

Multiple dimensions of ECE quality and the resources needed to support it

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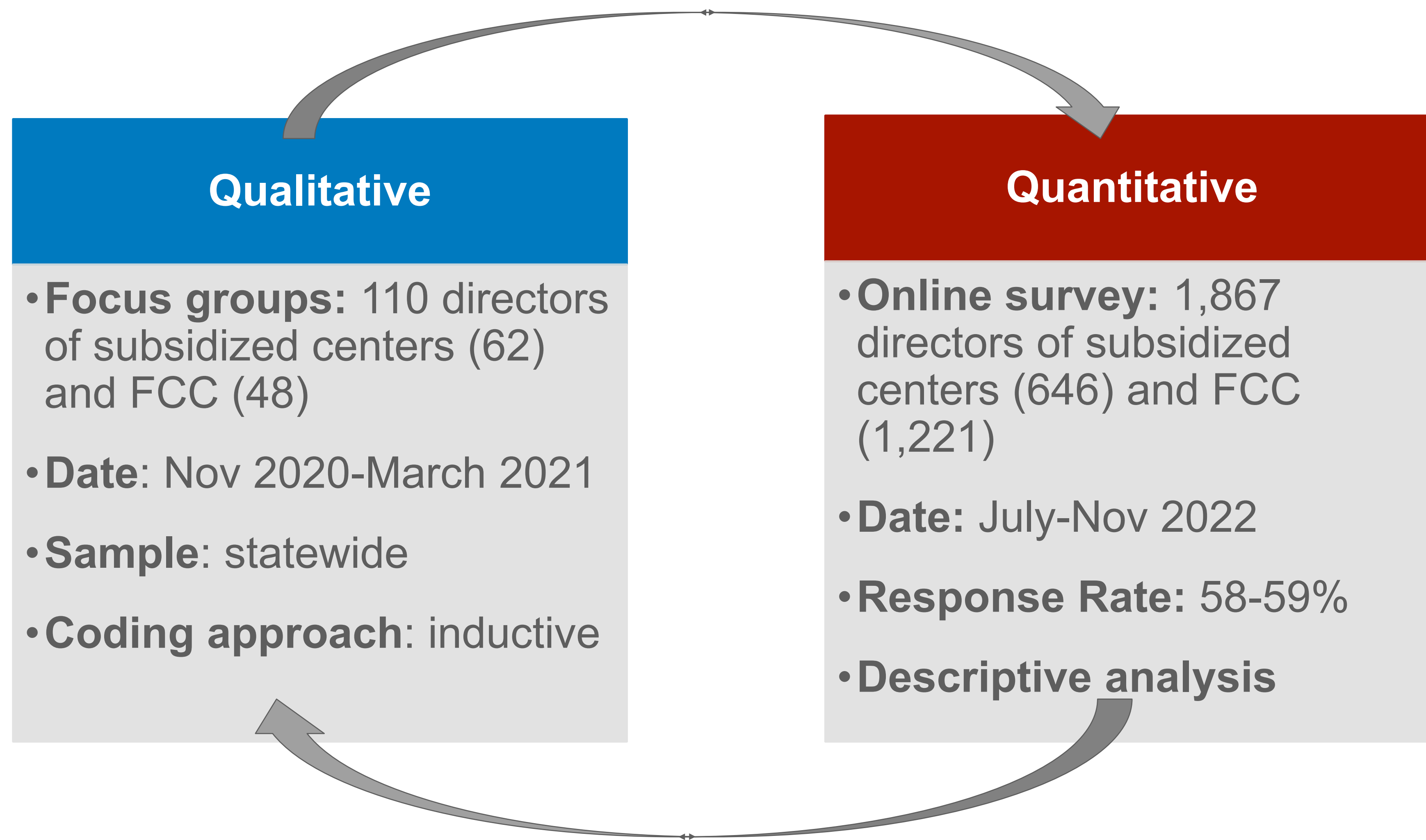


Research questions

- I. What do subsidized center and FCC directors perceive as important components of high quality care (that facilitate equitable access)?
- II. What resources are needed to support high quality care?



