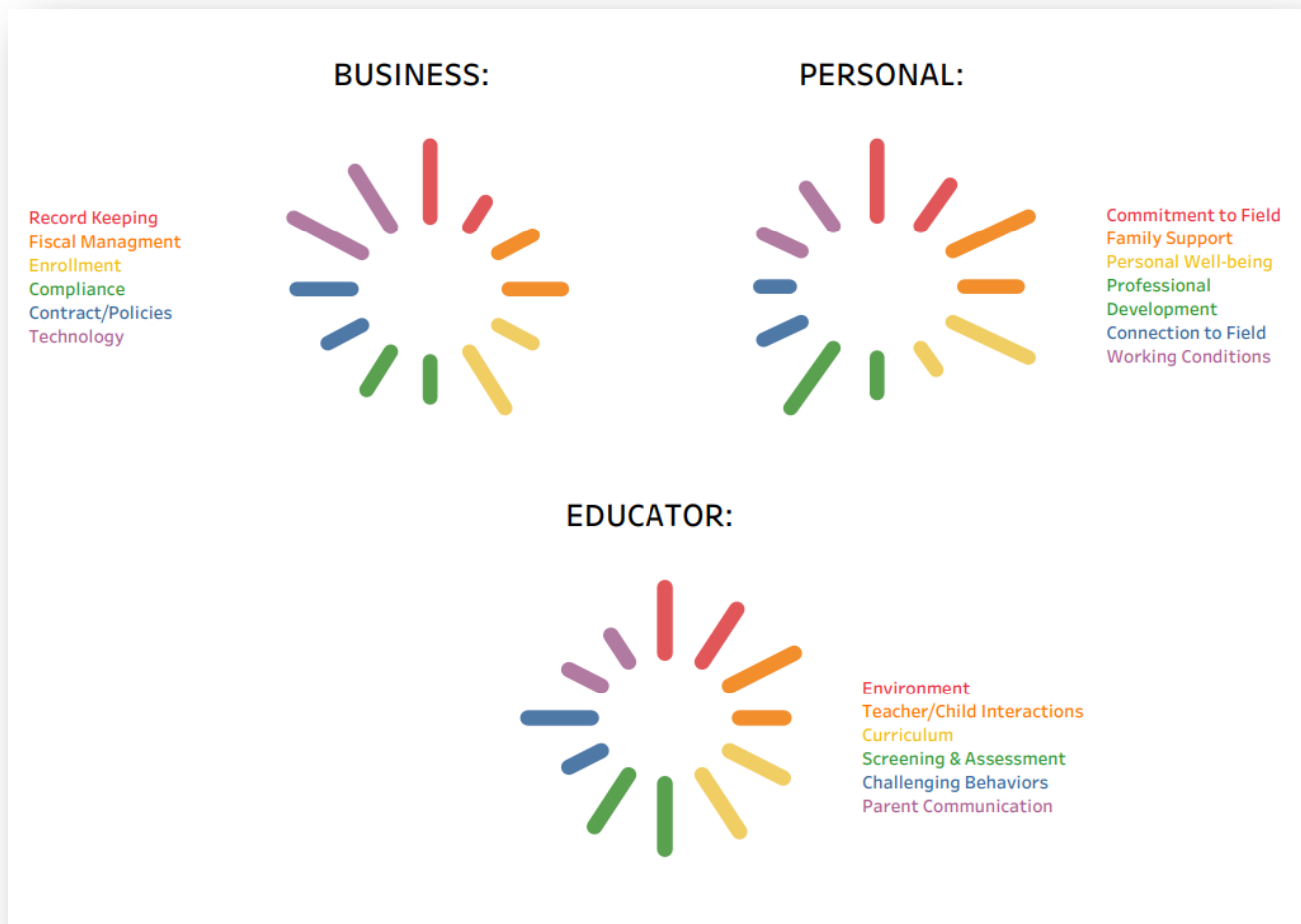
Interestingly enough, 85.7% of Latino/Hispanic providers had prior experience working in the early care and education field and were more likely to report their number one reason for entering the field was to have control over their early care and education business practices, compared to less than 49.4% of all other respondents who had no prior early care and education experience and were more likely to report their number one reason in opening their family child care business was to care for children of family, friends and neighbors. (In drilling down to other ethnicities, no significant differences were found, including Caucasion/Black/Other).





Balance© Survey Results:

The following is the Organizational Level results for the respondents to the FFCCHA Balance Survey© conducted in July of 2022.



READING THE BALANCE REPORT:

Each wheel contains “spokes” that reflect answers from the Balance Survey©. There are six topic areas in each wheel. Each topic area is represented by two spokes. Depending on how the provider answers the survey, spokes will represent:

- Full spoke = strength in this area
- Partial spoke = partial strength in this area
- No spoke (dot) = an area of challenge
- When the 2 spokes in any area do not match, it signifies a difference between perception and practice.

A wheel with the most missing or partial spokes will create imbalance for the provider and have a negative impact on the other two wheels.



Overall, an analysis of the data tells us that the FCCCHA provider members have strong environments, feel confident in the use of screening tools and technology, and confidence in their implementation of curriculum. Three of these four spokes fall within the Educator wheel.

This begs the question: is there more focus on educational support in the state and what supports are available to providers in strengthening their business practices and personal well-being?

Is there more focus on educational support in the state and what supports are available to providers in strengthening their business practices and personal well-being?

Per participant responses, the Business and Personal Wheels contained the weakest spokes. We have found correlation between the weak areas of the business and personal wheels, these are identified in the individual wheel analysis to follow. The Personal Wheel also reflects the most inconsistencies between spokes in the same area, showing a lack of intentionality to strengthen well-being indicators. For example, while most report family members don't complain about the shared space, providers scored very low for intentionally planning spaces for their family.

This is reflected in the individual responses, with many providers reporting a high level of stress over income and filling openings, in addition to low feelings of being connected to others in the field and poor working conditions. Personal well-being is often tied to how successful the business practices are for the provider, and this correlation shows in these results. Another contributing factor to these results may be that a majority, 64.7% of providers, reported that they were the sole household income.

Given these results, supports in business practices and personal well-being would be most likely to have the largest impact on retention and quality.

