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Los Angeles County Landscape of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care



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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.”

First 5 Los Angeles (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 F5LA partnered with the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles (CCALA)¹ and the Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) 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. 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.”² This landscape analysis of HBCC in Los Angeles County will help inform future strategies to support the HBCC 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 Family, Friend and Neighbor child care 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.

¹ <https://www.ccala.net/>

² <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, Friend, and Neighbor Providers

The typical profile of the FFN participants in this landscape analysis was an unpartnered/ single woman in her late 40's, rents her home, makes less than \$35,000/ year, has a high school diploma/ GED, and speaks English at home. Over half identified as Hispanic/ Latine, 28% as Black/ African-American, and 10% White/ Caucasian. This landscape analysis showed that FFN providers are the least resourced group, sometimes even less so than the families for whom they provide child care. These findings may suggest the need for a family-centered model of support that looks distinctly different than what is offered to licensed family child care providers. What policies are needed to build a stronger, more sustainable HBCC sector for the future?

Tenure and Experience

The FFN providers in this sample receive child care subsidies and their length of child care experience may reflect that in their survey responses (half providing child care for less than five years). The data from this landscape study as well as national studies show the more fluid nature of FFN providers compared with the more long-term nature of licensed FCC providers and should factor into the development of programs and policies aimed at the two groups of providers. Although they have fewer years providing child care on average than licensed providers, discussions in community convenings and interviews revealed the extensive experience in raising children that should be honored and recognized in programs designed to support FFN providers.

Non-standard Hours Care

Home-based providers offer a wide range of hours of care, supporting the specific needs of families who may need child care outside of the standard 8 AM to 6 PM, Monday through Friday schedule. National surveys find that parents with lower income and single full-time working parents are most likely to need care during non-standard 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). Nonstandard hours are defined as Weekday Evenings, Overnight, or During Weekends (NSECE, 2015). More FFN providers offer weekend (45%) and non-standard hours care in general (60%) compared with licensed FCCs. 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.

BACKGROUND OF FFN PROVIDERS:

79%

Annual household income is \$35,000 or less per year

51%

Highest formal education level is High School Diploma/ GED or lower

25%

own their home

49%

have taken care of children other than their own for less than 5 years



RACIAL DIVERSITY

58%

Hispanic/Latine

28%

Black/African-American

10%

White/Caucasian



Reasons for Providing Care

Findings for FFNs are similar to past research. In the current study, 75% of FFN providers reported the motivation to help the children's parents, family or friends as the reason for providing child care. A needs assessment for license-exempt care in Los Angeles County conducted in 2014 yielded similar results with 52% of FFN survey respondents indicating that they chose to become a child care provider to assist a friend or family member (Harder & Company, 2014). COVID-19 may have increased values for supporting close family and friends and strengthened this already existing value. Key informant interviewees' experience also validated the survey findings. Overwhelmingly, license-exempt providers cited the desire to help family or friends work as a reason for why they started taking care of children. This theme was present in three-quarters of the interviews and surveys conducted.

When the survey results were presented to FFN providers in the community convening, most agreed that the data reflected their lived experience and that the reasons may change over time. For example, many begin with the motivation to help friends and family and then a few decide to become licensed. In a trip to learn about child care programs implemented in New York City, the programs operating there found that 25% of FFN providers moved on to obtain a license.

These differences in motivations are key to understanding how to approach supports and services for these two distinct populations of caregivers. If motivations focus on supporting loved ones, a family support model should be considered, particularly for the FFN population. A key example of this occurs in New York City. FFN providers who receive child care subsidies are required to register with WHEDco (Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation)³, engage in 5 hours of pre-service training and receive home/monitoring visits. Providers are offered a wide range of supportive services including training and technical assistance, enrollment and assistance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and grants and supports for meeting building code requirements. This group goes beyond an "educational" model of support to ensure providers' basic needs are met, knowing they are often in great need, much like the families they serve. For example, food cards to address food insecurity, financial assistance, mental health services, and technology supports including internet and devices. This holistic approach with a family support model may be more effective in supporting what is needed by FFN providers. Work supported by the Packard Foundation's ten-year commitment to FFN providers across California that started in 2014 is another excellent example of relevant supportive services for this group. These projects uniquely address the needs of specific communities through home visitation, play and learn groups and distributions of resources (as reported by Duane Dennis). For example, digital devices and technology



**FFN PROVIDERS
ARE AN
EXTENSION OF
THE CHILD'S
FAMILY**

92%
are related to the
child (54% are
grandparents)

69%
get their
information about
their child care
work from family

³ <https://whedco.org/>

supports for providers to access professional development and resources, virtual playgrounds and storytimes, virtual peer support, cash assistance for cleaning supplies and tools for child well-being, home visitation and remote support for South-East Asian, Slavic, and Arab communities, and COVID-19 supports are implemented in various forms in communities across California.

Families Served by FFN Providers

Half of the surveyed parents placed their children with FFN providers. Of these, 92% were related to the child and 54% were the grandparent to the child. This close relationship suggests that supportive services for this population of providers should consider a family-support model. An interesting result from this landscape study that is often reflected in the subsidy landscape is the fact that the largest age group served by FFN providers includes school-age children (73% compared with 48% serving preschoolers).

