

2023

# Los Angeles County Landscape of Family Child Care



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Most working parents use some form of child care in order to work and remain employed. Despite the fact that significant numbers of families, particularly under-resourced families use home-based child care (HBCC), little is known about the needs, resources, and quality of these providers and about the families served by these providers. First 5 LA (F5LA ) is launching a new multi-year strategy to achieve greater equity for our HBCC community and support them to thrive. Because little is known about this population of providers First 5 LA partnered with the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles (CCALA)<sup>1</sup> to initiate a landscape analysis of HBCC providers in Los Angeles County. CCALA is a partnership of ten agencies that serve communities at the local level and can reach thousands of parents and child care providers across Los Angeles County. CCALA partnered with the Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) research department to conduct the landscape analysis. One way of defining a landscape analysis is that it “outlines the strengths, resources, and needs of a particular community. It provides a framework for designing a service and ensuring that it is embedded directly in the needs of the community.”<sup>2</sup> This landscape analysis of HBCC in Los Angeles County will help inform future strategies to support this workforce. Landscape project planning, stakeholder engagement and input, and research tool development took place in the fall of 2021. Outreach and key stakeholder engagement occurred in winter 2021-22. Between February and November of 2022 data were collected from HBCC providers, parents who use HBCC, and agencies that serve HBCC providers via surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, and community convenings to interpret data and offer recommendations. This brief presents information gathered from and about the licensed Family Child Care (FCC) providers in Los Angeles County. For information on the background, methods and activities of the Landscape Analysis, please refer to the overall project brief or report.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ccala.net/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tutoring/program-focus/conducting-community-landscape-analysis#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20Landscape%20Analysis,the%20needs%20of%20the%20community>



## Background Characteristics of Family Child Care Providers

The typical profile of the FCC participants in this landscape analysis is a partnered/married woman in her 50's, owns her home, has some college education, and is equally likely to speak English or Spanish at home.

Over half identify as Hispanic/Latina, 15% as Black/African American, 13% White/Caucasian, 9% Asian/Asian American. Although only 26% of FCCs have an annual income of \$35,000 or less, this differs by license size with 43% of FCCs with small licenses and 19% of FCCs with large licenses in this income bracket. Similarly, FCCs with large licenses are more likely to have a BA degree or higher while FCCs with small licenses are more likely to have Some College as their highest level of education. Additionally, FCC providers with large licenses are more likely to have assistance with their child care work (this is a requirement for those with a large license). This affords the opportunity to earn more income and attend professional development activities. Given the differential results in resource levels (income, education and assistance in their work), programs and policies that target FCC providers should approach these two groups differently. FCC providers with small licenses may be more vulnerable to economic fluctuations and require nuanced supports. Research has found that FCCs with small licenses were more likely to go out of business following the great recession and the trend persisted (NCECSQ, 2020).

HIGHEST LEVEL OF FORMAL EDUCATION	FCCs WITH SMALL LICENSE	FCCs WITH LARGE LICENSE
Some College or Less	69%	55%
BA Degree or Higher	16%	27%



### RACIAL DIVERSITY

**57%**  
Hispanic/Latina

**15%**  
Black/African American

**13%**  
White/Caucasian

**9%**  
Asian American



**Annual Household Income Less Than \$35,000**

**43%**  
FCCs with Small License

**19%**  
FCCs with Large License



## STRENGTHS OF FCC PROVIDERS IN THIS LANDSCAPE

**89%**

Serve multiple age groups

**79%**

Have been caring for children for more than 10 years

**77%**

Serve Dual Language Learning (DLL) children

**72%**

Serve children with child care subsidies

**56%**

Serve multiple language groups

**49%**

See their work as a personal calling/career

**47%**

Provide non-standard hours care

**39%**

Serve children with special needs



## Tenure and Experience

Home-based providers have a wealth of experience in caring for young children (79% of FCCs report over 10 years). FCC owners begin with small licenses and then some make the decision to take on greater complexity and apply for a larger license. As a result, those who have large licenses have a greater number of years of experience and have had their license longer than those with smaller licenses. Those with large licenses have the capacity to care for more children, serving as a hub for more families in the community. As such, they spend more time in activities such as providing care, planning lessons, doing paperwork and other business practices than those with small licenses. In order to increase the child care capacity in our communities and ensure their sustainability, supports may be needed for small FCC businesses to obtain large licenses.