64.7%
**Reported That They Were the
Sole Household Income**



Individual Wheel Results

Business Wheel



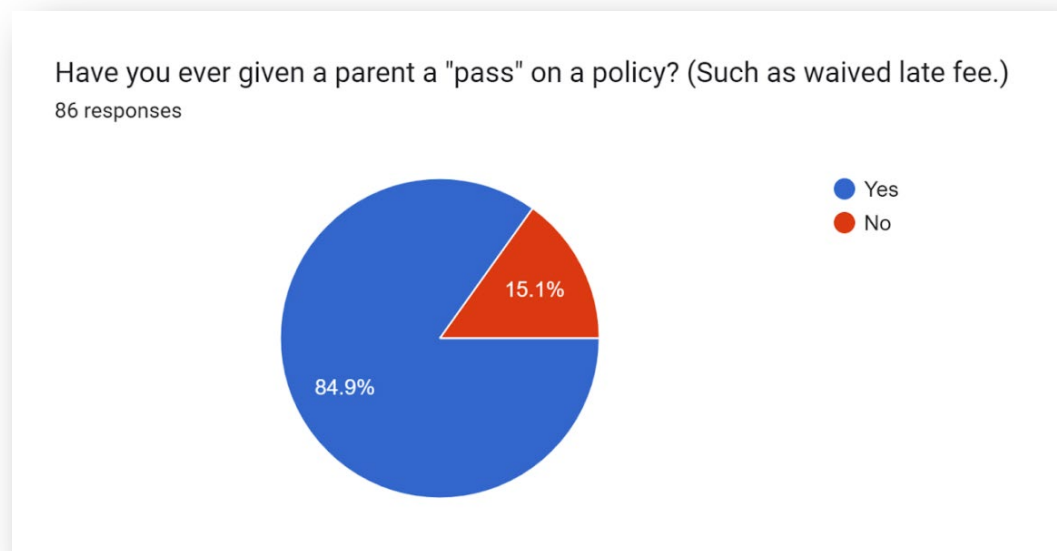
The strongest spoke in the Business Wheel was Technology, with partial strengths in Record Keeping, and Enrollment. The weakest spokes in the Business Wheel are: Fiscal management, Compliance and Contract/Policies.

Family child care business practices are often misrepresented as only focusing on record keeping and enrollment, often with the use of technology. However, information from experts in family child care business practices such as Tom Copeland, Patricia Dischler and Kris Murray reflect in their writings a much broader scope that includes: Contracts/Policies, Compliance and Fiscal Management.



Contracts, policies and the ability to implement and enforce them are often cited as a foundation to a family child care business. While many support agencies provide a template to policies, providers are rarely provided the in-depth training or assistance needed to understand and write policies best suited to them and their business. This leaves them in the position to uphold policies that they don't fully understand or believe in, making it difficult to uphold at all.

When policies are consistently broken or ignored, it causes stress for the provider, putting them in uncomfortable situations with families they are working to build close relationships with. They often feel cornered to "give a pass" when they don't really want to, just to avoid conflict. However, the more they do this, the higher their stress level becomes, and contributes to consideration for leaving the business or even the field.



While 71% of respondents reported feeling confident in upholding their policies and contracts, a shocking 84.9% of respondents give passes to parents. This shows a disconnect between perception and reality, something the Balance Report® is specifically designed to do in order to dive deeper into practices.

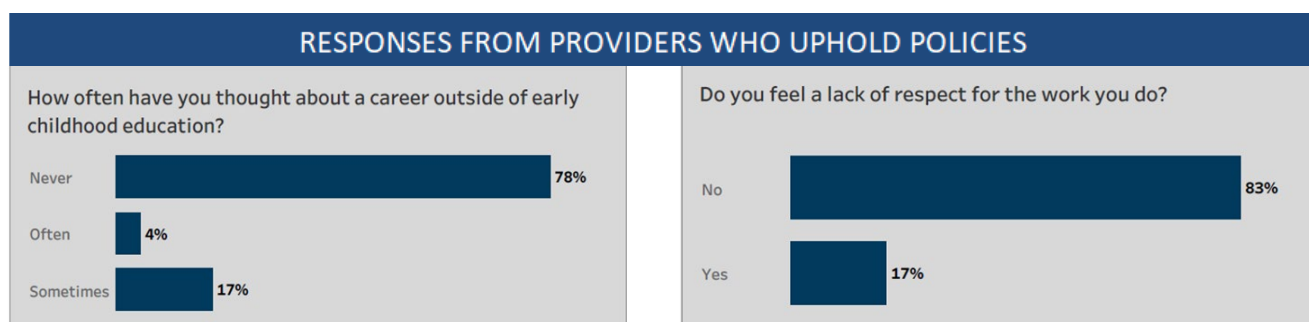
Feeling good about relationships with parents can give providers confidence in upholding policies, but when paired with poorly written policy, a lack of understanding of policies, or linked to other weakness in the Business Wheel such as poor fiscal management or low income satisfaction, it puts providers in situations where outlying factors affect their ability to uphold policies, and the lack of upholding policies creates a negative feedback loop to those factors, and becomes a difficult cycle to break.



When specifically looking at the providers who do give a pass on policies to parents compared to those who do not, we find some striking results that give us insight to reasons providers leave the field.

There is a clear correlation between strong business policy practice, respect, connections and a desire to leave the field.

Of providers who do NOT give parents a pass, 78% say they never consider leaving the field, 83% feel respected and 34% feel very connected to others in the field.



However, of providers who do give parents a pass, these numbers drop significantly. Only 55% report they never consider leaving, only 47% feel respected and only 24% feel very connected to others.

Looking deeper, we see that 81% of respondents felt confident in their ability to fill openings quickly. Yet, only 65% were satisfied with their income. This leads to deeper questions about the fiscal management of their business, how they set their rates, their ability to collect tuition and fees, and a worry over income can often affect a provider's willingness to enforce a policy as they may be more worried about losing families and the income related. This creates a chain of events that raises provider's stress levels thereby contributing to challenging behaviors with children and affects the provider's overall personal well-being. All of these connections and interactions raise the likelihood of provider burn-out and eventual closure.

