

California Child Care Research Partnership

Fact Sheet Number 1 (January, 2016)



Family Child Care Providers' Experiences in Quality Improvement – The California Child Care Research Partnership



This fact sheet is one in a series of fact sheets designed for the rapid sharing of policy-relevant results from the project.

WHO CARES? CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet provides key information about licensed family child care providers. Understanding the characteristics of these child care providers can help to ensure that programs and agencies more effectively serve them. Key characteristics reported here include the ages, linguistic background, and ethnicity of the providers. It also examines providers' background and training and providers' financial situation. Specifically, it describes the characteristics of the providers who participated in the California Child Care Research Partnership during the first two project years (2013-14 and 2014-15). The participants were not representative of any larger populations; they are compared with other representative samples whenever possible. Data were collected in two samples:

- **Sample 1** was drawn from selected areas of Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County (SoCal: LA/SB). It is predominantly urban (73%) and suburban (25%) with few rural providers (2%).
- **Sample 2** was drawn from Contra Costa County, El Dorado County, and Sacramento County (NoCal: CoCo/EIDo/Sac) and includes many urban (51%) and suburban (36%) as well as a larger proportion of rural providers (13%).

Surveys were mailed to all licensed family child care (FCC) providers in the selected areas and providers chose whether or not to return their surveys. Both samples included approximately even numbers of providers with large and small licenses.

Where possible, our samples were compared with the last statewide survey of child care providers in California, as reported in

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UNIQUE FEATURES OF FCC HOMES

One unique feature of FCC homes is the mixed-age setting. Whereas centers often group children by age (e.g., infants in one room with one teacher, toddlers in another room with a different teacher, etc), most FCC homes serve children of mixed ages. In our study, **76% of FCC homes (asked of Sample 2 only) served children across three age categories or more, including children under 18 months of age, 18-23 months, 24-35 months, preschool, and school age.** Children staying with the same provider as they get older can result in greater continuity of care, and having multiple children in one child care setting can be a big help for families. However, serving children who can vary in age from newborns to 11 years old may necessitate support specific to this unique feature of FCC homes.

Another unique feature of FCC homes is the flexibility of services that may be available to families. **Over half of the providers reported that they offered care after 6 pm and on weekends, hours that are vital to parents who work non-traditional hours.** When providers were asked *how often* they were open after 6 pm and on weekends (Sample 2 only), **17%** reported that they were “always” open those hours and an additional **6%** were “frequently” open those hours and **31%** were “sometimes” open those hours.

FCC PROVIDERS ARE DIVERSE IN THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

FCC providers in our study were diverse in many ways, including their linguistic background and ethnicity. The majority of providers in each sample spoke English (62% in Sample 1 [SoCal: LA/SB] and 77% in Sample 2 [NoCal: CoCo/EIDo/Sac]), but many providers in each sample spoke languages other than English (Figure 1), particularly in our more urban Sample 1 (SoCal: LA/SB). FCC providers in our study were also diverse in their ethnicity (Figure 2): each of our samples included substantial numbers of Latino and African-American providers with fewer from additional ethnic groups. FCC providers in our study were less diverse in age (Figure 3). Most were 30 to 54 years old, with a substantial portion 55 years or older, and few 29 years or younger. **Thus, the agencies serving FCC providers serve a diverse workforce.**