Family, Friend and Neighbor providers serve a more limited range of children than licensed FCC providers. 46% of FFN providers serve children who speak Spanish, and 63% serve children who are Hispanic/ Latine and 34% serve Black/ African-American children. In contrast, FCC providers often serve children with multiple languages and racial backgrounds, likely reflecting the fact that they are a business open to multiple families whereas FFN providers typically care for a relative and at most one other family. This again speaks to the need for a family-support model for FFN providers.



Accessing Professional Development

92% of FFN providers stated they do not engage in any formal professional development programs. The highest rate of participation was 3% in the Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) which serves as a support for increasing capacity of unlicensed or newly licensed providers to serve infants and toddlers. This may be a program that should be leveraged and expanded in its service to these providers. When asked about informal professional development, the largest percentage (12%) of FFN providers said they enrolled in a course about working with children of different races, ethnicities and cultures.

TOPICS OF INTEREST INCLUDE:

- Behavior management
- Special needs



92% of FFN providers do not participate in professional development activities

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION INCLUDE:



30%
No barrier



36%
Lack of time



22%
Time or location of professional development service



21%
Cost of service

10% 
Transportation



69%
of FFN providers
use family members
as their source of
information for
their child care
work



TOP AREAS OF INTEREST:

- **Child development**
- **Behavior management**
- **Activities to do with children**
- **Special needs**

Barriers to Accessing Professional Development and Supportive Services

When asked what prevents them from accessing services or professional development, 30% of FFN providers said nothing prevents them. These providers may be the more difficult to motivate and engage. The top substantive barriers included lack of time (36%), offerings at inconvenient time or location (22%) and cost (21%). Although only 10% cited the barrier of transportation, this was significantly higher than that reported by FCC providers. A small number (17) mentioned language as a barrier and 77% of these providers spoke Spanish. During community convenings, providers and agencies that support providers discussed lack of awareness as a barrier and the need to have a different approach to outreach than is often currently the case (email blasts). Some suggested success in the use of trusted community promotoras. Also suggested was a shift in the mental model of “imparting information” to creating a safe space to learning and network worth one another and to honor their expertise in raising children. These barriers should be considered when designing policies and programs for FFN providers to engage in professional development.

Networking

While FCC providers use a wide range of resources when they need information about their child care work, FFN providers predominately rely on a family member (69%). Very few reach out to agencies and some (13%) reported not having anyone to reach out to. As mentioned previously, this may reflect the need for a new model of outreach (e.g., promotoras) for this group.

Topics of Interest

The top three topics of interest for all providers included child development, behavior management and guidance, and activities to do with children. Prior research found similar results for FFN providers (Harder & Company, 2014). An increase in interest is seen in the area of behavior management and special needs as brought forward in the key informant 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.

Related to prior results in this report (92% not engaging in formal professional development and 30% saying nothing prevents them), 29% of FFN providers stated that none of the topics provided were of interest to them. Again, this may reflect the need for the field to change our mindset and approach to FFN support and professional development.

Greatest Challenges Facing FFN Providers

FFN providers are the least resourced group in the child care field, and are at times even less resourced than the families they serve who qualify for subsidized child care, struggling to afford even basic necessities such as food, rent and utilities. As found with FCC providers, the top challenge cited by FFN providers was the low pay (51%). Interestingly, 34% reported no challenge in their work. The greatest costs associated with their work as a provider included food (82%) and rent/utilities/insurance (51%). When asked about their greatest challenges during the pandemic, cleaning supplies and technology rose to the top of the list, but access to food for children in their child care was significantly higher than for FCC providers (13% vs 3%). Food was a reoccurring theme across the survey, interviews and community convenings. This is logical given the permeable line between the provision of child care and the relationship with the child and family and again suggests the need for a family-support model of services for FFN providers.

“Our salary is never going to let us buy our own house. Landlords might not permit us to care for children at their property. We aren’t offered any type of health insurance. We as caregivers spend more money on extra food or gasoline. I have to pay my family out of my income to help out when we need help [caring for these children]. It seems that the system wants everyone to be poor. As I have to go out of my way to help take care of a child without a pay.”

– Survey participant, Grandparent FFN Provider

“I feel like license-exempt providers are grossly underpaid. We still keep children safe and love them. We are the backbone of our communities and families. But it seems like we get the shorter end of the stick compared with larger facilities.”

– English speaking FFN provider in community convening

CHALLENGES FOR FFN PROVIDERS:



51%
Low Pay

AMONG GREATEST COSTS ARE:



82%
Food



51%
Rent/Utilities



“It’s very difficult to see any future in child care because the current compensation rate is so low that you’re constantly trying to deal with each day you can’t think ahead or prepare for the future. That’s why I’m going back to the health care field. Right now, it is not a livable wage. \$40 a day for 12 hours of care. It’s incomprehensible that it’s that low. And they are ok with that?”

