

LEAVING CHILDREN TO CHANCE: 2012 UPDATE

NACCRRA'S RANKINGS OF STATE STANDARDS AND OVERSIGHT OF SMALL FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

Each week, nearly 11 million children under age 5 are in some type of child care arrangement for an average of 35 hours. Nearly 15 percent of these children are in family child care homes.

The 2012 *Leaving Children to Chance* report scores 51 states (including the District of Columbia) and the Department of Defense (DoD) on key aspects of their small family child care homes. A small family child care home is a child care home in which up to six children, including those of the caregiver younger than age 6, are cared for in the home of the provider for compensation.

For this update of its 2010 report, NACCRRA used 16 benchmarks that represent the most basic research-based criteria. Eleven program requirements were scored, as were five oversight elements. Standards include frequency of inspections by the state for family child care providers, types of background checks for family child care providers, required training of family child care providers, number of children allowed in each home and more.

Key Findings

Progress has been made in many states since NACCRRA's 2010 report, but more progress is needed to ensure that children are safe and in a quality setting.

- Of the states that license small family child care homes, the average score was 69, which was 46 percent of possible points. Using a standard grading scale across American classrooms, this would be a failing grade.

- Scores for the Top 10 states ranged from 86 to 120. Of these states, one earned a "B" (*Oklahoma*), three states (*Washington, Kansas and Delaware*) and DoD earned a "C," four states earned a "D" (*Maryland, Alabama, the District of Columbia and Colorado*), and the 10th state, *Massachusetts*, with a score of 86, at 57 percent, earned an "F" (as do all remaining states).
- Sixteen states scored zero in this report. Eight scored zero because they do not inspect family child care homes before licensing (*Iowa, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia*). Eight others scored zero because they either allow more than six children in the home before requiring a license or do not license small family child care homes (*Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, South Dakota and Virginia*). **The children in these states are in a child care setting in which the safety of the home is unknown.**
- The biggest change over the past two years to improve the quality of care occurred in *Kansas*. *Kansas* scored 111 points in this report and is ranked 3rd, compared to a score of zero in the 2010 report.
- **Background checks:** Only nine states conduct a comprehensive background check, which includes a check of federal and state criminal records using fingerprints, a check of the child abuse registry and the sex offender registry. Only 18 states check the sex offender registry.

- **Training:** Four states require 40 or more hours of initial training as recommended by NACCRRRA. In 13 states, there are no hours of initial training required for providers operating small family child care homes.
- **Health and Safety:** Only 15 states address each of 10 basic health requirements and 10 basic safety requirements as experts recommend.
- **Inspections:** Even the strongest program requirements are undercut by ineffective monitoring. Eight states issue

a license to family child care providers without an inspection. Only 26 states plus the DoD conduct inspections at least annually.

The federally funded Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) does not require a minimum licensing standard for providers caring for children with child care subsidies. About 19 percent of children whose child care is paid for through CCDBG are in unlicensed care (about 322,000 children). It is time to strengthen CCDBG and state licensing requirements.

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Top 10 and States Scoring 0

Top 10 States and States Scoring Zero					
Total Scores and Rankings for Program Requirements and Oversight					
Top 10 States			States Scoring 0		
State	Final Score*	Rank	State	Final Score*	Rank
Oklahoma	120	1	Michigan**	0 (107)	37
Washington	119	2	Montana**	0 (65)	38
Kansas	111	3	West Virginia**	0 (64)	39
Delaware	109	4	Pennsylvania**	0 (41)	40
Department of Defense	107	5	South Carolina**	0 (39)	41
Maryland	102	6	Nebraska**	0 (34)	42
Alabama	97	7	Iowa**	0 (31)	43
District of Columbia	96	8	Texas**	0 (15)	44
Colorado	95	9	Idaho^	0	52
Massachusetts	86	10	Indiana^	0	52
			Louisiana^	0	52
			Mississippi^	0	52
			New Jersey^	0	52
			Ohio^	0	52
			South Dakota^	0	52
			Virginia^	0	52
Total Maximum Score: 150					

* Final scores reflect an adjustment based on the number of children paid providers could care for before being licensed.