TENURE AND EXPERIENCE	FCCs WITH SMALL LICENSE	FCCs WITH LARGE LICENSE
Average Number of Years Licensed	11.6 years	16.0 years
Average Number of Years Working with Children	16.0 years	21.2 years
Average Number of Weekly Hours Worked	44.4 hours	52.3 hours

## Non-Standard Hours Care

Home-based providers offer a wide range of hours of care, supporting families who may need child care outside of the standard 8 AM to 6 PM, Monday through Friday work schedule. National surveys find that parents with lower income and single, full-time working parents are most likely to need care during non-standard (often referred to as non-traditional) hours of care (Borton, Datta, & Ventura, 2021) and that home-based providers are more likely than center-based providers to offer these hours of care (NSECE, 2015). Non-standard hours are defined as weekday, evenings, overnight, or during weekends (NSECE, 2015) and 47% of FCCs in this study provide these hours of care. Additionally, 43% of parents reported using care during non-standard hours. Given the reliance of workers during non-standard hours in industries such as food, hospitality, entertainment, emergency and medical services, the HBCC workforce is a vital part of the infrastructure for these industries and should be supported and respected as such.



## Reasons for Providing Care

Although many FCC providers began taking care of children as a means to earn income while staying home with their own children, the work grew into a personal calling or career. This motivation may play a role in how FCC providers view their work and engage in professional development and quality improvement initiatives. FCC providers were also asked why they decided to get a license. The desire to have their own business, the possibility of earning more income, and legitimizing their business surfaced as the three most frequently cited reasons for becoming licensed. These results illustrate the career and business mindset of the FCC provider population. This mindset, particularly with those who have a large license may play a role in the types of services, professional development and quality improvement services that would be relevant for this population.

*"I got licensed because it's a business and to be taken serious as a professional, you have to be licensed. And to be able to be paid what you want to be paid, it's best to be licensed."  
– English-speaking FCC provider*

*"I got my license because I think that's one of the qualities that parents look for versus just looking for a babysitter. I think sometimes parents want, you know, the background checks and stuff like that and the regulations that come with home daycares."  
– English-speaking FCC provider*

## Families Served by FCC Providers

Most (89%) FCC providers serve more than one age group and were more likely than Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers to serve children under age 5. They were also more likely to serve children with special needs, Dual Language Learners, and children whose care is subsidized. Additionally, they were more likely to serve multiple language (56%) and racial groups (62%) as compared with FFN providers. This may be a reflection of the fact that they are a business that serves multiple families in the community whereas FFN providers typically serve relatives and at most one additional family.





**FCC PROVIDERS  
WITH LARGE  
LICENSES  
PARTICIPATE IN  
PROGRAMS MORE  
THAN THOSE  
WITH SMALL  
LICENSES:**

Family Child Care  
Home Education  
Network (FCCHEN)

ECE Workforce  
Registry

Emergency Child  
Care Bridge

Quality Start Los  
Angeles (QSLA)

Early Head  
Start-Child Care  
Partnerships

Workforce  
Pathways Stipend

Gateways for Early  
Educators

Quality Start Dual  
Language Learner  
(DLL) Initiative

Training

Coaching

Home Visiting



**Accessing Professional Development**

FCC providers were more likely to access professional development programs (e.g., Family Child Care Home Education Networks, Quality Start Los Angeles, Emergency Child Care Bridge, Quality Start Dual Language Learner, Gateways, etc.) as compared with FFN providers and those with large licenses were more likely to access these programs than FCCs with small licenses. Providers with large licenses were also more likely to engage in general professional development (workshops and coaching). The one program where participation did not differ by license size was CCIP (Child Care Initiative Project). However, participation in this program was low (9% for FCC and 3% for FFN). Given the program’s strength in supporting FFN and newly licensed providers, this may be a program that needs more resources. This landscape analysis has shown the vulnerable state of FFN and FCC providers with small licenses and the CCIP program targets these groups. Additional consideration regarding the constraints of FCCs with small licenses may need to occur to ensure they are engaged and supported.

