PARENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD CARE IN THE UNITED STATES

NACCRA’s National Parent Poll: November 2008
January 2009
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would also like to thank Karen Scott and Cheryl Korn at Zogby International for the fielding and analysis of the survey.

ABOUT NACCRRRA

NACCRRRA, the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, is our nation’s leading voice for child care. We work with more than 800 state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies nationwide. These agencies help ensure that families in 99 percent of all populated ZIP codes in the United States have access to high-quality, affordable child care. To achieve our mission, we lead projects that increase the quality and availability of child care professionals, undertake research, and advocate child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families. To learn more about NACCRRRA and how you can join us in ensuring access to high-quality child care for all families, visit us at www.naccrra.org.
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Child care is an under-appreciated feature in the infrastructure that supports the American economic system. Each week, about 11.3 million children under age 5 spend some time in a child care setting (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). For many families, parents need to work to provide basic needs for their families, and child care is an economic necessity. Other families have more options, and child care is a choice that meets the families’ needs and values. Unfortunately, the hard choice for all these families is often between safe, reliable high-quality child care that they cannot afford and child care they can afford that is barely adequate.

In November 2008, NACCRRA commissioned Zogby International to conduct a nationwide telephone survey of 1,004 parents with children under age 6. The survey recorded information about parents’ child care arrangements for their youngest child. Parents were asked about the factor that was most important in their child care decision and their biggest concern about child care. The poll surveyed parents on their perceptions about child care issues, including provider training, inspections of programs, requirements for licensing, and background checks. Parents were also asked about their attitudes toward public funding to increase the quality and affordability of child care.

Key Findings

Child care arrangements for the youngest child:

- About half the parents (49 percent) said their youngest child was regularly cared for by someone other than themselves.

- Almost one-fourth (23 percent) reported alternating work schedules to accommodate child care needs.

- A third of parents (33 percent) were using multiple child care arrangements.

- Many of the children were in formal child care arrangements. Almost half of the children (49 percent) were in a child care center or full-day preschool. Over one-third (34 percent) were in a nursery school or part-day preschool, and 16 percent were in family child care.

- Another 19 percent were at a relative’s home, and 11 percent were at a friend or neighbor’s home.

- Fewer children were cared for in their own home, either by a relative (12 percent), a nanny (7 percent) or a friend or neighbor (5 percent).

Most important factor in choosing child care:

- A safe environment was the most important factor in choosing child care for 36 percent of the parents.

- A learning environment and learning activities was the most important factor for 17 percent of the parents. In addition, 9 percent said the most important factor was having child care providers trained in child development.

- Cost was the primary factor in choosing child care after a safe environment and a learning environment.

Single biggest concern about child care:

- Quality was the biggest concern for 40 percent of parents. More than six in 10 (63 percent) were willing to pay an extra $10 per year in taxes to improve child care quality, and 54 percent were willing to pay $50 per year extra in taxes.
• Affordability of child care was the biggest concern for 22 percent of parents. Almost one-third of families (32 percent) earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line listed cost as their primary concern. **Almost three-quarters of parents (74 percent) favored providing public funding to make child care more affordable. In addition, 70 percent were willing to pay an extra $10 per year in taxes to make child care more affordable, and 60 percent were willing to pay $50 per year extra in taxes.**

**Paying for child care:**

• Parents were using multiple resources to help pay for child care: 11 percent received help from family members, 10 percent received public assistance and 7 percent received private assistance.

• A majority of parents (60 percent) agreed that parents should not have sole responsibility for paying for early childhood education.

**Parents’ impressions about safety and quality in child care:**

• Parents made the logical conclusion that governmental oversight was in place to support the safety of their children.

• 87 percent of parents thought all providers were trained to recognize signs of child abuse.

• 85 percent of parents thought all providers were trained in first-aid and CPR.

• 84 percent of parents believed all child care providers must have a background check.

• 81 percent of parents believed that state government licensed all child care programs.

• 76 percent of parents believed that government inspected all child care programs.

**Parents believed that governmental regulations were in place to support quality of care and learning for their children:**

• 96 percent of parents believed all child care providers offered learning opportunities to children.

• 82 percent believed all providers were trained in guidance and discipline.

• 78 percent assumed all child care providers had training in child development before working with children.

