Family Friend & Neighbor
Child Care:
Policy Options and Research Questions

Lisa A. McCabe, Ph.D. & Sam Stephens, Ph.D.

Annual Meeting of the
Child Care Policy Research Consortium
October 2012
Project Overview

• Funded by AECF as follow-up to 2004-2010 investments in FFNC work
• Goal: understand current state of policy and research in the field from the perspective of grantees and non-grantees
• Individual interviews with AECF grantees (19) and non-grantees (9)
  – 10 in evaluation research
  – 3 in policy research
  – 13 in system development
  – 2 in private funding
Home Based Child Care

Unregulated (FFNC)
- Relatives
  - Paid
    - Public subsidies
    - Private pay
  - Unpaid
- Non-relatives
  - Paid
    - Public Subsidies
  - Unpaid
    - Private pay

Regulated
- Paid
Cross-cutting Themes in Interviews – Policy & Research

• Diversity

• Quality

• Family Strengthening

• Regulation
FFNC Diversity

• FFN caregivers and care arrangements are not an “it”
  – While primarily relatives – particularly grandmothers
  – others provide care in many circumstances
  – FFNC is often provided in combination with other arrangements

• Policy context for FFNC varies considerably across states
  – Use of child care subsidies for FFNC
  – Regulations
FFNC Diversity

• Question: Where does FFNC fit?
  – Subsidized child care
  – Child welfare
  – Work support versus child learning
  – QRIS
  – Family Strengthening System

• One size does not fit all
Provider Diversity: Research Questions

• Who uses FFNC?
  – Family characteristics
  – Child characteristics
  – Community characteristics

• Who are FFNC providers?
  – Motivation?
  – Turnover?
  – Quality?
  – Interests and needs?

• How is FFNC used by families?
  – Primary or supplemental?
  – Short or long term?

• How does FFN caregiving vary across subgroups?
  – By relationship to child
  – By compensation arrangements
  – By interest in “professionalism”
Quality in FFNC

- Consistent evidence of poor quality in home-based settings makes arguments for increased public investment difficult to support.

- Focus tends to be on fraud & safety issues for FFNC receiving subsidy.

- Challenge = identifying cost-effective strategies for engaging and supporting FFNC that produce improvements in quality & children’s outcomes.
Bringing FFNC QI Models To Scale

• Many local models exist, some with evaluation results
  – E.g. Caring For Quality, Community Connections, Grandmother Project, Zero to Three FFNC materials

• But no mechanism via state policy/funding to expand/replicate/sustain
QRIS as Quality Strategy

• QRIS movement
  – Presented to policymakers as way to increase accountability & improve child outcomes
  – No strong evidence yet that QRIS improves care environment & child learning in regulated child care
  – Increasing requirement that subsidies be used only with providers in QRIS

• Question: How should FFNC fit within QRIS?
Challenges in Using QRIS for Supporting FFNC

- Home-based providers (regulated & not) face more barriers to participating in & benefitting from QRIS
- QRIS standards often are not differentiated between center- and regulated home-based settings
- Challenges with identifying, outreach, engagement with FFN groups
Challenges in Using QRIS for Supporting FFNC

• Quality improvement supports for home-based providers need to meet diverse needs and interests
  – Professional Development
  – Grandmothers with limited English
Quality:
Research Questions

• How does QRIS improve learning environment and child outcomes in regulated home-based settings?

• Are quality standards applicable to both regulated and unregulated home-based care settings?

• To what extent is the rating process essential to improvements? That is, can quality be improved without ratings?
Quality: Research Questions

• How could effective quality improvement strategies be adapted for unregulated home-based settings?
• What are the thresholds of quality that really make a difference for child outcomes?
• What will it take for such strategies to go to scale, either inside or outside QRIS?
Family Strengthening with FFNC Settings

- Promising strategy that can build on successful parent education/home visiting models
- Coaching and mentoring with ongoing practice and feedback utilizes adult learning principles
- Challenges
  - Providing intensive support of sufficient duration
  - Organizing support to meet different needs & interests
  - Efficiently using limited resources
Family Strengthening: Research Agenda

• Develop and rigorously evaluate programs that support specific groups of FFN caregivers

• Explore how cultural differences affect results in engaging FFN caregivers, meeting their needs, enhancing their caregiving, and improving children’s learning

• Identify critical components and threshold levels of interventions that produce results, with implications for replication and going to scale
State Regulations & Requirements

• Focus in regulations for licensed child care providers is generally health & safety
• FFNC Providers receiving subsidies may be subject to some requirements
• States vary greatly in use of subsidies for FFNC
• States also vary in requirements for FFNC receiving subsidies
Recent clarification that states can meet parental choice while requiring subsidized providers to meet quality criteria

Reauthorization of CCDBG = potential opportunity to:
  - Increase requirements for and monitoring of FFNC subsidies
  - Expand support for quality improvement activities with FFNC providers
State Regulation: Research Questions

• How are state requirements for FFNC providers associated with the role these providers play in subsidy system?

• When new requirements for registration or training are adopted, what are the effects on FFNC provider participation in the subsidy system? On child/family care arrangements?
## Crosswalk with National Survey of Early Care and Education (NCECE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Topics</th>
<th>NCECE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who uses FFNC?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family characteristics</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How is FFNC used by families?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary or supplemental?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short or long term?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who are FFNC providers?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests and needs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does FFN caregiving vary across subgroups?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By relationship to child</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By compensation arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By interest in “professionalism”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaires available at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/nsece](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/nsece)
Questions?