Figure 1. Non-English Languages Spoken at Home by FCC Providers

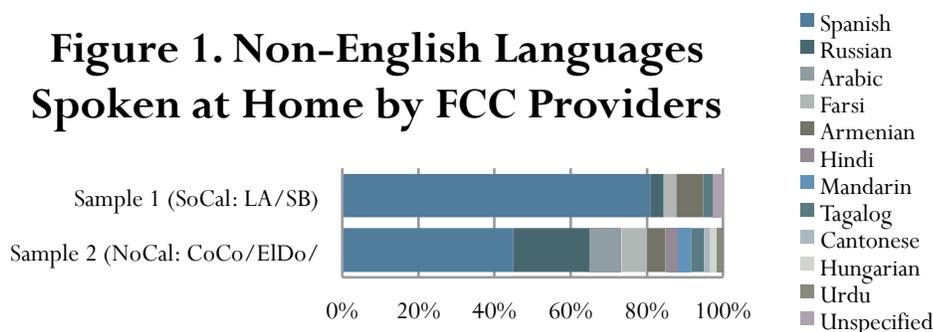
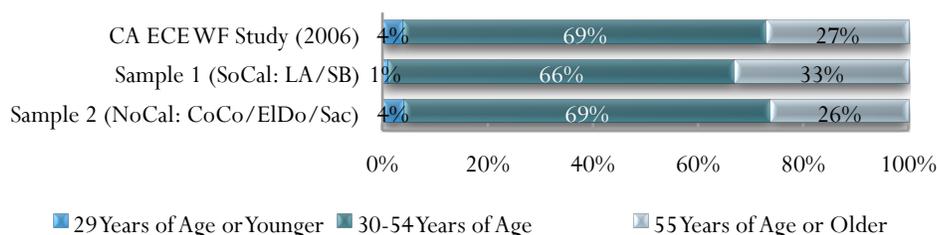


Figure 2. Provider Ethnicity



Figure 3. Provider Age



CA ECE WF Study: Whitebook, M., Sakai, L., Kipnis, F., Lee, Y., Bellm, D., Speiglmán, R., Almaraz, M., Stubbs, L., & Tran, P. (2006). California Early Care and Education Workforce Study: Licensed family child care providers. Los Angeles County 2006. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

MANY FCC PROVIDERS HAVE EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

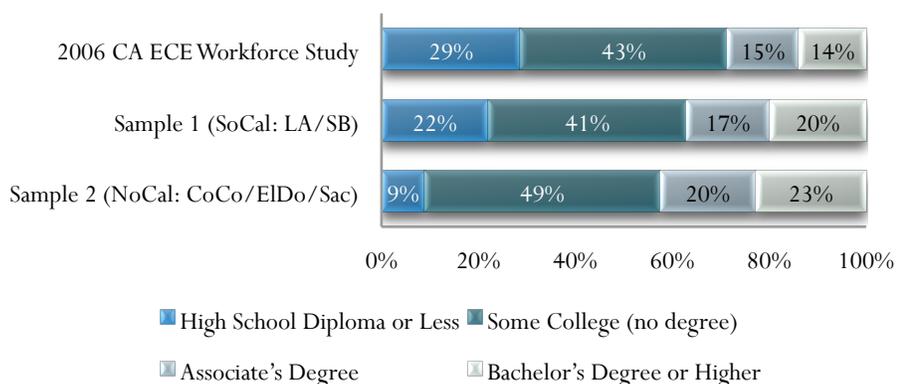


WHAT TYPES OF PERMITS DO THESE FCC PROVIDERS HAVE?

The most frequent type of single permit in each sample was Associate Teacher (22%/26% of permit holders in Sample 1 / Sample 2, respectively) authorizing the holder to “provide service in the care, development, and instruction of children in a child care and development program, and supervise an Assistant and an aide.” Just as the level of educational attainment varied across the two samples, so did the attainment of other permit types, but over 50% of the permit holders in our samples had permits for Teacher or higher (55%/51% of permit holders in Sample 1 / Sample 2, respectively). Some of the permit holders had Assistant permits (15%/10% of permit holders in Sample 1 / Sample 2, respectively).