**Imbalance in One Wheel Creates
Imbalance in Other Wheels**



Another connection between business practices and personal well-being was seen in a reported 64% of providers who have made changes prior to a monitoring visit. This shows disconnect between daily practices and compliance. When licensing rules are unclear, misinterpreted by provider or inspectors, it creates uncertainty and undue stress for the family child care provider. Because of this, providers feel the need to make changes based on these interpretations before an inspection for compliance.

64% of Providers Have Made Changes Prior To A Licensing Visit

The stress related to inconsistencies of inspections was the top topic at each of the Listening Sessions held at the FCCCHA conference. Providers shared stories of inspectors who interpreted the rules and regulations differently. Thereby leading to confusion for providers. Providers were not given clarification as to why certain practices were not considered a violation by past inspectors but were now considered a violation by the new inspector. FCCCHA Executive Director, Tammy Tener asked "Are licensing inspections helpful or hurtful?" Based on the responses, a majority of providers felt inspections were hurtful.

The group as a whole showed agreement with one provider's statement, "I feel like inspectors are out to get me." This correlates with the 2020 study by Bromer, et al. that found that "80% of former FCC educators reported challenges with ECE systems (i.e., licensing, subsidy, and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems) (See section on LICENSING REQUIREMENTS for more detail.)" The study specifically mentioned providers not trusting inspectors and found them to be disrespectful. Whether this is true or not, it is the provider's perception and the Florida Department of Children and Families will have to find ways to build trustful relationships with providers and consistency in monitoring visits.



Educator Wheel



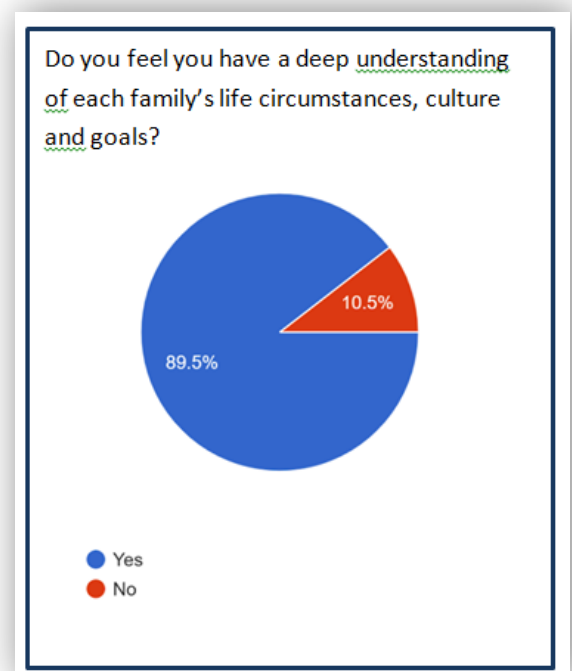
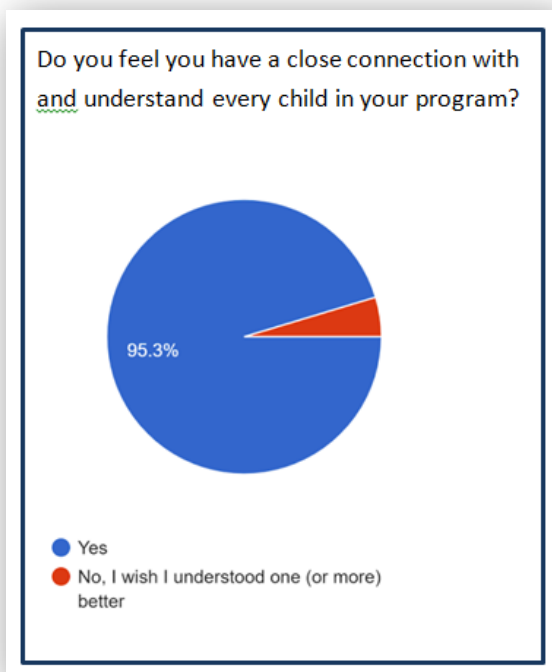
The strength for providers is clearly in the Educator Wheel. It is interesting to note that providers most often reported a feeling of not being respected for their competency as an educator, yet their view of themselves as an educator and their answers to specific educator practices, are reporting strong practices.

The Educator Wheel was the most balanced of the 3 Wheels, with overall strength in: Environment, Teacher/Child Interactions, Curriculum and Screening/Assessment. The clear weaknesses were in Parent Communication and Challenging Behaviors. As previously discussed, there is correlation between the Business and Educator Wheels when it comes to communication with parents and child behaviors. These issues are often connected as a provider considers what to discuss with parents and how straightforward to be with stressful issues, of both business nature and of child behaviors. Business weaknesses that cause stress can likewise affect a relationship with parents and with a child and be the cause of poor communication or provider ability to handle challenging behaviors.



The successes of family child care are clearly reflected in some of the Educator Wheel data:

One of the hallmarks of Family Child Care is the close relationship that is built with children and families. As families often enroll siblings with the same provider, therefore working with them for multiple years, close relationships are built not only with the children but with the families.





FFCCHA members clearly have accomplished building a close relationship with the children and families in their care. 96.5% report that despite all of the duties within their day, they find time to interact closely with each individual child in their care every day. Having a close relationship with an adult has been identified as one of the strongest indicators for future school success for children. As Dr. Jack Shonkoff states, “young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually every aspect of their development” (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