Unfortunately, the reality is very different from the parents’ perceptions. There are no federal standards to govern child care, and there is a wide variation in state licensing regulation. Licensing requirements do not support the safety and quality standards that parents expect, especially in family child care homes.

**Support for child care improvement initiatives:**

• A vast majority of parents (96 percent) agreed that all child care providers should be required to undergo comprehensive background checks, using fingerprints, BEFORE they begin working with children.

• There was strong support among parents (95 percent) for requiring inspections of child care programs, including family child care homes, BEFORE they begin caring for children. In fact, almost one-third (32 percent) said child care programs should be inspected four times a year.

• Ninety-two percent of parents agreed that training for providers should include classes in child development, first aid and CPR, child guidance and discipline, and recognition of the signs of child abuse.

• In addition, 93 percent of parents thought existing health and safety standards for child care should be improved.
Conclusion and Recommendations

Economic reality and solid research on child development should inform decisions made about child care and early learning opportunities. Parents need child care in order to work, and they want their children to be in a learning environment that will help them be ready for school. Parents expect child care that is high-quality, safe, affordable and reliable. They are willing to pay extra taxes to support high-quality, affordable care.

Parents logically assume that child care regulations are in place to make child care safe and of high-quality, but reality falls short of those expectations. Parents can benefit from comprehensive consumer activities to educate parents about the quality and supply of early childhood programs. States use Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding to help fund local Child Care Resource + Referral agencies (CCRS&Rs) to support public awareness to promote early care and education.

The bottom line is that all parents want to be able to provide their children with high-quality early care and learning opportunities whether it is in the parent’s home, a family child care home or a center-based setting. It is time to rethink how decisions are made about child care quality and how child care is financed in America in order to make it affordable for all families. NACCRRA makes the following recommendations to states:

1. Require all paid providers to undergo a complete background check, including fingerprints, prior to working with children.

2. Require inspections prior to the state issuing a license and regular unannounced inspections throughout the year.

3. Require 40 hours of pre-service training and 24 hours of annual training. Training should include child development, guidance and discipline, first-aid/CPR, recognizing child abuse and neglect, and related health and safety issues.

4. Require developmentally-appropriate quality standards.

5. Support local child care resource & referral agencies in their efforts to promote public awareness to advance safe, affordable, high-quality care and early learning opportunities.
PARENTS’ USE OF NONPARENTAL CARE

Child care is an under-appreciated element of the infrastructure that supports the American economic system. Parents need child care in order to work and support their families. Plans to address the current economic problems must include providing parents with safe, reliable, affordable child care and ensuring children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Each week, about 11.3 million children under age 5 spend some time in a child care setting (U.S. Census, 2008). For many families, parents need to work to provide basic necessities for their families, and child care is an economic necessity. Other families have more options, and child care is a choice that meets the families' needs and values. Unfortunately, the hard choice for all these families is often between safe, reliable high-quality child care that they cannot afford and child care they can afford that is barely adequate.

All parents hope to find child care that guarantees their children's safety, fosters their children's development and is affordable. Their major concerns are about the quality of care their children receive and the high cost of care. They also worry about the reliability of care, availability and hours of operation.

Parents’ impressions are that the general child care situation is better than it is in reality. They think the care is safer and of higher quality than it really is. Parents assume that the government licenses all child care centers and family child care homes and that these facilities are inspected regularly. They believe child care providers are well trained and are required to provide early learning activities.

Unfortunately, the reality is that only 11 states license all child care centers and family child care homes. Just five states require quarterly inspections. Comprehensive background checks using fingerprints are only required in nine states. Only one-fourth of the states require child care teachers working in centers to have pre-service training in early childhood education. The result of these minimal standards is that children in licensed child care settings are receiving unequal early care and learning opportunities compared to other early learning settings such as state-funded prekindergarten and Head Start programs. This is a direct result of state policies that set the bar for quality at different places for different programs (NACCRRA, in press b).

Safe, high-quality child care costs more than most families can afford. The true cost of care for high-quality child care requires appropriately-trained and compensated caregivers and compliance with rigorous licensing standards (including comprehensive background checks) and inspections. Unlike funding for public schools, funding for most child care is supported by parent fees - and parents can only allocate so much of their budget to child care. Government-funded child care subsidies are insufficient to help many eligible adults working in low-paying jobs afford reliable child care. In middle class families, where, on average, child care takes up 10 percent of the family budget (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), health care and safe, high-quality child care often become optional expenses (Business Roundtable & Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2003). Ironically, in many states, it is cheaper to enroll a child in college than it is to pay for child care. Parents, like grandparents (NACCRRA, 2008a), are willing to pay more in taxes to support higher-quality child care and to make it more affordable.

