

Identifying and Exploring Profiles of Home-Based Child Care Providers: A Mixed Methods Study of Licensed and Unlicensed Providers

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Project Description

This mixed methods study seeks to broaden the understanding of home-based child care providers and their beliefs and practices related to children and families. Many low-income children from birth to five receive care in home-based child care settings. However, relatively little is known about home-based providers, how they view their role, the quality of care they provide, and how to effectively engage them in quality improvement initiatives. This study uses a national sample of home-based providers from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) to explore national trends, as well as a sample of providers in Delaware to garner a deeper understanding of the results of the analysis of the national data.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do home-based providers group into profiles based on key characteristics related to their beliefs, practices, and professional engagement?
2. What is the predicted profile membership of home-based providers in Delaware?
3. What provider and program characteristics predict profile membership?
4. How do home-based providers in each profile perceive their role and what is the quality of care they provide to children?

Sample

The sample for the secondary analysis of the NSECE data includes approximately 3,400 listed home-based providers serving at least one child to whom they are not related. Following this analysis, surveys were mailed to all listed home-based providers in Delaware; 935 providers and 252 responded. A sample of 15 survey respondents were selected to participate in case studies. These included licensed and unlicensed providers from high- and low-poverty communities.

Methods

This is a multiphase mixed methods study conducted in three connected phases.

- *Phase I: Secondary analysis of NSECE data.* In the first phase of the study, latent profile analysis (LPA) was completed using 14 variables related to providers' beliefs and practices related to working with children and families, including their caregiving beliefs; their educational practices related to curriculum and planning children's activities; their professional engagement in coaching, coursework, workshops, and networking; and their practices to support families. Multinomial logistic regression was used to examine provider and program characteristics that vary across profiles, including provider education, enrollment, and community characteristics.
- *Phase II: Survey of Delaware home-based providers.* A survey consisting of the same questions used to determine profiles in the Phase I analysis was mailed to all listed home-based providers in Delaware, including licensed family child care providers and unlicensed family, friend, and neighbor providers receiving subsidy. Survey data was analyzed descriptively and using exploratory and confirmatory LPA to identify profiles of providers in Delaware and to match Delaware providers to the profiles identified in Phase I.
- *Phase III: Case Studies.* A sample of 15 survey respondents representing each profile was randomly selected to participate in case studies. Participants completed the Family Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality questionnaire (FPTRQ; Kim et al., 2015) to gain a better understand of the quality of their communication and relationships with families. They also participated in a program observation using the *Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives* (CCAT-R; Porter, Rice, & Rivera, 2006).

Finally, participants were interviewed about how they view their role and how they manage multiple roles. They were also asked for more detailed responses to the survey questions, such as the curriculum they use and how they implement it. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

Progress Update

Data collection for the three phases of the project is complete, and analysis is complete for Phases I and II and underway for Phase III.

Preliminary results suggest that home-based providers align into profiles that are largely driven by their educational practices with children, including their frequency of implementing planned learning activities and use of curriculum. The largest group of providers is in the Formal/Educational profile. These providers report that they regularly engage in educational activities with children and spend time planning children's activities. They are also the most likely to participate in professional development activities, including training, coursework, and onsite coaching. Within the NSECE, two additional profiles were identified: Somewhat Formal and Informal providers. These providers are less likely to use a curriculum and implement planned learning activities. Providers in the Formal/Educational profile are most likely to identify with the roles of teacher and

administrator. Providers across all profiles identify as an extension of the family and also identify functional roles such as cook and janitor.

Implications for Policy/Practice

Gaining a better understanding of the range of caregiving beliefs and practices among home-based child care providers can inform state and national efforts for quality improvement in these settings. Learning more about how home-based providers view their roles may ensure quality improvement efforts are differentiated and tailored to engage these providers more effectively.

Implications for Research

Through the multiphase mixed methods design in which the three research phases are connected, this study provides an in-depth examination of home-based child care providers using multiple methods.

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