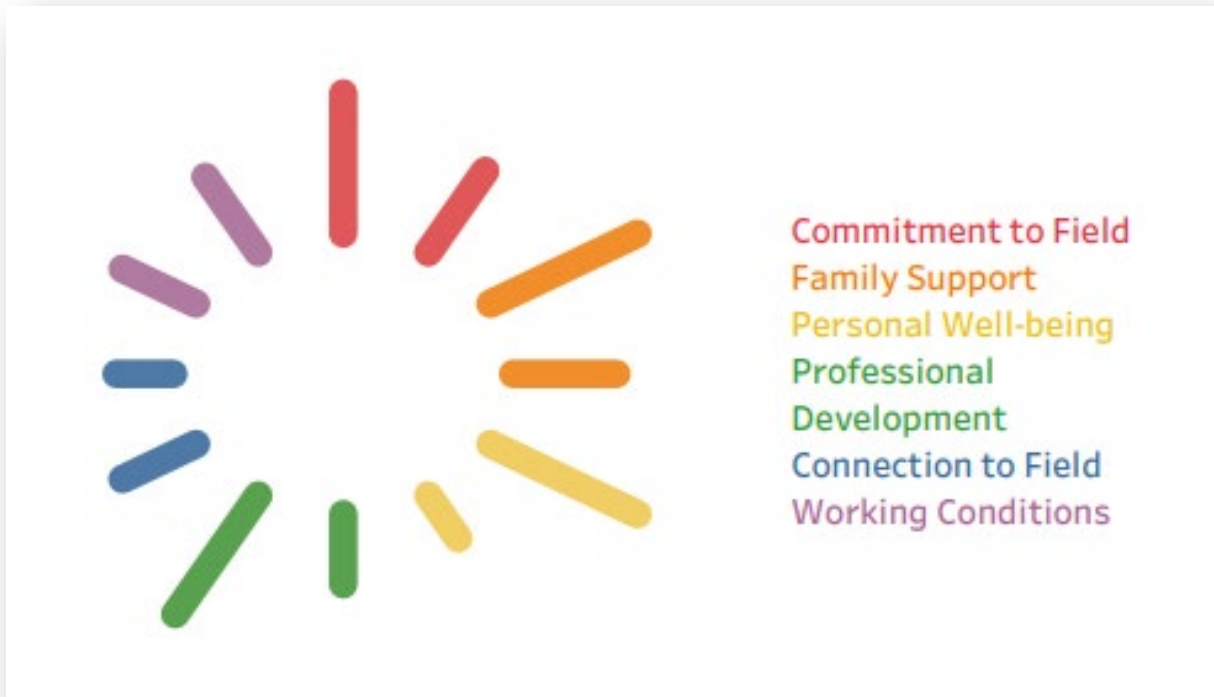
Given these close relationships then, it is alarming that 66% reported they would give notice to a family due to a child's challenging behavior. It signals that there are other contributing stress factors to the situation, and in seeing the weak spokes in the Business Wheel and Personal Wheel, it is no surprise. For example, a provider who feels deeply connected to the field, and other providers, has the support network to turn to for advice and help when encountering challenging behaviors and be less likely to expel children from their program. A provider without these connections can feel isolated and have a higher degree of stress as they attempt to navigate challenging behaviors on their own.

96.5%
*report that
despite all of
the duties
within their
day, they find
time to interact
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Personal Wheel



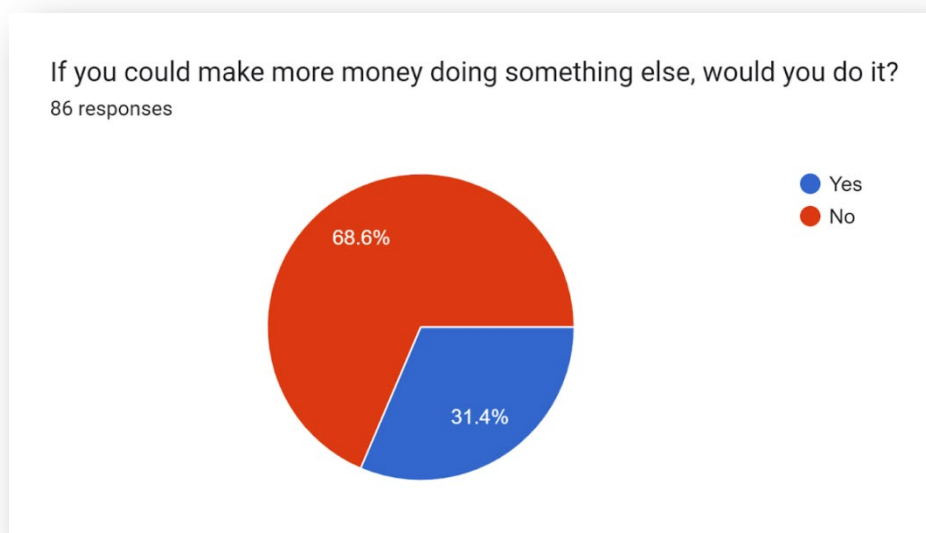
The Personal Wheel was the most imbalanced of all wheels, with no one area of solid strength (meaning both spokes representing the area were strong). There was some strength in Commitment to Field and Family Support, but these two areas become at risk when influenced by ongoing imbalance in other areas.

As a whole, the Personal Wheel is greatly affected by each spoke in the wheel, as well as spokes in the other two Wheels. Things can change quickly if they get out of control elsewhere. Without any area of two solid spokes, the entire Personal Wheel becomes a risk area for providers.

The FFCCHA results represent quite a bit of stress and imbalance for providers, with Connection to the Field and Working Conditions being the weakest areas.



This imbalance often results in providers exiting the field, as demonstrated in responses to the following question:



In addition to the above statistic, an alarming 44% of participants reported that they are considering leaving the field of early care and education. This is very telling of the level of stress providers feel from their work as educators, not just business owners.