In November 2008, NACCRRA contracted with Zogby International to conduct a nationwide telephone survey of 1,004 parents with children under age 6. Appendix A has details about the methodology of the poll. The survey recorded information about parents’ child care arrangements for their youngest child. Parents were asked about factors that were important in their child care decision and their biggest concern about child care. The poll also surveyed parents on their perceptions about child care issues, including provider training, inspections of programs, requirements for licensing, and background checks. Parents were also asked about their attitudes toward public funding to increase quality and affordability of child care. The margin of error is +/- 3.2 percentage points.
Parents were asked whether their youngest child had been cared for in the past five years on a regular basis by someone other than a parent or guardian. About half the parents (49 percent) said their children were regularly cared for by someone other than themselves. In addition, almost one-quarter (23 percent) reported alternating work schedules to accommodate child care needs. Two in 10 (20 percent) of these children cared for by someone else were 1-years-old or younger; another 14 percent were 2-years-old; 22 percent were 3-years-old; another 20 percent were 4-years-old; and almost one-quarter (23 percent) were 5-years-old.

The most frequent care arrangement that parents reported using for their youngest child was center-based care. These arrangements include child care centers, part-day preschools and nursery schools, prekindergarten programs, and other types of early childhood education programs such as Head Start. Forty-nine percent of parents reported using either a full-day preschool (29 percent) or a child care center (20 percent). Another 34 percent reported using part-day preschool or nursery schools. Family child care homes were used by 16 percent. Other parents reported using informal options such as family members (12 percent), friends and/or neighbors (11 percent). In-home care was provided by relatives (12 percent), nannies (7 percent) or friends or neighbors (5 percent). Many of these parents (33 percent) were using multiple child care arrangements to meet their child care needs. Figure 11 has information about the child care arrangements that parents reported using for their youngest child.

Most parents were using child care in order to work (50 percent) or attend school (12 percent). Eleven percent of parents with income 200 percent below poverty said they needed child care because they were looking for a job compared to about 2 percent of those with higher family incomes. This is an important support for parents in the low end of the income spectrum, especially as these are the parents disproportionately affected by the current economic downturn, and they need child care while they find another job. When both parents are employed full-time, 80 percent use some form of child care. The majority of these parents (60 percent) use a child care center or a full-day preschool. Families in the South (65 percent) were most likely to use a child care center or full-day preschool than were families in the West (41 percent), the Northwest (44 percent) or the Midwest (45 percent). This may be because southern states serve a higher percentage of 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool programs than other areas of the country (Barnett et al., 2007). In addition, child care costs on average are lower in the South (NACCRAA, 2008b).
Parents also chose early care for their children as an opportunity to stimulate their children’s development. Many parents reported using nonparental care as an educational experience to provide a learning environment for their children (20 percent) and to provide social experiences (19 percent).

Of families using child care, 33 percent were using multiple arrangements with the average number being 1.6 arrangements. Parents earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line, on average, used 1.9 arrangements, compared to 1.4 for those earning between 200 percent and 300 percent of the federal poverty line. These multiple arrangements mean less stability and security for poor children.

Respondents who said they and their significant other work alternating schedules because of child care (21 percent) were about twice as likely to have a child with special needs as those couples who did not work alternating schedules (11 percent). This may be in part because three in 10 (31 percent) said it was difficult to find a child care provider for their child with special needs. Respondents who have a child with special needs were also about three times more likely than those who do not have a child with special needs to say they have had to give up or compromise on child care providers trained in child development (21 percent vs. 6 percent); a clean environment (16 percent vs. 4 percent); and a safe environment (15 percent vs. 5 percent).

Almost one-fourth of parents (23 percent) reported working alternating shifts to address child care needs. Of these, 57 percent use some form of child care. They were more likely to use part-day preschool and nursery school options than were parents who were not making these accommodations (60 percent compared to 26 percent). Parents working alternating shifts were less likely to be using full-day options such as full-day preschool (18 percent versus 35 percent), a child care center (14 percent versus 24 percent) or a family child care home (9 percent versus 20 percent).