Providers in each of our samples had been licensed, on average, over 11 years (Sample 1 [SoCal: LA/SB]: 11 yrs; Sample 2 [NoCal: CoCo/EIDo/Sac]: 13 yrs). In addition, at least 25% had been licensed 15 years or more. Many providers had a current California Child Development Permit: 39% of Sample 1 respondents and 38% of Sample 2 respondents. However, experience with formal education varied (Figure 4) from a high school diploma or less to a bachelor’s degree or higher. **Our results suggest that professional learning systems for FCC providers need to address a full range of experience and background to be relevant to the diverse educational backgrounds of FCC providers.**

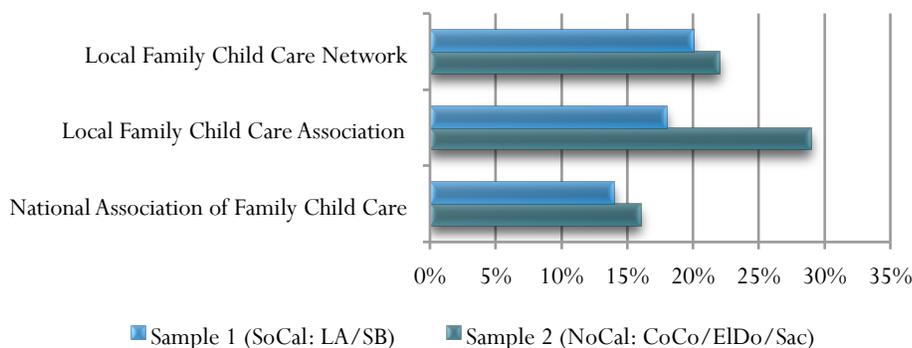
Figure 4. Provider Educational Attainment



MANY FCC PROVIDERS ARE COMMITTED TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

When asked about their plans for the next two years, 88%/87% in Sample 1/2, respectively, plan to continue operating an FCCH. In addition, a substantial proportion were in a network with other providers, either the National Association of Family Child Care (14%/16%), a local family child care association (18%/29%), or a local family child care network (20%/22%). **Thus, outreach to FCC providers may be more effective when it builds from existing professional networks.**

Figure 5. Affiliation with Professional Networks



PROVIDERS’ FINANCES CAN BE CHALLENGING

We asked about providers’ total household income. A substantial number of providers struggled financially in both samples, as indicated by the proportion of providers with incomes less than \$25,000 (Figure 6). Our results suggest that how much providers struggle financially may vary by region. Providers varied in the proportion of their total household income that was derived from their FCCH, but about

50% of providers derived greater than half of their income from FCCH.

Indeed, many providers (Sample 1 [SoCal:

LA/SB]: 21%; Sample 2 [NoCal:

CoCo/EIDo/Sac]: 17%)