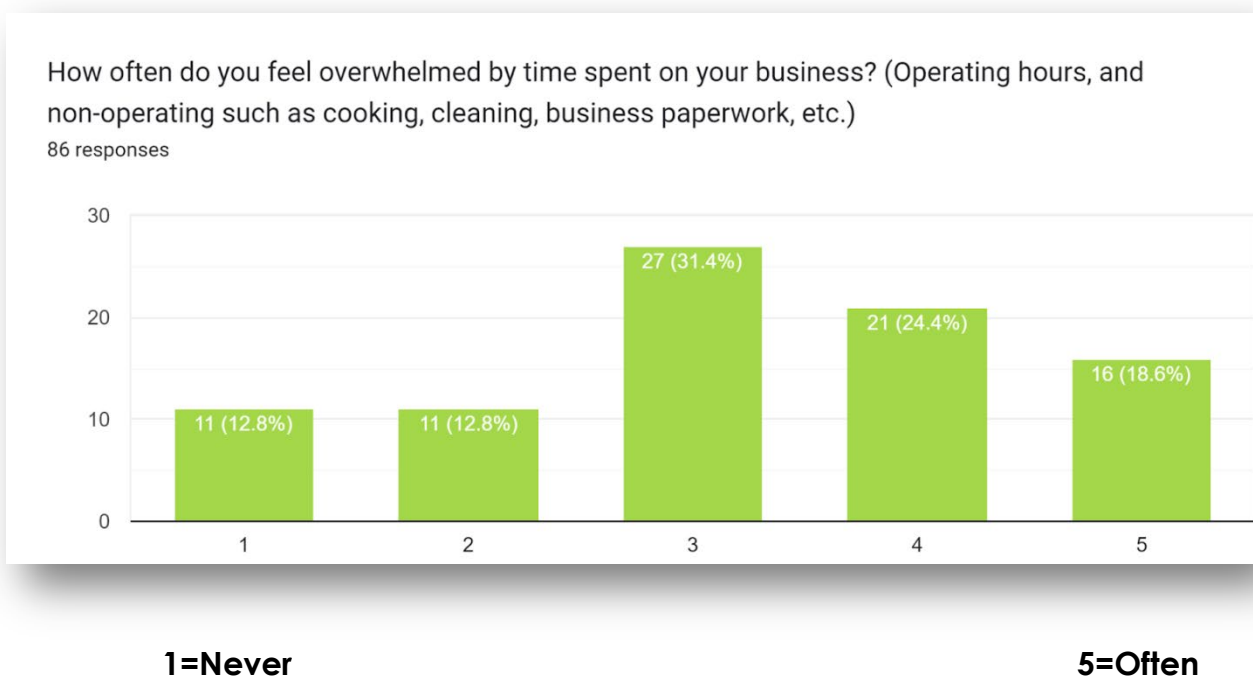
44% Consider Leaving the Field

One of the risk factors for any career is the lack of access to benefits. The low income of family child care businesses paired with no access to group policy rates, creates a burden that becomes a contributing factor in closing their business. Results show only 9% of respondents report having health insurance, vacation pay, sick pay, and retirement contributions. Sadly, 33% reported they do not have any of these benefits.

Despite providers also reporting they often feel they are not treated as educators, 58% report holding some type of higher education degree and 75% report exceeding the state's required number of continuing education hours each year. (This is further addressed under "Equity for Family Child Care" section below.)



Family child care typically is a sole provider working alone, unless it is a Large Family Child Care license, in which there are 2 or more providers. Working alone, paired with the multiple roles and responsibilities of a provider (Owner, Director, Teacher, Caregiver, Accountant, Cleaner, Cook, etc.), often becomes overwhelming. This is reflected by 74% of respondents reported somewhat to high levels of feeling overwhelmed by all of these responsibilities, as seen in this chart:



It is for this reason, that connectivity is so important to the field. Being connected to others who are trying to juggle the same roles, encountering the same challenges but have discovered solutions, can be a lifesaver for a provider.

However, only 26% of respondents reported feeling “Very Connected” to other family child care providers for emotional support. (See section on “Connectivity” further in this report for more detail.)



Digging Deeper...

Given the results of the Balance Survey®, and individual responses from the listening sessions and follow up surveys, we have identified several areas in need of focused solutions and support:

Recruitment & Retention:

Earlier in this report, we identified factors that may identify a provider likely to leave the field: poor business policy practices, lack of connection to others, lack of feeling respected. In addition to these factors, we see a correlation between the stress of challenging behaviors in children and a provider's desire to leave.

Of all respondents, 36% reported never feeling stress from challenging behaviors in children. However, when filtered for those who consider leaving the field, 85% report feeling stressed by behaviors.

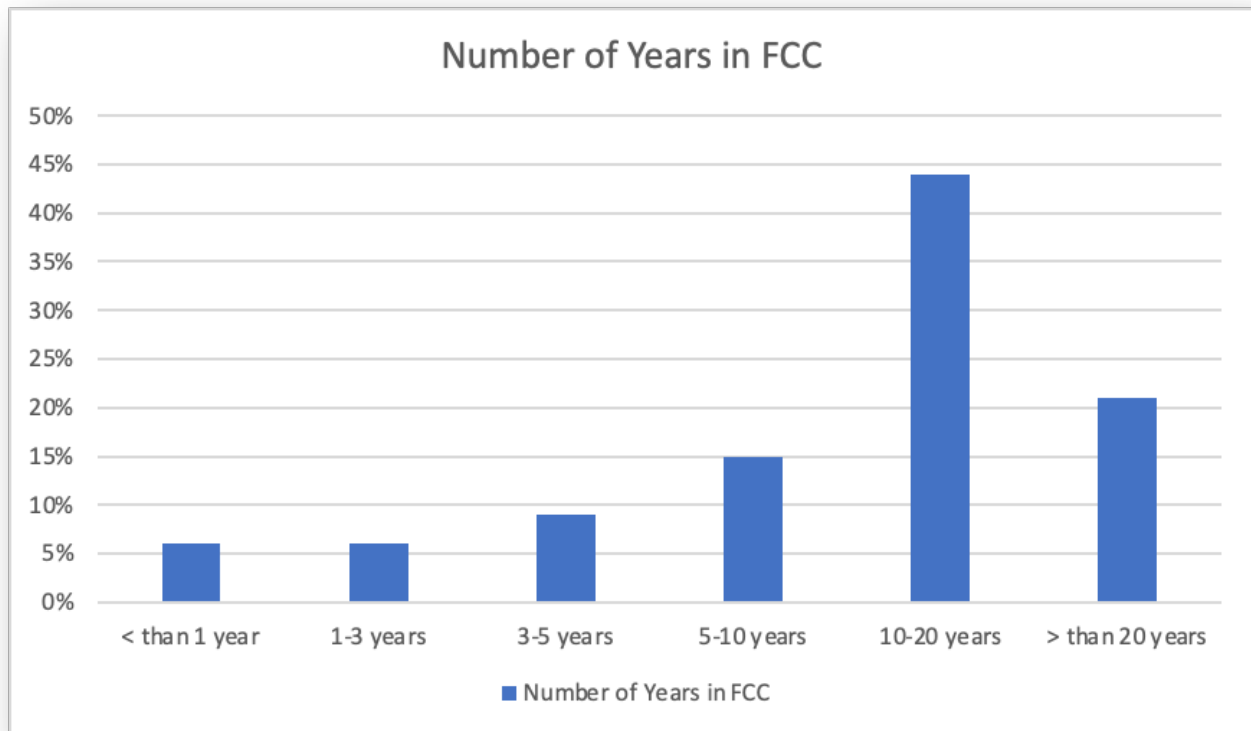
One of the most significant results was in reporting a feeling of lack of respect. The full group result was 41% feeling a lack of respect, but this jumps to 71% for those thinking of leaving the field.

