

For Immediate Release
March 7, 2012

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Report: Most States Fail to Protect Children in Family Child Care Homes

NACCRRRA's Updated Report Ranking and Scoring States Based on Current Small Family Child Care Home Standards and Oversight Reveals Failing Grades for Most States

Sixteen States Received a Score of Zero. Only Four States Received 70 Percent or Higher.

Arlington, VA – The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) released its latest report today, ranking states on their current small family child care home standards and oversight policies. The report, entitled *Leaving Children to Chance: NACCRRRA's Ranking of State Standards and Oversight of Small Family Child Care Homes: 2012 Update* reveals that most states fail to protect the health, safety and well-being of children being cared for in small family child care homes. According to the report, only four states scored 70 percent or higher on the basic requirements needed to ensure that children are safe and in settings that promote healthy development.

The report ranks every state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense (DoD) child care system, on 16 basic standards focused on ensuring the health, safety and well-being of children while in family child care homes serving six or fewer children. States were ranked based on a point system with states earning a maximum of 150 points. This is NACCRRRA's sixth report reviewing state child care standards and oversight since 2007 and an update of NACCRRRA's 2010 review of state small family child care home standards.

Standards reviewed include: basic health and safety requirements; inspections prior to licensing; number of annual inspections and policies with regard to complaint-related inspections; types of background checks for child care providers and people in the household of licensed providers who are required to have a background check; provider education; initial training and annual training requirements; toys and materials required; learning activities required; group size limitations; and parent-provider communication requirements.

According to the report, the average state score (among states scoring points) was 69 (46 percent) of a possible score of 150 points. Sixteen states received a score of zero. About half the states do not conduct inspections at least annually. Only nine states (*Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington and Virginia*) require a comprehensive background check for child care providers (a fingerprint check against state and federal records, a check of the child abuse registry and a check of the sex offender registry). Only 15 states meet each of the 10 basic health and safety requirements needed to keep children safe and healthy in child care.

“States have made progress since our last review of family child care homes in 2010, but progress is not enough. Too many states are still leaving children to chance.” said Ollie M. Smith, Interim Executive Director of NACCRRRA. “Parents need to know that their children are safe in child care and in a setting that promotes their healthy development.”

According to the report, the top 10 states scoring the most points included: Oklahoma (120), Washington (119), Kansas (111), Delaware (109), DoD (107), Maryland (102), Alabama (97), the District of Columbia (96), Colorado (95) and Massachusetts (86).

Eight states scored zero because they issue a license without conducting an inspection prior to granting a license (*Iowa, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia*). Eight states scored zero because they allow more than six children in the home before requiring a license or do not license family child care homes (*Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and Virginia*).

“Nearly 2 million children are in some type of family child care home setting each week. Even in the top 10 states, there is much room for improvement,” said Smith. “For example, Massachusetts was 10th, but the state’s score of 86 equates to 57 percent -- a failing grade in any classroom.”

“The federal law governing child care, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, has not been reauthorized since 1996. This report should be a wake-up call to Congress,” said Smith. “How many years have to pass before Members of Congress stop leaving children to chance? This Congress can choose to make a difference for children. I hope they will. It is time.”

NACCRRRA recommends that Congress:

1. Reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant to strengthen minimum protections for children in child care.
2. Require family child care homes in which paid providers regularly care for unrelated children to be licensed.
3. Require a comprehensive background check for child care providers (a check of state and federal records using fingerprints, a check of the child abuse registry and a check of the sex offender registry).
4. Require an inspection/site visit prior to licensing and unannounced inspections throughout the year.
5. Require states to post inspection results on the Internet so that parents can make informed choices among child care providers in their community.
6. Require 40 or more hours of initial training and 24 hours of annual training (in basic areas like CPR, first aid, safe sleeping practices for infants, etc.).
7. Require states to meet each of the 10 health and safety standards;
8. Grant the Child Care Bureau the authority to assess state child care plans for content and compliance and withhold funds from states with insufficient policies and oversight.
9. Require states to justify any categories of providers who are exempt from licensing.

To download a copy of the full report, visit www.naccrra.org.

NACCRRRA, the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, is our nation’s leading voice for child care. We work with more than 600 state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to ensure that families in every local community have access to quality, affordable child care. To achieve our mission, we lead projects that increase the quality and

availability of child care, offer comprehensive training to child care professionals, undertake nationally recognized research and advocate for child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families. To learn more about NACCRA and how you can join us in ensuring access to quality child care for all families, visit us at www.naccrra.org.

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