The regular use of care by someone other than a parent increased with higher family income. Only 36 percent of parents with an income below 200 percent of the federal poverty line used regular child care, compared to 56 percent of parents with an income above 300 percent of the federal poverty level. However, parents with lower incomes (67 percent) were more likely to use part-day preschool options compared to families with a higher income (23 percent). This disparity may reflect the fact that the Head Start program and state-funded prekindergarten programs are targeted at children in families with low incomes. Table 1.1 shows the percent of families in selected demographic categories that have regular child care arrangements for their children, and the types of child care arrangements that the parents have used by percent of usage. The table reflects the fact that some parents use multiple child care arrangements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1: Type of Child Care Used by Selected Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center/Full day Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery/Part day Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relative's home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/neighbor’s home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Neighbor at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most Important Factor in Choosing Child Care
Safety, a learning environment with trained teachers and cost were the three most important factors that parents considered when they were making child care decisions.

Safety
More than one-third of parents (36 percent) identified a safe environment as the most important factor.

Learning Environment
A learning environment and learning activities was the highest priority for 17 percent of the parents. Similarly, 9 percent of parents placed the highest value on having child care providers trained in child development.

Cost
Cost was the most important factor in choosing child care after a safe environment and a learning environment. Not surprisingly, cost was an especially important factor for parents earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line. Twenty-five percent of these parents mentioned reasonably priced child care compared to 7 percent of those earning within 200 percent and 300 percent of the federal poverty line and 3 percent of those whose earnings were higher.

Biggest Single Concern About Child Care
When parents were asked to consider their own situation and indicate their single biggest concern about child care, quality was their first concern, followed by cost, availability, hours of operation and reliability.

Quality of Care
Parents most often mentioned quality (40 percent) as their single biggest concern about child care. Parents in the Northeast were most concerned about quality (55 percent, compared to 35 percent in the South, 36 percent in the Midwest and 38 percent in the West). Quality was a major concern among parents of all income groups. Twenty-seven percent of parents earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line mentioned it as their chief concern, compared to 39 percent of parents earning between 200 percent and 300 percent of the federal poverty line and 49 percent of those earning higher incomes.

In fact, parents were so concerned about quality that 63 percent were willing to pay $10 extra per year in taxes to improve child care quality, even in today's uncertain economy. More than half of the parents (54 percent) were actually willing to pay $50 per year extra in taxes. A similar poll of 500 grandparents conducted by NACCRRA in September 2008 saw comparable results: 61 percent of grandparents supported $10 in higher taxes per year to improve the quality of child care.

Affordability
After quality issues, parents were most worried about cost. In choosing child care, cost followed safety and a learning environment. However, once parents are using care, the reality of the ongoing cost of care becomes a more significant factor. It was identified by 22 percent of parents as their primary concern. On average, unsubsidized child care takes up 10 percent of an American family's budget (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Cost, unsurprisingly, was a bigger worry among those earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line. For these families, the cost of child care can take a significant part of their budget. In 38 states, families earning $18,000 or less each year would have to spend 30 percent or more of their annual income to afford the average fees for care for an infant (NACCRA, 2008b). Almost one-third of these parents (32 percent) indicated cost as their first concern, compared to 21 percent of parents earning between 200 percent and 300 percent of federal income poverty guidelines and 17 percent of those earning higher.

In addition, nine in 10 parents (91 percent) recognized that affordable child care was an important factor in helping all working families in today's economy. About three-quarters of parents (74 percent) favored providing public funding to make child care more affordable. In fact, affordability is a serious enough concern that
70 percent of parents were willing to pay $10 extra per year in taxes to make child care more affordable; and 60 percent supported an extra $50 per year in taxes for more affordable child care.

Support for additional public funding to make child care more affordable was also indicated in NACCRRA's Grandparent Poll. In that survey, 67 percent of those polled supported a similar increase to make child care more affordable. Figure 1.2 shows the level of support by parents and grandparents for paying an extra $10 or $50 dollars annually in taxes if the funds are used to support improved quality or to make child care more affordable.