Another significant result: satisfaction with income. While already low at 34% being satisfied with their income for the full group, this drops to only 14% satisfied for those who consider leaving. Or in other words, 86% of providers who are considering leaving are not satisfied with their income.

Finding balance for time for family was less significant, but notable, with a full group result of 69% saying they are able to find balance, but for those considering leaving it drops to 57% feeling balance.



All of these factors have created obstacles to longevity in the field that many cannot overcome, as the numbers of years in business are showing:



Years of service results were very alarming and portray a recruitment and retention crisis for Florida.

Without major recruitment and retention efforts, family child care may cease to exist in the State of Florida. Twenty-one percent of providers have been in business for more than 20 years. The largest percentages (44%) have been in business between 10-20 years.

65% of Providers Have Been In Business Over 10 Years



As these providers retire over the next 10 years there is no pipeline to fill the void. This denies families equitable access as defined under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) which states "Parents should have the opportunity to choose from the **full** range of eligible child care settings; center based care, **family child care**, and care in the child's home." This also contributes to child care deserts around the state.

With such a large percentage of providers close to retirement, coupled with 68.6% of providers feeling frustrated with the system and consider leaving the field, creates a potential crisis looming for availability of family child care as an option for families.

The window of opportunity to retain providers seems to occur in the 3-5 year range. During this time, the number of providers considering leaving the field is at its highest (54%). If a holistic approach is taken during this window, addressing all three Wheels, retention could be improved.

As included earlier in this report, we are already seeing the impact of stress and retirement in the Florida numbers. It is unknown how many of these providers chose to become unregulated versus closed entirely. Either way, this crisis cannot wait for a solution. Changes must be made immediately to change the trajectory before the family child care option disappears in Florida.

68.6%

*Of Providers Feel
Frustrated With
the System and
Have Considered
Closing*

Equity for Family Child Care:

*When asked
"What is your
wish?" many
respondents
replied with a
simple word:
"Respect."*

A common theme among providers in each Listening Session, and our Tell Us Your Story survey, reported feeling a lack of respect from the State due to policies, funding, and protocols where family child care is excluded or treated differently than other early childhood facilities and staff.

When asked "What is your wish?" many respondents replied with a simple word: "Respect." In our survey, 48% reported feeling a lack of respect. In diving into this answer, the feeling of lack of respect stemmed from situations where an assumption had been made about the provider's capacity for



providing quality care and education. This ranged from licensing inspectors making assumptions and lack of respect to family child care being left out of grant and education opportunities provided at the state and federal levels, or differences in expectation in state and county licensing requirements for family child care versus other types of child care businesses.

Comments from respondents included:

- ***“My wish list for the state would include equal funding across the board for ALL child care businesses, no distinction from Family Child Care Homes/Center Base or Private that service School Readiness Children.”***
- ***“Family Child Care Providers need to be in the spotlight and included with other child care professionals too. YES, they go through ongoing professional trainings, conferences, members of various organizations and YES they are essential workers in this profession!”***
- ***“My wish list for the state would be to respect us as professionals. Some of us do have degrees or supersede the requirements.”***
- ***“Stop treating home-base preschools as if we are not part of the education system.”***
- ***“Allow home-base professionals the same grant opportunities.”***

“Stop treating home-base preschools as if we are not part of the education system.”



Providers also reported not always having access to training in their area, or having training that was specific to family child care. They reported, “feeling like the ugly step-sister” whenever attending training or meetings for the broader early care and education field. These feelings stemmed from information being shared that was either only applicable to center care or representative of center care.

The state has created a pathway for family child care providers to participate in state-funded VPK, however only 1.5% of FCC businesses choose to do so. This was posed as topic for discussion at the Listening Sessions with the following obstacles reported:

- **VPK providers are required to have a minimum of 4, four-year-olds.**
 - **Family Child Care licensing ratios limit providers to 6 children (including the provider's own children under 13), with Large Family Child Care Homes limited to 12 children (2:6 teacher/child ratio). However, center ratios are much higher at 1:11 and 2:20 teacher/child ratios.**
 - **This limit in capacity paired with the requirement of at least 4, four-year-olds, puts providers in the position of not having the space to take sibling groups or not caring for Infants, Toddlers & Twos which destroys the strength and purpose of family child care.**
- **VPK Payment does not motivate.**
 - **The max rate of \$2486/year per child does not offset the cost of paperwork and eligibility requirements for the provider.**

To increase family child care provider participation in VPK, the state could expand eligibility to include 3 year olds for family child care. This increases the potential for providers to have 4 children within those ages at any given time. However, this does not address the capacity limit.

Due to the limits on capacity providers often struggle with any efforts for raising their income. While larger programs can somewhat manage this by increasing capacity, this is not an option for FCC. If the state's intent is to protect smaller ratios in the FCC setting for families looking for this option, then the VPK per child rate should be increased to compensate for this benefit.

Capacity limit was one of many inequities between FCC and center regulation. The most discussed was the requirement that a provider be in business for 2 years prior to application to become a Large Family Child Care Home. There is no such requirement for a center license.



As discussed early in this report, there is a lack of consistent communication to providers throughout the state of the potential supports and programs that could strengthen their business and increase their income.

We see this in a drastic difference in provider's feelings of being satisfied with their income based on years in business:



Providers who do choose to stay in the field a long time, have the connections with other providers necessary to learn about any new funding streams such as the USDA Food Program, T.E.A.C.H., and VPK, as well as local and state grants. In our Listening Sessions, many providers shared not knowing anything about VPK, becoming a Large Family Child Care Home, and other initiatives that improve income, despite being licensed, a member of FFCCHA or contracted by an Early Learning Coalition.

Improving communication to providers early in their careers could potentially improve the success of their business, their sense of inclusion and respect, and improve retention. Improved data collection to better understand provider's needs at the local level could help to target communication efforts and reach providers.

There is much work to be done to fully include family child care as part of the overall early care and education system in Florida through equitable funding, communication, training, data collection, and initiatives.