“At [the R&R]. Where I live they cover the area I live in, they also give trainings with being a better provider, personal for the provider, child development, how to implement more activities with the child. To have children be interested with activities. Personal care and also with children. It’s the only agency I’ve worked with, when I went to [the local community college], they also teach you how to care of children, what activities to do with kids, questions with nutrition for children.”  
– Spanish-speaking FCC provider

## Barriers to Accessing Professional Development and Supportive Services

FCC providers cite lack of time, inconvenient time/location, and cost as the top barriers to accessing professional development. Compared to FCCs with large licenses, those with small licenses were more likely to cite cost and lack of benefits to participation. These results continue to confirm the unique nature and constraints faced by FCC providers with small licenses. If they feel they cannot afford (this may mean hiring an assistant they normally do not have so they can participate) or they do not see how the benefits outweigh the challenges, they will not participate in professional development. FCC providers with large licenses were more likely to cite a lack of time as a barrier. Given the fact that they also cite greater challenges with paperwork, this may indicate the need for support in “backend” services such as paperwork, accounting, subsidy enrollment and tracking, etc. for this group. A subset of FCC providers (100) mentioned language as a barrier to accessing professional development and supportive services. Sixty-nine percent of these providers spoke Spanish and 21% spoke Chinese. Even one barrier can prevent providers from accessing programs and services. New programs and policies should consider these constraints and develop a menu of options to address them. In terms of communication, most providers want to hear about these opportunities via email. FCC providers were more likely than FFN providers to want information about these opportunities from the Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies and at workshops and conferences.

*“Sometimes it’s just the time. Having the time to do it, especially for those that are, like, 24 hours and, you know, I’m 24 hours, five days a week, but that takes up the whole week, you know? So a lot of times the meetings are in the evenings or whatnot, and you can’t do it.”*

*– English-speaking FCC provider*

## Networking

When asked who they reach out to when they need information related to their child care work, FCC providers reach out to a wide variety of connections. The largest group was other child care providers (58%), followed by family member (46%), coach/specialist/agency staff (34%) or friend (32%). Some FCC providers were already well-connected and networked and this strength could be leveraged for future programming.



### BARRIERS TO ACCESSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES



Lack of time



Inconvenient time or location of service



Cost



## SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THEIR CHILD CARE WORK

**58%**

Other providers

**46%**

Family

**34%**

Coach or Agency Staff



## TOP AREAS OF INTEREST

- Child Sevelopment
- Behavior Management
- Curriculum
- Special Needs

## Topics of Interest

The top three topics of interest for FCC providers included child development, behavior management and guidance, and curriculum. Prior research found similar results (California Child Care Research Partnership Team, 2016). An increase in interest is seen in the area of behavior management and special needs as brought forward in the focus groups, interviews and community convenings. Many commented on how the pandemic resulted in delayed development and the need to learn more about how to support these children. This may reflect the fact that FCC providers are more likely to see their work as a career and therefore are motivated to learn more about multiple topics to improve their business of caring for children.

## Greatest Challenges Facing FCC Providers

One-fifth (1/5) of providers plan to leave the field within the next 5 years, exacerbating the existing child care desert problem. The top area of concern and challenge for providers included low pay (52%). FCC providers were also concerned about COVID-19 (46%), a lack of benefits (39%), managing COVID-related situations in the program (32%), mental health challenges (18%), and burnout (14%). Programs and policies that are intended to benefit providers should encompass a holistic approach that would connect providers to income, health and mental health supports.

