C4: *State Child Care Licensing: The Missing Piece of the Early Learning Research Agenda*
Wednesday, February 7, 2018
4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. | *Richmond*

1. Descriptive Information

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Childcare licensing touches many early care and education providers. State and federal early learning initiatives (e.g., pre-K, QRIS, Head Start) also rely in many ways on the success of a solid licensing system. However, little research has examined childcare licensing. For example, how does licensing data help inform our understanding of access to healthy and safe childcare? Are higher quality programs less likely to have licensing violations? Is the frequency of licensing inspections related to providers' compliance history? This session makes the case for increasing the use of licensing data to gain a better understanding of the potential role and implications of childcare licensing data. Presenters will describe available national and state licensing data, provide an example of how Minnesota has used its licensing data, and introduce a framework demonstrating how licensing supports quality. An open discussion will explore pressing research questions and strategies for conducting research to examine childcare licensing.
	Facilitator
	    Kelly Maxwell, Child Trends
	
	Panelists
	    Sheri Fischer and **Nina Johnson**, National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance | *An Overview of National and State Data on Child Care Licensing*
	
	    Regina Wagner, Minnesota Department of Human Services | *Minnesota's Use of Child Care Licensing Data*
	
	    Kelly Maxwell, Child Trends | *Developing a Research Agenda for Licensing and its Relationship with Quality*
	
	Scribe
	    Chandra Curtis, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

- [State Child Care Licensing: The Missing Piece of the Early Learning Research Agenda](#)
- [Understanding Licensed Child Care in Minnesota](#)
- [Resource List: Child Care Licensing](#)

3. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation/Panelist #1: Nina Johnson**—State licensing data (what they have and how they use the data).
    - Nina provided an overview of the types of data that state collect on child care licensing and the various ways states use licensing data (e.g., for required reports, to inform quality improvement, evaluate their practice, coordinate with other programs). See slides for more details.

- **Summary of Presentation/Panelist #2: Sheri Fischer**—National data on child care licensing (what data do we have and how are we sharing it)
    - Sheri described sources of national data on child care licensing (see slides for more details).
    - Child care licensing studies—The National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) and the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance periodically conduct a national study about child care licensing policies and program requirements. The data from the previous studies are available online, and the 2017 survey is currently underway.

- Topics covered in NARA Survey include number of licensed facilities and capacity; number of licensing staff; types of inspections; frequency of inspections; frequency of licensing renewal; inspections and monitoring; risk assessment, defining compliance, differential monitoring; technical assistance to licensees; use of technology and data; and complaint investigations. The 2017 survey includes new questions on licensing requirements for Head Start, licensing requirements for legally exempts centers and home, and licensing's role in legally exempt centers and homes.
  - ECQA manages the [National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations](#), which provides a way to search for state regulations. Program requirements data are collected for the licensing studies on types of licensing regulations; facility type definitions; licensing exemptions; staff qualifications and training; child-staff ratios and group size (centers); number of children allowed (FCC); supervision of children; care of children; and facility requirements.
  - Various resources related to licensing and health and safety are available at: https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/topics/protecting-childrens-health-and-safety

- **Summary of Presentation/Panelist #3: Regina Wagner –** State use of its licensing data.
  - Reggie described how Minnesota is using its state's child care licensing data. She described how Minnesota's child care licensing is organized (state and county level).. Minnesota used its data to help understand why they were seeing an increased trend in deaths in child care and, in particular, Family Child Care (FCC). They saw a connection with safe sleep violations and implemented a back to sleep regulation/law. The data were very helpful in understanding what was going on and how to reduce deaths...
  - They also used their data to examine whether centers in certain communities (e.g., low-income) had more violations than centers in other communities. The data did not show a discrepancy between higher/lower income centers in the data.
  - Minnesota has seen a decrease in FCC providers. They examined their data to better understand the changes in licensed FCC providers in different regions of the state. They have also examined data based on the number of years licensed to better understand the needs of certain providers (new vs. more experienced By examining their data, they realized that FCC providers who struggle during the application process are more likely to have more violations in the first 5 years of operation than do providers who did not struggle during the application process.

- **Summary of Presentation/Panelist #4: Kelly Maxwell -**Licensing supports quality.
  - Licensing historically has been viewed as the foundation of quality, but some are now viewing it as an important aspect of quality all along the quality continuum. Licensing can support quality in various ways (e.g., regulations, provision of technical assistance)
  - There is not much research on child care licensing or how licensing is related to quality. Kelly shared some examples of possible research questions and asked the session participants to offer their ideas about important questions to address.

Brief Summary of Discussion:
Discussion around Sheri Fischer's Presentation:
- Question: You're getting information about providers. When you get information from licensing, do you get information about enrollment?
- Response: We receive license capacity across the state (facilities/homes); we ask for data on enrollment but we don't consider that data to be reliable.
- Question: Do they give you any data on license exempt providers?
- Response: In the past, we did not, but in the 2017 survey we ask some questions about how many license-exempt providers that receive CCDF were monitored.
- Question: On the licensing survey, do you ask for data as of a specific time period? What is the time that they're using to report? Response: We ask for data as of December 31.

Discussion around Regina Wagner's Presentation:
- Question. How do you count the FCC provider's own children when considering whether they meet the requirements about number of children served?
- Response: In Minnesota, you are allowed to have two non-related children without a license. For licensed FCC providers, their own children count towards overall enrollment/ratio/capacity of that home.
- Question: For the FCC providers that close, do you have data to see where these children are going? It would be interesting to see why they are leaving. Providers may leave the business because the children are moving into elementary school. Or are the children going to child care centers?
- Response: We don't know the dynamics/reasons why FCC homes are closing their businesses or where the children go when a FCC closes..

General Discussion:
- Leadership and their capacity/staff are important for programs to o meet licensing standards.
- I worry about a self-fulfilling prophecy. I am working with providers who are struggling to stay in quality. They feel that licensers are out to get them. I think about that in the context of a culture of compliance vs a culture of continuous improvement. Is there a way to change all parts of the system?
- Question: In Georgia, we have been working to strengthen our partnership with providers—have been working on this for at least 10 years. It takes a long time for providers to really believe that we are partnering with them. There is an imbalance of power between the licenser and provider, which leads to the "gotcha" mentality.
- It would be interesting to see if there is a relationship between QRIS rating levels and the number or types of licensing violations.

4. **Summary of Key issues raised** (facilitators are encouraged to spend the last 3-5 minutes of sessions summarizing the key issues raised during the session; bullets below are prompts for capturing the kinds of issues we're looking for)
   States collect a range of data on child care licensing and use the data for multiple purposes. There are a few national data sources available on licensing, but most research on licensing has to be done at a state level because states vary in their licensing regulations and the data they collect. The purpose of this session was to raise awareness about licensing data available for researchers and to encourage researchers to include licensing in their studies to better understand how licensing and quality are related.