It should be noted that this survey did not include questions specific to feelings of inequity by ethnicity, rather we collected information on ethnicity and ran the results of all questions filtered by ethnicity as compared to the full group results and found no significant differences. The feelings of inequity reported on in this section were attributable to the entire respondent pool unless specifically noted.



Connections to the Field:

FFCCHA offers many opportunities for providers at the state level to become connected and involved. FFCCHA hosts an annual conference to provide education and encourage connections for providers and those who support providers. FFCCHA also supports the development of local chapter associations. Currently there are 17 chapter associations. These smaller organizations cover 15 of the 30 Early Learning Coalition boundaries in Florida, leaving 15 without local support (50% of state).

Currently, there is no clear path to finding or joining a local support group for providers. Neither the Department of Children and Families or the Florida Early Learning Coalitions website have links to finding or joining support groups.

The FFCCHA website does have a page to find your local representative and any local chapter associations at: <https://familychildcare.org/about/find-area-representative/>

Despite this hard work of FFCCHA at the state level, it is clear there is much to be done on a local level in order to provide equitable access to all providers in Florida for support and connections.

Of the 30 FFCCHA Area Representative positions, currently 20 Areas do not have an assigned Representative. Reliance on volunteers, who are already overloaded from responsibilities of their family child care business and personal lives, has proven to be a challenge for the state association.

FFCCHA has no paid employees. The Executive Director, Conference Chair and several other roles are provided only a small stipend, volunteering much of their time. All other association roles and responsibilities are filled by family child care providers asked to volunteer their already depleted time. While they have done an amazing job with the little funds and time they have had, it is time for something different.

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These challenges are seen in the data - of the FFCCHA member respondents, 22% do not feel connected to others in the field. It takes more than membership to feel connected, what is needed is a local connection, someone providers can see and talk to regularly.

As we did in the Retention section of this report, we see the 3-5 years in business range as an opportunity for addressing this issue. Our results showed that in this group, 45% did not feel a connection to others. This drops to 20% in the over 10 years in business group, indicating that having a connection to others may contribute to staying in the field longer.

A lack of connectivity spreads across all three wheels. When support is near at hand, providers are much more likely to write and uphold strong policies, have benefits, handle challenging behaviors, and address many other factors in their business that may cause stress.

Licensing:

In the two Listening Sessions held at the 2022 FFCCHA Annual Conference, FCCE facilitated conversations regarding challenges providers faced. The majority of these conversations revolved around State Licensing. Participants reported feelings of being targeted, disrespected, and often confused by citations. Many reported citations that did not have clear connections to specific rules but were more of an interpretation of the inspector.

In the Balance Survey(C), 58% of respondents reported that state monitoring visits were stressful. In addition, 64% would make changes before an expected visit. When asked in the Listening Session why providers would have anything to change (as opposed to daily practices being enough), participants reported a heightened sense of "making sure everything was perfect", with extra cleaning, planning for children so their behavior was not a distraction, double checking every known rule hoping to find the one thing the inspector would notice. Paperwork was a major part of this process. In fact, 58% of participants reported keeping up with paperwork was somewhat-to-extremely difficult.



Some specific comments from providers about inspections:

- *The inspectors are not kind or respectful. (Examples: using outlets to charge phone without asking, walking into their home without knocking, using bathroom without asking)*
- *I received a citation for my mother not having all her paperwork signed BEFORE she was even scheduled to start working here. This showed up on the website for parents to see as a citation. I would have had it all signed by the day she started, but my inspector showed up one week before and insisted it had to be ready the day he was there.*
- *I would like corrections to be noted in a timely manner on website.*

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- *Provider given a \$125 fine for having hand sanitizer outside of home on a table for parents because the inspector thought it was accessible to children.*
- *Too much paperwork, so much of it is replications.*
- *I feel like my inspector is out to get me.*
- *I want inspector consistency – other providers share stories, some written up for things others are not, seems each county has one who is known for being negative and writing up things providers are not even sure is a rule, their interpretations are not consistent.*

Providers who had been in the field for over 20 years shared that in the past inspectors were often seen as a source for support. However, they agreed that in the past few decades this has changed to a focus on non-compliance, and that they feel most inspectors are looking through the “lens” of center rules, with little or no understanding of family child care.

Zoning Issues:

The issue of zoning caused a lively conversation during the Listening sessions with many providers reporting that they knew someone or they themselves had issues with their local zoning boards.

One story that was shared was, “A provider's local city required an \$850 application fee along with a \$500 advertising fee. There was no guarantee that the provider would receive their zoning variance thereby losing \$1350.00.”



According to Suelo@Vacancy.Care (2021), the average salary of a child care provider in Florida is \$26,000 annually before taxes. Adjusting for taxes that leaves around \$22,651. Asking a provider to put \$1350.00 or 6% of their take home salary on the line with no guarantee is unconscionable.

Zoning issues are not only a State of Florida issue, but are a national issue. The American Planning Commission addressed this issue in 1997, yet the problem has continued to exist and hampers the recruitment and retention of family child care business owners. Florida law defines family child care as “an occupied residence in which child care is regularly provided for children from at least two unrelated families and which receives a payment, fee, or grant for any of the children receiving care, whether or not operated for profit.”(Chapter 402, Section 302, 2022 Florida Statutes) Therefore, it can't exist outside of a residential setting.

We concur with the National Association of Family Child Care's Position Statement that, “family child care must be protected by state law as a residential use. States should enact both preemptive zoning legislation and legislation declaring family child care to be a residential use that shall not be prohibited by restrictive covenants” (2008).

Success for Family Child Care

When asked about what was successful for family child care in Florida, responses primarily were in regard to the FFCCHA, particularly their annual conference. Family Child Care conferences often become a place for feeling a part of a larger family and are often referred to by attendees as “a big family reunion!” This sense of connection to a larger group and field has been identified as an indicator to longevity in the field by Juliet Bromer's research referenced earlier in this brief. Participants who referenced conference as a positive influence confirm this as well.

The 2022 FFCCHA conference had 211 registrations. This is only 38% of the FFCCHA membership, leaving 62% who did not attend. Considering the survey of all members reported that 74% did not feel strongly connected to other providers, it could be argued that if more had attended the conference this feeling of connectivity would have greatly increased. (See earlier discussion/data on connectivity).