** States receive a zero if they do not inspect family child care homes prior to issuing a license. The score these states otherwise would have received is listed to the right of the zero. They are ranked at the bottom of the chart beginning with rank 37 in order reflecting their total points. For example, Michigan ranked 37th because Michigan would have received the highest total of points (107) among states scoring zero.

^ States receive a zero if the number of children that a provider can care for without a license exceeds six.

NACCRRA recommends Congress:

Reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in the 112th Congress.

Protect children's safety

- Require comprehensive background checks for child care providers and those receiving subsidies to care for unrelated children. Substitutes and aides, other adults in the home and teenagers (all who may have unsupervised access to children) should be included in any background check requirements.
- Require states accepting federal funds for child care to prohibit the use of CCDBG or TANF funds to pay convicted felons to provide child care.
- Require states accepting federal funds for child care to share suspension and violation information with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies so that agencies do not make referrals to programs that may be unsafe.

Promote accountability

- Require states accepting federal funds for child care to provide an evidence-based rationale for each category of license-exempt care and to disclose such information on the Internet.
- Require states accepting federal funds for child care to conduct quarterly inspections of licensed child care programs.
- Include a specific set-aside for licensing-related activities to promote the safety and healthy development of children.

- Require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to review state Child Care and Development Fund biennial plans and impose penalties when state plans fail to meet minimum protections for children, including ineffective state monitoring practices.

Promote quality child care

- Set clear expectations about what quality means and establish a floor for what is minimally acceptable.
- Increase the CCDBG quality set-aside to 12 percent, gradually increasing it to 25 percent, on par with Head Start.
- Require states accepting federal funds for child care to require 40 hours of *initial* training.
- Require states accepting federal funds for child care to require 24 hours of *annual* training to reinforce initial training and to stay current on health and safety requirements and policies.

NACCRRA recommends states:

Strengthen state requirements and oversight.

Protect children's safety

- Require comprehensive background checks for child care providers and those receiving subsidies to care for unrelated children. Substitutes and aides, other adults in the home and teenagers (all who may have unsupervised access to children) should be included in any background check requirements.
- Require family child care providers to keep certification in first aid and CPR.

- Require family child care providers to follow the 10 recommended basic health practices and the 10 recommended basic safety practices.
- Require all paid family child care providers caring for one or more unrelated children on a regular basis (like a business) to be licensed.
- Inspect licensed homes at least quarterly.
- Share suspension and violation information with CCR&Rs so that agencies do not make referrals to programs that may not be safe.
- Require family child care providers to have a minimum of 40 hours of initial training in child development, discipline and guidance, recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect, working with families, learning activities, elements of child care quality, licensing requirements, fire safety, and basic health and safety.
- Require family child care providers to have a minimum of 24 hours of annual training in child development, discipline and guidance, recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect, working with families, learning activities, elements of child care quality, licensing requirements, fire safety, basic health and safety practices.

Promote accountability

- Conduct quarterly inspections to ensure compliance with state requirements. At least some of these inspections should be unannounced.
- Ensure adequate oversight by reducing licensing staff caseloads to a ratio of no more than 50:1 to improve accountability for meeting state requirements.
- Post routine inspection reports and substantiated complaints on the Internet.
- Ensure child care providers have access to a continuum of professional development opportunities, beginning with quality community-based training programs that are linked to career ladders and tied to higher education.
- Create and expand more online training opportunities, training to better address children with special needs and training in languages other than English.

Promote quality child care

- Limit the number of children one family child care provider can care for to six. Limit the number of infants and toddlers to no more than two when older children are present or three when no older children are present.
- Require family child care providers to have at least a high school degree and be working toward a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate degree in early childhood education or a related field.
- Require family child care providers to offer activities that address eight developmental domains.
- Require family child care providers to encourage parent involvement, to communicate with parents on a daily or ongoing basis, to allow parental visits at any time their children are present, to have contracts and share written policies, and to notify parents when a substitute will be caring for their child.
- Require licensing staff to have a bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education or a related field.