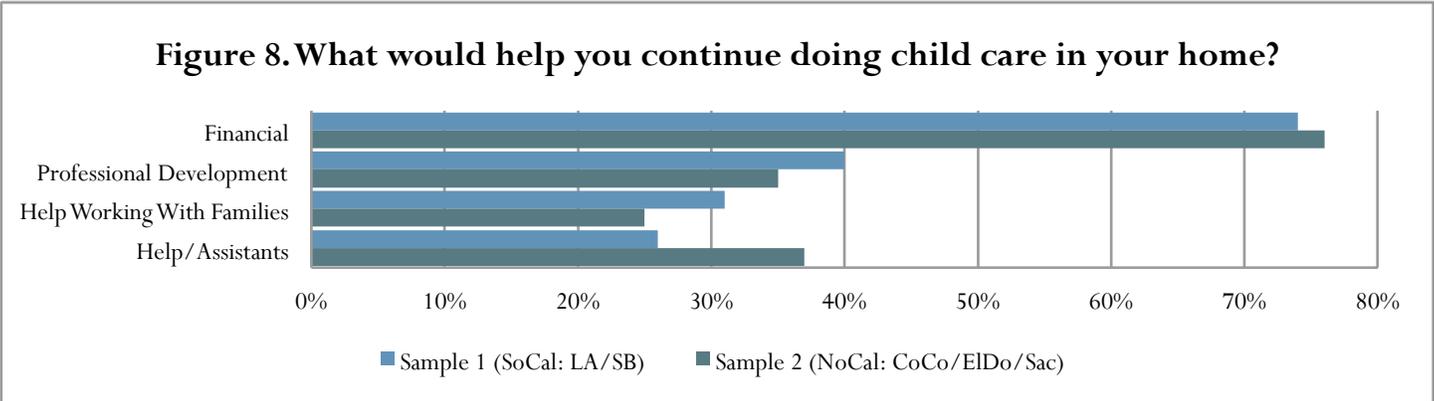
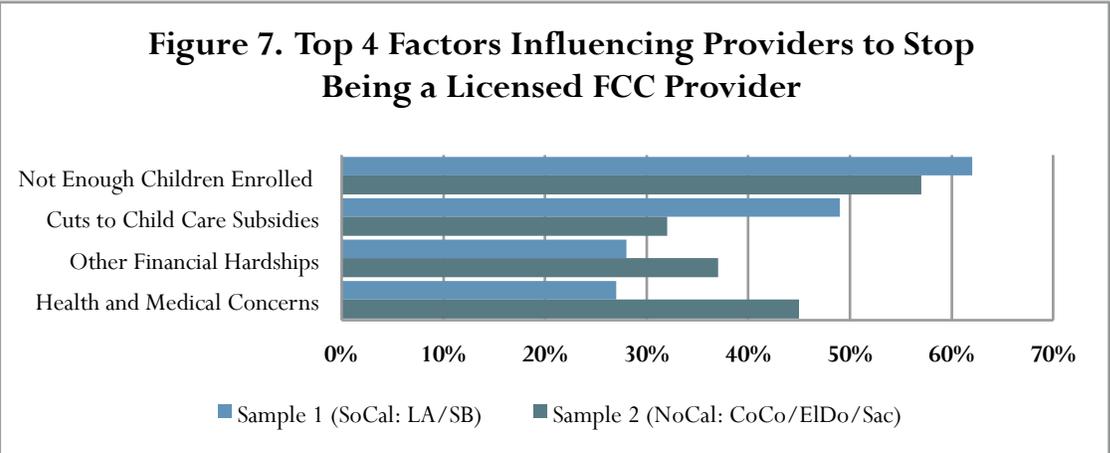
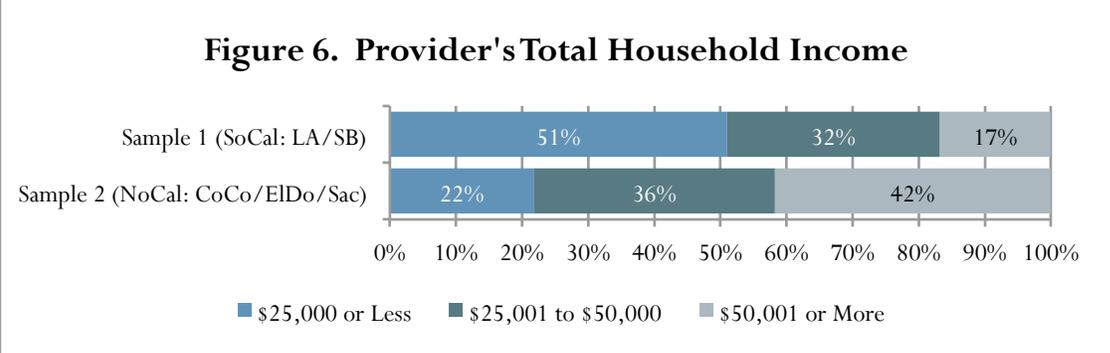
reported that over half of their income was derived from their FCCH *and* their earnings were “inconsistent” from week to week.

Providers may struggle to engage in quality improvement and professional development if their financial situation is tenuous and such efforts do not improve chances for financial success.

When asked what might influence them to stop being a licensed FCC provider (Figure 7) and what would help them continue

operating an FCC (Figure 8), financial factors were identified for each question.

Thus, programs and initiatives that seek to improve or maintain high quality experiences for children may need to address the financial concerns that many FCC providers face.



Suggested Citation: California Child Care Research Partnership Team. (2016). Who Cares? Characteristics of Licensed Family Child Care Providers. Fact Sheet Number 1. Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Northridge.