FCCE

Recommendations

Family Child Care Experts, LLC offers recommendations based on the results from the Balance Report© and Listening Sessions.

Recommendation #1

Use CCDF funds or other state funds to provide financial support to FFCCHA to become a staffed-family child care network and shared services provider.


The Bipartisan Policy Center reports that Family Child Care Networks are critical to stabilizing the family child care workforce (2020). A highly effective network has a Director with the knowledge and understanding of the needs and culture of family child care that focuses a holistic approach to support that encompasses: personal well-being, business and education.

The goal would be to:

- Build consistency of resources available to family child care providers across the state.
- Build partnerships with local ELCs to provide services and collect data specific to family child care.
- Bring consistency to a state-wide voice of family child care.
- Create local family child care support group facilitation.
- Work with DEL when critical decisions are being made about funding, policies and programming to ensure equity and access.
- Create a landing page for all family child care data to drive data-based decisions.

Recommendation #2

Streamline the licensing process and improve consistency of monitoring and licensing.




Work with FFCCHA to develop licensing toolkits similar to what All Our Kin (AOK) in Connecticut has developed. Licensing Toolkits walk potential providers through the application process, provide materials, support providers with HOA and Zoning issues, and provide a family child care (paid) mentor to walk through the process.

Develop quarterly training for licensing staff to support reliability in understanding licensing regulations and interpretations, develop monitoring systems that identify interpretations, streamlines and reduces manual processes, increases accuracy, consistency, and efficiency during monitoring visits, and eliminates assumptions and personal interpretation of licensing rules and regulations.

Recommendation #3

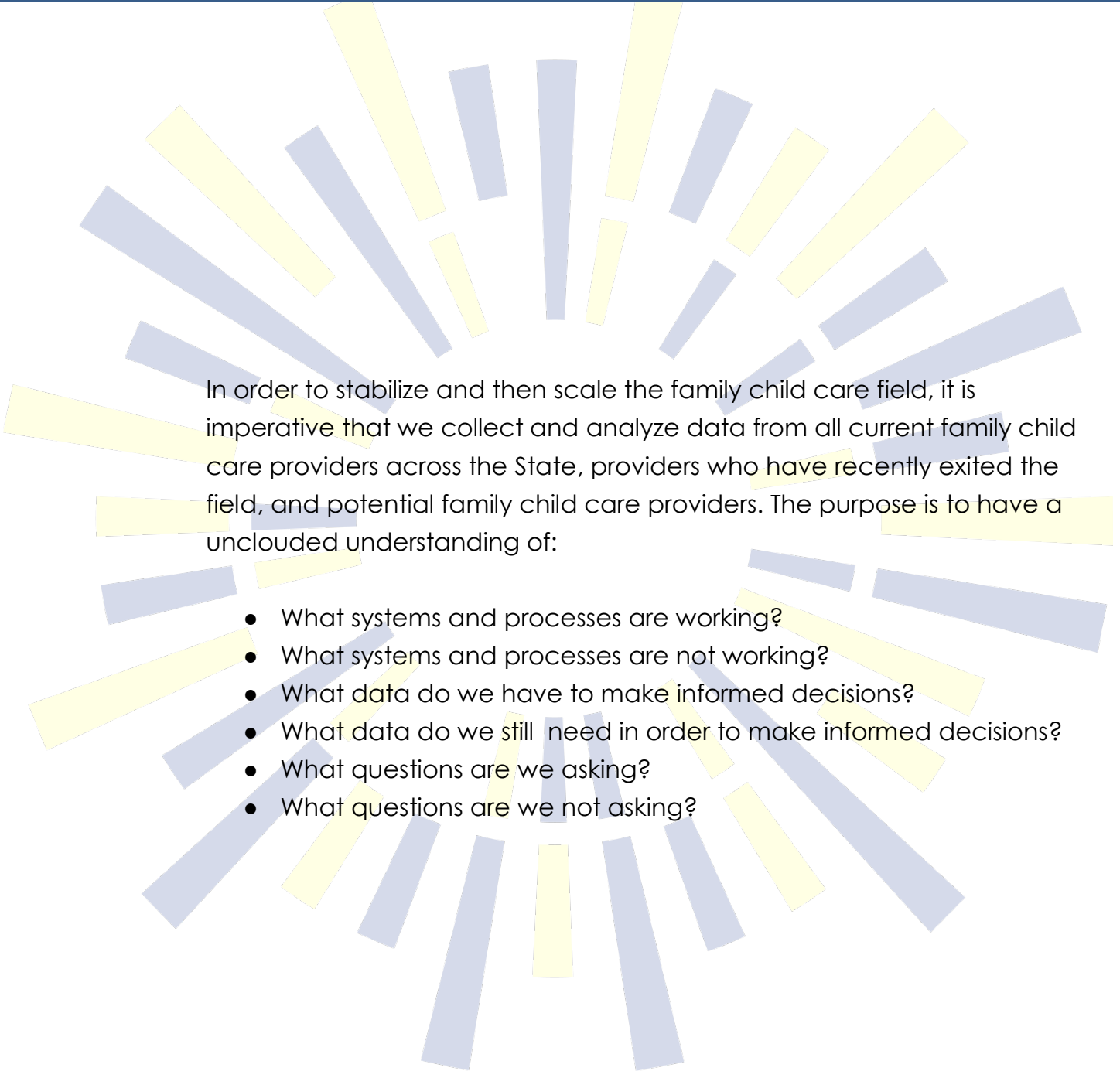
Enact Zoning legislation that protects family child care business owners who meet the Florida Family Child Care Licensing Requirements



By working with FFCCHA to enact State-wide zoning legislation it will remove barriers to recruitment of new family child care providers and retention of those family child care providers who decide to move.

Recommendation #4

Work with FFCCHA and Family Child Care Experts, LLC to implement Result-Based Accountability to stabilize, sustain, and then scale family child care in Florida



In order to stabilize and then scale the family child care field, it is imperative that we collect and analyze data from all current family child care providers across the State, providers who have recently exited the field, and potential family child care providers. The purpose is to have a unclouded understanding of:

- What systems and processes are working?
- What systems and processes are not working?
- What data do we have to make informed decisions?
- What data do we still need in order to make informed decisions?
- What questions are we asking?
- What questions are we not asking?

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