Many providers (54%) experienced a decline in enrollment during the pandemic and have never recovered. Concerns were discussed regarding free programs and increases in parents working from home (trying to provide a quality environment for their own children while working). Ensuring the existence of a solid mixed delivery system is essential for parents who desire home-based care for cultural, linguistic, ratio, nonstandard hours care, or other reasons. Regulations require that FCC providers with large licenses employ an assistant. However, providers relayed increasing concerns over the ability to attract and retain qualified staff. There is a well-documented staffing crisis in the child care sector. FCC sustainability will depend upon their ability to attract and retain qualified assistants.

**"Finding qualified staff. And being able to pay the staff, because it's difficult to be able to compete with Target, and Del Taco when they pay in \$18 an hour and you don't need a high school diploma or whatever. And they're offering benefits. It's hard for us to compete."**

*– Spanish-speaking FCC Provider*

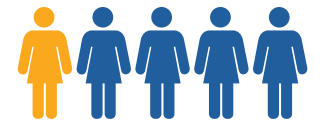


## Recommendations for Developing New Programs and Policies

The data reveal the strengths and perseverance of child care providers and the challenges they face as a result of economic realities and systemic inequities and barriers. Continued and ongoing examination of current policies to identify opportunities for improvement and the development of relevant programs and policies is recommended to better support and sustain this essential workforce.

## Ensure the Active Involvement of FCC Providers in Designing and Implementing Policies and Programs That Impact Them

Historic and systemic barriers of racism, sexism and classism have resulted in programs and policies that create harm rather than opportunity. Honoring and actively involving providers will ensure programs and policies are relevant, accessible, equitable, and impactful for providers and ultimately the families they serve. First 5 LA has convened a Provider Advisory Group of licensed FCC providers as an important step in this direction. Family child care providers need to be actively involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of new programs and policies that are intended for them. Their unique strengths and challenges need to be considered in any future program or system planning. Involving them in decision-making will ensure that any new program or policy is relevant, fiscally-sound and impactful.



**1/5 of FCC  
Providers Plan to  
Leave the Field  
Within 5 Years**



### **CHALLENGES FACED BY FCC PROVIDERS**

- Low pay
- Declining enrollment
- Inability to attract and retain qualified staff
- COVID-19
- Lack of benefits
- Mental health
- Burnout





## Support a Mixed Delivery System and Livable Wages to Ensure the Ongoing Sustainability of the Child Care Provider Community

One in five FCC providers plan to leave the field in the next 5 years and of that group, 19% are leaving due to low compensation. Additionally, 52% report their top challenge is low compensation and many (54%) experienced declines in enrollment during the pandemic and have never recovered. In addition, almost half have been late or delayed paying basic bills such as rent and utilities and/or have had to apply for government assistance programs. Providers also expressed concern over increased challenges in finding and retaining qualified staff because they cannot offer the comparable pay and benefits as other programs and agencies. It is critically important to compensate the FCC workforce appropriately. It is an economic justice issue for these providers and is essential for ensuring a wide diversity of programs so parents can work. Parents who need non-standard hours care, special needs care, infant care or other options offered by FCC providers need this workforce to maintain employment. The sustainability of the FCC workforce is therefore also a broader workforce issue. As the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment states, "As a system that relies primarily on a market-based structure, by definition it disadvantages those with the least means to purchase services. As services are tied to buying power, the wages of early educators, primarily women, are directly tied to the ability of families to pay."<sup>3</sup> New systems and policies, including cost-based models are required to fully address the needs of FCC providers, to ensure their sustainability as well as their ability to attract and retain qualified staff. A great deal of work has already begun through the California Rate and Quality Workgroup in assessing a cost-based model in place of a market-based model for reimbursement. Continued advocacy for this model is recommended.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/blog/ece-is-in-crisis-biden-can-intervene/>



“Most of my friends are not okay and can’t retire. I have a husband and am fortunate to be able to retire. I can hand my business over to my children. It’s sad for my peers who spend their whole lives in this field and leave with nothing.”