Mixed methods research design



*Surveys and focus groups conducted in English and Spanish

*Providers served at least 1 preschooler

**Multiple components of quality practice that support
equitable access to ECE**



Multiple dimensions of quality

- When asked, providers noted many dimensions of quality and that quality can be difficult to define.
- Many factors
 - *“I think there are many factors that make up a high quality of a program, say the **interaction between and with the children**, say a **well implemented curriculum**, say the goals for them, say is learning, as you teach, the **support you give to the kid**. There are several, several factors...**Family engagement**, how to involve families with the program with the children, that they are interested in their education and in everything that is happening with them within the program. **The environment**, how you have the areas, how everything is suitable for them depending on the ages and stages of the children. **Leadership**, how to manage your program.” -FCC Director*
- Difficult to define
 - *“I mean, I think we all know what is not high quality, but defining high quality is very difficult because it all really matters. It is every element... It matters that teachers have time to connect with parents. It matters that it's connected with community.” -Center Director*

High quality care: meeting children's developmental needs

- Addressing children's mental health and behavioral needs
- Promoting children's socio-emotional development
- Preparing children for school
 - *“I think that the children's social and emotional development is the most important thing. If they go to kindergarten and they're unable to function on an hour-to-hour level, because they have social and emotional issues, those need addressed before you can teach them the ABCs.” –Center Director*
 - *When I think about the quality of early education for preschool children...Good encouragement for them to feel confident because for me the priority is for them to be calm and comfortable so that you can promote development in any environment.” -FCC Director*

High quality care: meeting family needs

- Supporting families' access to resources
- Developing a community
- Parent communication and engagement

“I have children from all backgrounds, all religions. And not always can I answer their questions, but moms and dads can. So I may have those conversations with parents... Keeping those connections is what keeps the quality there. Open engagement. -FCC Director”

“When I think of high quality, I also think of appropriate social interactions with families, not only the children, but also the parents...just having a really good understanding of cultures, different cultures, diversity, and just being aware of those kinds of things when you're dealing with families and their children. -Center Director”

High quality care: challenges meeting children in the child welfare system's needs

- System barriers
- Trauma
- Limited resources
- But, high commitment to serving children

“...the ability to serve [DCF] families who are in the greatest need is a privilege and I take that very seriously. And I think that not enough programs have the ability or the drive to assist those families that need it.” -Center Director

“I really just prefer to take children with DCF voucher. It's very close to my heart. It's personal to me...They need me. -FCC Director

Resources needed to support quality



Resources needed to support quality

- **Educators:** higher wages, respect, planning time, PTO
 - *“[I] think quality is... We rely heavily on just decency, human decency, and kindness, and love... this is going to sound very basic, but higher pay. So that teachers feel respected...” –Center Director*
 - *“it’s not only money, it’s also time... Teachers do not get planning time reliably. They do not get time to document reliably. They do not get time to take a week off from work reliably. They don’t have time to be sick reliably. –Center Director*
- **Infrastructure:** equipment to learning materials
 - *“I would like to improve in terms of the curriculum, I want to have more resources, more tools to work with... And if we have a curriculum, we should have the materials to do that curriculum.” –FCC Director*