– English speaking FFN provider in community convening

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 FFN 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. FFN providers need to be actively involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of new programs and policies that are intended for them. FFN Providers have a wealth of strengths. They are grandparents, aunts, uncles and close friends who are integral part of the family’s stability and the parents’ ability to work. Their unique strengths and challenges need to be specifically considered in any future program or system planning. Involving them in decision-making will ensure the relevance and impact of any new program or policy.

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

Given that 49% of FFN providers plan to leave the field in the next 5 years and of that group, ¼ are leaving due to low compensation, new programs and policies are needed to raise the rates of pay and provide other financial supports. FFN providers are significantly challenged by low wages and the high costs of food, particularly nutritious food. Given that few own their homes and many have an annual household income less than \$35,000, these providers often have fewer resources even than the parents who qualify for subsidized child care. Home Grown is supporting a Direct Cash Transfer pilot program in Colorado to lift providers out of poverty (Thriving Providers Project).⁴ The results of this pilot program should be reviewed and considered for future programs that support FFN providers.

⁴ <https://homegrownchildcare.org/thriving-providers-project-in-the-spotlight/>



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

Ensuring a menu of services to meet providers where they are in their journey is essential. While some expressed interest in continuing child care only while their family needed them (to then return to a prior career), others expressed interest in moving toward becoming licensed. Program and policy leaders should consider ways to engage those who may be motivated to move on to licensure, rather than lose this experienced and flexible group of providers. However, with the current state of reduced enrollment in licensed child care settings, ensuring a strong, mixed delivery system is essential to ensure their sustainability. Barriers to licensure should be addressed. For example, a subset of FFN providers plan to become licensed but expressed concerns. The providers who plan to obtain a license speak Spanish or Mandarin and discussed challenges around language barriers with programs and perceived requirements from licensing and programs for their education and home size.

Develop and Implement New Models for Engaging Providers

As previously stated, FFN providers are distinctly different from licensed FCC providers. Given the results of this landscape analysis that the FFN provider is an extension of the child's family, home visitation, play and learn groups, promotoras, resource distributions or other family support models are more relevant to many FFN providers (also suggested by Shivers, Farago, & Yang, 2016), while others may benefit from programs that have career ladder support (such as the Child Care Initiative Project). Given their distinct nature from licensed Family Child Care providers, both the program model and the funding sources that support them may need to be distinctly different. Successful models exist in Arizona, California, and New York City that provide holistic services, including home visitation, resource connections for income/rent/food/utility assistance, hands-on assistance to enroll and continue using the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and play and learn groups.

FFN providers are typically underrepresented in research and programs intended to impact the most under resourced communities. Engaging FFN providers who receive child care vouchers was feasible in this landscape analysis by partnering with CCALA agencies. However, a significant number of children are cared for by FFN providers who do not receive subsidized child care. New partnerships and additional funding will be required if this group is to be included in future programs and services. Given the large percentage of FFN providers serving school-age children, connecting with the parents through the K-12 school system may be key to reaching the unsubsidized FFN population. NSECE (2021) indicates that this is a substantial portion of the child care field (unpaid



“We noticed promotoras are a key factor in reaching FFNs because usually promotoras are FFNs themselves. They interact directly with those FFNs that are taking children to school and they know each other. Promotoras are the most successful because they live in those communities.”

– CBO staff during community convening



providers outnumber those who are paid by almost 4 times, nationally). Prior research in Arizona (Shivers, Farago, & Goubeaux, 2015) found that high participation rates and improvement in FFN quality was linked to specific program implementation methods. Specifically, hiring staff that are bilingual and bicultural and share the same cultural heritages as most of the providers, outreach based on natural connections where providers congregate (elementary schools, faith-based organizations, libraries and community centers), relationship-based supports, and flexible and customized programs that meet the holistic and specific needs of FFN providers.

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

Government, philanthropy, CBO 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.

“The conversation in which people interact and learn from one another may better fit FFNs. We should honor the expertise in the room and set up the room so they can learn from one another instead of ‘training’ them. If I don’t think of myself as a professional and I’ve been around kids a long time raising them, I don’t want to go to a training.”

– CBO staff during community convening



In Summary: Honor and Build on the Strengths of Family, Friend and Neighbor Providers



Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers have significant strengths that should be honored and respected in any policy or systems change. For example, FFN providers:

- *Have many years of experience raising children*
- *Are an extension of the family and often go above and beyond, revealing the permeable boundary between child care and family*
- *Serve large numbers of school-age children*
- *Offer non-traditional hour care, particularly when no other care options are available (e.g., on weekends)*
- *Serve many Spanish-speaking families*

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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For questions about the tools, methods, and analyses in this project, please contact: [Olivia Pillado](mailto:opillado@ccrcca.org) at opillado@ccrcca.org or [Dr. Susan Savage](mailto:ssavage@ccrcca.org) at ssavage@ccrcca.org

For information regarding the Home-Based Child Care Project contact: [Fiona Stewart](mailto:fiona.stewart@ccala.net) at fiona.stewart@ccala.net