– English-speaking FCC provider

“So if you cannot find or pay someone, you know, good amount or if you cannot find good help or assistant, it is really major issue. And then you get burnout too. Because all day working with kids, you know, sometimes we have problems too. We have other issues too. So yeah, it’s really hard then to manage with the kids. We have good days bad days, you know, so we all are humans.”

– English-speaking FCC provider

The increase in free preschool options for parents is an incredible opportunity to relieve one of the major expenses faced by families. The state intends for school districts to partner with community-based child care in the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK). Given the fact that Los Angeles Unified School District is the second largest district in the nation (second only to New York City) this will require tremendous resources to involve the community-based provider voice in the roll-out and implementation of TK. As part of this landscape analysis, a team travelled to New York City to learn from experts about developing a supportive and inclusive mixed-delivery system. A key lesson learned from those in New York was that directing Universal Preschool funds solely to center-based programs resulted in many community-based child care programs closing because they couldn’t enroll enough families. When New York City began development of a universal program for 3-year-old children, they learned from their prior challenge and actively and intentionally included HBCC providers in their universal system. Including HBCC providers in the design and implementation of TK will ensure their sustainability and availability to parents who need this type of care.







## Create a Seamless, Responsive and Holistic Model of Support for Providers

It is important to recognize that licensed FCC providers are not one monolithic group and therefore need a menu of services to meet each one where they are in their career pathway. Family child care providers with small licenses have lower household incomes, less formal education, are less likely to engage in professional development programs and are less likely to have an assistant as compared to those with large licenses. They will need supports (compensation, assistants, etc.) to engage in professional development or quality improvement. Along with FFN providers these providers may benefit from home visitation models of support. Given that a provider with a small license is likely to be the sole adult providing child care, any program that conducts a home visit will need to bring two staff – one to provide care and supervision and one to work with the child care provider.

## Develop and Implement New Models for Reaching and Engaging Providers

The landscape analysis found that reaching and engaging providers requires a significant amount of staff resources at agencies and this needs to be well funded. To reach those who are typically under-represented, outreach needs to occur through multiple modalities (email, phone, social media, etc.), occur on multiple occasions, in multiple languages and through a diverse range of partners who have trusted relationships in the community. Some communities may have been under-represented (e.g., those in SPA 8, Armenian or Chinese-speaking providers, and those not connected to technology). Ensuring partners in SPA 8 are involved as well as finding trusted members of the community to help outreach to language groups may need to be funded to increase representation in these groups. Community-based organizations (CBOs) operate on very thin financial margins. In order to be effective, outreach efforts by staff at these agencies will need to be adequately funded and this funding will likely require new staff rather than adding onto the existing workload.

Once providers are reached, effective engagement and retention in programs is key. Staffed support networks for FCC providers have a well-known research base for success (Bromer & Porter, 2017). As stated previously, FCC providers with small licenses may also benefit from home visitation program models. Leveraging the networks that already exist in the provider community and ensuring a full range of community partners are involved will be key in reaching and serving those who may typically be under-represented.

## Develop Strategic Partnerships to Create Sustainable and Holistic Policies and Programs for Home-Based Child Care Providers

Government, philanthropy, CBOs and provider partnerships will be key to developing sustainable programs and policies. State and local governmental partners are essential for creating structural change. Philanthropic partners have vested interest and proven programs that can fill gaps where public funding falls short. CBOs and providers have community-level expertise for implementation and guidance to ensure programs and policies are relevant, equitable and effective.





# In Summary: Honor and Build on the Strengths of Family Child Care Providers



Family child care providers have significant strengths that should be honored and respected in any policy or systems change. For example, FCC providers:

- *Have many years of child care experience*
- *Have extensive existing networks*
- *Serve children with special needs, DLLs, and those who receive subsidized child care*
- *Serve multiple age groups*
- *Serve a wide diversity of language and racial groups*
- *Offer non-traditional hour care*

With significant numbers of families relying on HBCC, especially those with infants and toddlers, multiple language learners, with low-income and/or working non-traditional hours, it is essential to build on these strengths to support and sustain this workforce.

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