

Leaving Children to Chance: 2010 Update

NACCRRRA's Ranking of State Standards and Oversight of Small Family Child Care Homes

Child care is a way of life for millions of American families.

- Each week, over 11 million children under age 5 are in some type of child care setting
- Approximately 1.7 million are in family child care arrangements
- On average, children of working mothers spend about 36 hours each week in child care

This is NACCRRRA's fourth year of ranking state child care standards and oversight affecting young children.

Our conclusion is states are leaving children to chance.

NACCRRRA assessed state policies for small family child care homes, where up to six children are cared for in the home of the provider for compensation. The maximum number of points a state could receive is 140. Of the states that scored points, the average score was 63, which equates to 45 percent – a failing grade in any classroom.

Top states: *Delaware, Oklahoma, Washington, Massachusetts, the Department of Defense (DoD), Alabama, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Colorado and Florida* ranked among the top 10 highest scoring states for standards and oversight. **This does not mean that they scored high, but rather, that they scored highest among all states. For example, Florida was 10th with a score of 76, but that equates to 54 percent, a failing grade in any classroom.**

Bottom states: Eight states (*Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, Montana, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia*) received a zero because they do not inspect or visit family child care homes prior to the state granting a license. Nine states (*Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, South Dakota and Virginia*) received a zero because they either do not license small family child care homes or they allow more than six children (including the provider's children) to be cared for in a home without requiring licensing.¹

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- **Weak State Inspection Standards:** About half the states do not conduct an inspection at least once a year. Montana requires visits only once every 5 years and Michigan once every 10 years.
- **Incomplete Background Checks:** Only 27 states use fingerprints to conduct checks. A background check based on name only is of limited value. Only 17 states require a check of the sex offender registry. Fifteen states do not require a check of the child abuse registry.
- **Weak Minimum Education Requirements:** Twenty-six states have no minimum education requirement for family child care home providers. Only 17 states specify a minimum of a Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) or a high school diploma.
- **Weak Training Requirements:** Eleven states do not require any initial training for individuals to become licensed as small family child care home providers.
- **Weak Early Learning Standards:** Only 14 states require providers to read to children. Fewer than half (20) of the states restrict the use of media such as television and videos.
- **Weak Basic Health and Safety Standards:** Only nine states met each of the 10 requirements under both health and safety. Despite tragedies where infants die from unsafe sleeping positions, only 30 states require safe sleeping practices.

¹ To derive the threshold for licensing, NACCRRRA added one child if the state does not include the providers' own children in establishing its licensing threshold. NACCRRRA added one child for each family exempted before licensing begins.

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NACCRRA RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS

Recommendations for State Policy	Efforts that cost little money but that would have a large impact on the quality of care
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify basic health and safety practices that child care providers should know so that children are safe and providers are better prepared to respond to the children. 2. Develop basic policies for family child care providers to follow in communicating and interacting with parents. 3. Post the results of inspection reports and inspection report violations on the internet so that the information is publicly accessible and parents can make informed choices. 4. Develop emergency preparedness plans for natural disasters or periods of emergency. 5. Require the state licensing department to share timely information about family child care home provider status with CCR&Rs and others who help families find child care.
	Efforts that require more personal responsibility for those who choose to care for unrelated children
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require comprehensive background checks for paid providers caring for unrelated children (i.e., use fingerprints to check the state criminal history database and the federal FBI database as well as checking the sex offender and child abuse registries). 2. Require providers to complete 40 hours of initial training in specific topics. Require 24 hours of annual training.
Recommendations for Federal Policy	Efforts to promote accountability with taxpayer funds
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require all paid family child care providers caring for one or more unrelated children on a regular basis to be licensed and inspected, both before a license is granted and once or more a year. 2. Provide the appropriate number of licensing personnel to ensure family child care regulations are appropriately enforced. 3. Expedite background check processing and promote information sharing among separate state systems.
	Efforts that cost little money but that would have a large impact on the quality of care
Recommendations for Federal Policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorize the Child Care Bureau to impose financial penalties against states that fail to develop state plans and regulations consistent with the intent of the CCDBG law. 2. Require states to explain any category of license-exempt care that includes children in significant numbers. 3. Prohibit self-certification of compliance with health and safety standards. 4. Separate relative care from unregulated friends and neighbor care in all federal child care regulations.
	Efforts to promote accountability with taxpayer funds
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require all providers receiving CCDBG or TANF subsidies to be inspected to ensure compliance with basic health and safety standards. 2. Increase CCDBG funding and require states to set aside at least 12 percent of CCDBG funding for quality related activities (including activities such as inspections). 3. Support research on the regulations that promote quality family child care.

For more information, contact Grace Reef, Chief, Policy & Evaluation at 703-341-4116 or greef@naccrra.org or Pam Davidson, Director of Government Affairs at 703-341-4156 or pamela.davidson@naccrra.org. For additional information about data and regulations in individual states, http://www.naccrra.org/randd/state_by_state_facts.php;