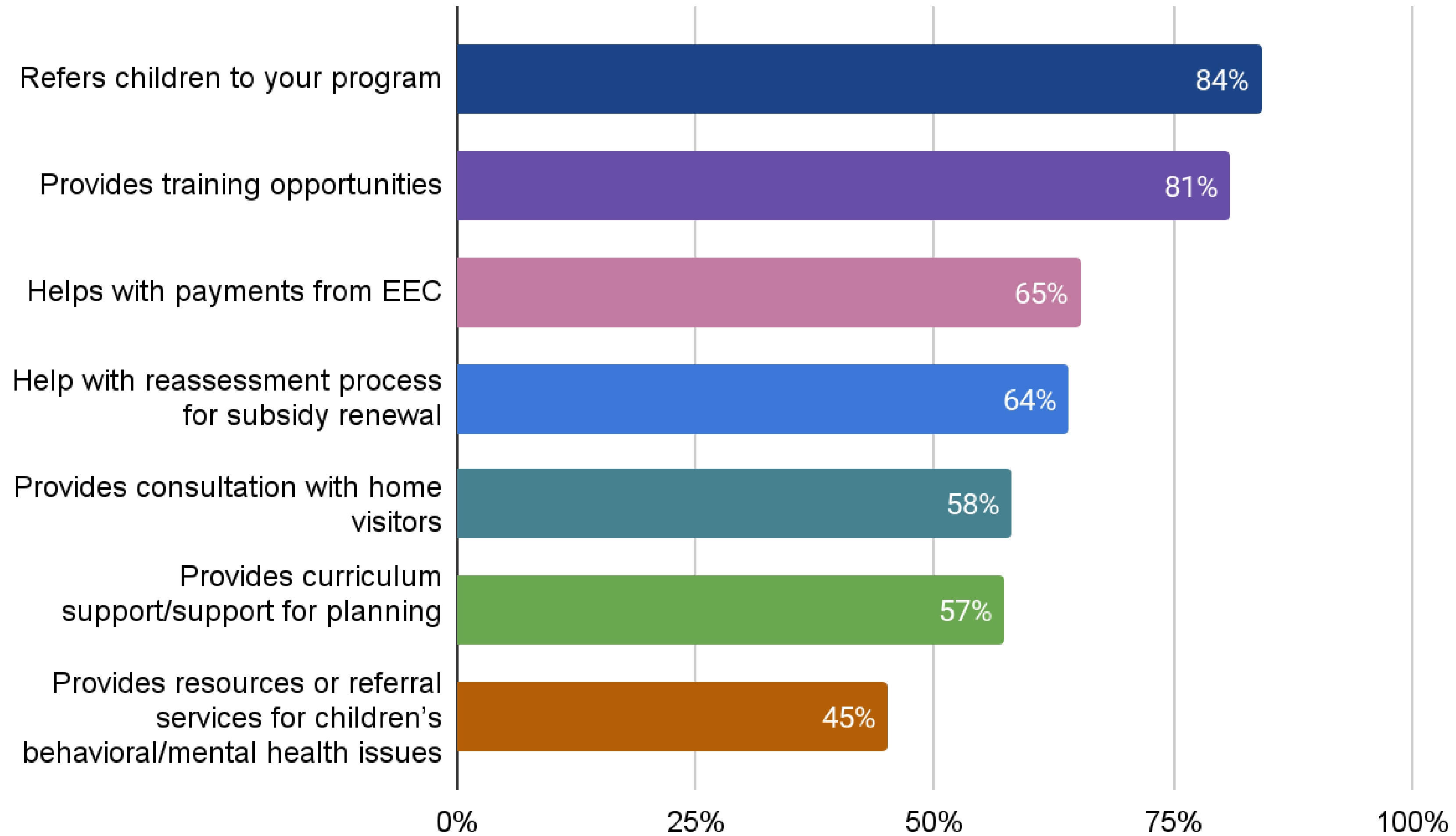
Resources needed to support quality

- **Supports for more individualized learning:** enhancing curriculum, lowering class size, support for multi-language
 - *“And we only have so many staff. Our ratio is like one to four kids, but, even still, I mean, these kids need one-on-one and it's, we can't, we didn't have the resources to offer that, um, and, just financially, you can't do that.” -Center Director*
- **Supports for families:** community resources, necessities
 - *“So I try my best to find the resources out there for them. I learned yesterday...there's a connection called wellconnect.com, that you can look up different agencies that might be able to help them in the community, so that's a big help. Because you need to know how to reach out to your families, and you can kind of tell what they need. Especially if a child comes in without a coat, or warm clothing.” -Center Director*

Resources needed to support quality

- **Children's mental health:** training, referrals/services, help in classroom
 - *“...providing more early intervention services for mental health and emotional health for our children. And I think as well, training for our staff because they are the front line with these children and they don't have the training or the background to be able to intervene in some of these instances...So, I think mental health support in the classrooms.” -Center Director*
 - *I just think, more varied trauma training, brain development, and how trauma affects the brain because it changes the wiring for these kids. I would like to see more training on that. -FCC Director*

Resources provided by FCC networks: less than half provide mental health referrals



Policy implications

- **Quality alignment:** providers perceive many aspects of quality that aligns with equitable access to meet families' needs and support children's development
- **Resource limitations** to support equitable access to quality care
- **CCDBG quality improvement funds** can focus resources on:
 - children in the child welfare system
 - support for providing individualized learning and attention
 - training, resources and referrals for child mental health