

**Family Friend & Neighbor  
Child Care:  
Policy Options and Research Questions**

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# Project Overview

- Funded by AECF as follow-up to 2004-2010 investments in FFNC work
- Goal: understand current state of policy and research in the field from the perspective of grantees and non-grantees
- Individual interviews with AECF grantees (19) and non-grantees (9)
  - 10 in evaluation research
  - 3 in policy research
  - 13 in system development
  - 2 in private funding

Home Based Child Care

Unregulated (FFNC)

Regulated

Relatives

Non-relatives

Paid

Paid

Unpaid

Paid

Unpaid

Public subsidies

Private pay

Public Subsidies

Private pay

# Cross-cutting Themes in Interviews – Policy & Research

- Diversity
- Quality
- Family Strengthening
- Regulation

# FFNC Diversity

- FFN caregivers and care arrangements are not an “it”
  - While primarily relatives – particularly grandmothers
  - others provide care in many circumstances
  - FFNC is often provided in combination with other arrangements
- Policy context for FFNC varies considerably across states
  - Use of child care subsidies for FFNC
  - Regulations

# FFNC Diversity

- Question: Where does FFNC fit?
  - Subsidized child care
  - Child welfare
  - Work support versus child learning
  - QRIS
  - Family Strengthening System
- One size does not fit all

# Provider Diversity: Research Questions

- Who uses FFNC?
  - Family characteristics
  - Child characteristics
  - Community characteristics
- Who are FFNC providers?
  - Motivation?
  - Turnover?
  - Quality?
  - Interests and needs?
- How is FFNC used by families?
  - Primary or supplemental?
  - Short or long term?
- How does FFN caregiving vary across subgroups?
  - By relationship to child
  - By compensation arrangements
  - By interest in “professionalism”

# Quality in FFNC

- Consistent evidence of poor quality in home-based settings makes arguments for increased public investment difficult to support
- Focus tends to be on fraud & safety issues for FFNC receiving subsidy
- Challenge = identifying cost-effective strategies for engaging and supporting FFNC that produce improvements in quality & children's outcomes



# Bringing FFNC QI Models To Scale

- Many local models exist, some with evaluation results
  - E.g. Caring For Quality, Community Connections, Grandmother Project, Zero to Three FFNC materials
- But no mechanism via state policy/funding to expand/replicate/sustain

# QRIS as Quality Strategy

- QRIS movement
  - Presented to policymakers as way to increase accountability & improve child outcomes
  - No strong evidence yet that QRIS improves care environment & child learning in regulated child care
  - Increasing requirement that subsidies be used only with providers in QRIS
- Question: How should FFNC fit within QRIS?

# Challenges in Using QRIS for Supporting FFNC

- Home-based providers (regulated & not) face more barriers to participating in & benefitting from QRIS
- QRIS standards often are not differentiated between center- and regulated home-based settings
- Challenges with identifying, outreach, engagement with FFN groups

# Challenges in Using QRIS for Supporting FFNC

- Quality improvement supports for home-based providers need to meet diverse needs and interests
  - Professional Development
  - Grandmothers with limited English

# Quality: Research Questions

- How does QRIS improve learning environment and child outcomes in regulated home-based settings?
- Are quality standards applicable to both regulated and unregulated home-based care settings?
- To what extent is the rating process essential to improvements? That is, can quality be improved without ratings?

# Quality: Research Questions

- How could effective quality improvement strategies be adapted for unregulated home-based settings?
- What are the thresholds of quality that really make a difference for child outcomes?
- What will it take for such strategies to go to scale, either inside or outside QRIS?

# Family Strengthening with FFNC Settings

- Promising strategy that can build on successful parent education/home visiting models
- Coaching and mentoring with ongoing practice and feedback utilizes adult learning principles
- Challenges
  - Providing intensive support of sufficient duration
  - Organizing support to meet different needs & interests
  - Efficiently using limited resources

# Family Strengthening: Research Agenda

- Develop and rigorously evaluate programs that support specific groups of FFN caregivers
- Explore how cultural differences affect results in engaging FFN caregivers, meeting their needs, enhancing their caregiving, and improving children's learning
- Identify critical components and threshold levels of interventions that produce results, with implications for replication and going to scale



# State Regulations & Requirements

- Focus in regulations for licensed child care providers is generally health & safety
- FFNC Providers receiving subsidies may be subject to some requirements
- States vary greatly in use of subsidies for FFNC
- States also vary in requirements for FFNC receiving subsidies

# Federal Role in State Requirements for FFNC

- Recent clarification that states can meet parental choice while requiring subsidized providers to meet quality criteria
- Reauthorization of CCDBG = potential opportunity to:
  - Increase requirements for and monitoring of FFNC subsidies
  - Expand support for quality improvement activities with FFNC providers

# State Regulation: Research Questions

- How are state requirements for FFNC providers associated with the role these providers play in subsidy system?
- When new requirements for registration or training are adopted, what are the effects on FFNC provider participation in the subsidy system? On child/family care arrangements?

# Crosswalk with National Survey of Early Care and Education

Research Topics	NCECE
Who uses FFNC?	X
Family characteristics	
Child characteristics	X
Community characteristics	X
How is FFNC used by families?	X
Primary or supplemental?	
Short or long term?	X
Who are FFNC providers?	X
Motivation?	X
Turnover?	
Quality?	X
Interests and needs?	
How does FFN caregiving vary across subgroups?	X
By relationship to child	X
By compensation arrangements	
By interest in “professionalism”	X

Questionnaires available at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/nsece](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/nsece)

# Questions?