**Figure 1.2: Support for Paying Extra Taxes for Child Care**

![Bar chart showing support percentages for additional taxes to make child care more affordable.](chart)

- **$10 for Quality**: 63% (Parents' Poll '08), 61% (Grandparent's Poll '08)
- **$50 for Quality**: 54%
- **$10 for Affordability**: 70% (Parents' Poll '08), 67% (Grandparent's Poll '08)
- **$50 for Affordability**: 60%

**Paying for Child Care**

While most families pay for child care on their own or have informal arrangements where monetary payments are not made, many parents need help paying for child care. Over one in 10 (11 percent) reported they had family members helping them pay for child care; Ten percent received public assistance and 7 percent said they received some type of private assistance. Twenty-eight percent of parents earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line and 6 percent of families earning between 200 and 300 percent of the federal poverty line receive public assistance for child care. Respondents who had a child with special needs were more likely than respondents who do not have a child with special needs to say public assistance (25 percent vs. 8 percent) or private assistance (17 percent vs. 6 percent) helped them pay for child care.

Sixty percent of the parents agreed that parents should not be the only ones responsible for early childhood education, and that the public, along with parents, should share the cost of ensuring the availability of quality child care programs. Almost two-thirds of parents (62 percent) said that public education should be expanded to

**Availability, Hours of Operation and Reliability**

For 7 percent of the parents, each of the following topics was the primary issue of concern: availability, hours of operation of child care and reliability. Availability of child care/hours of operation may actually be more of an issue than parents indicated, since 23 percent of parents also said that they work alternating shifts specifically because of child care arrangements.
include younger children and that public money should help pay to improve the quality of child care as is done for the K-12 public school system.

Parents’ Impressions about Safety and Quality in Child Care vs. the Reality

Parents made the logical assumption that governmental oversights are in place to support the safety and quality of the care and learning for their children.

Unfortunately, the reality is very different from the perception of parents. There are no federal standards to govern child care, and there is a wide variation in state licensing regulation. Table 1.2 shows the percent of parents who agree with various value statements about child care and compares those impressions to the reality of child care regulations for child care centers and family child care homes. The data shows that licensing requirements in many states do not support the safety and quality standards that parents expect, especially in family child care homes.

Safety

In every state, educators are among those who are mandated by law to report child maltreatment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). It is not a coincidence then, that almost nine in ten parents (87 percent) believe that all providers are trained to recognize and report signs of child abuse.

Parents expect that teachers will be able to handle routine first aid needs and be able to administer CPR in an emergency situation. Over 85 percent of parents believed that all providers are trained in first-aid and CPR.

Comprehensive background checks are a tool to help child care employers protect the children in their care. These checks are critical to ensure that those working with children are not criminals or sex offenders. Overall, 84 percent believed that all child care providers must have a background check.

Restaurants are licensed by the state. Beauty salons are licensed by the state. It is not surprising that 81 percent of parents believed that the state government protected their children by requiring that all child care programs be licensed.

Licensing is meaningless unless there are inspections to ensure ongoing compliance. Over three-quarters (76 percent) of parents believed that the government regularly inspects all child care programs.

Quality

Exciting research in the past 15 years has informed the general public about the importance of early brain development on a child’s later success in life, so it is not surprising that 96 percent of parents believed that all child care providers offer learning opportunities for children.

• 82 percent believe that all providers are trained in guidance and discipline.

• Over three quarters of parents polled (78 percent) assumed that all providers go through training in child development BEFORE working with children.

Early learning guidelines are research-based, measurable expectations about what young children should know and be able to do. State-funded prekindergarten initiatives in 27 states and territories are required to use early learning guidelines to make decisions about curriculum, professional development and child assessment (National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, 2008). No state requires licensed child care programs to incorporate the use of the early learning guidelines into their program practices (NACCRRA, in press).
### Table 1.2: Parents’ Perception About Child Care Versus The Reality of States’ Licensing Requirements for Safety and Quality Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Reality of Child Care Licensing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All caregivers are trained to recognize or report child abuse</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>24 states require training on child abuse and neglect prevention.(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 states specifically require pre-service training in child abuse prevention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All caregivers are trained in first-aid/CPR</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>46 states have a pre-service requirement for CPR training.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Note: This is usually required of only one staff present at any given time.)(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29 states have a pre-service requirement for training in CPR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All caregivers must have a background check</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>45 states have a pre-service requirement for training in first-aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Note: most states don’t specify infant or child first aid.)(^d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 states have pre-service requirement for first aid training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All child care programs are required to be licensed</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>11 states license all child care centers and family child care homes.(^e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 states do not regulate small family child care homes with fewer than 6 children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 additional states do not conduct an inspection prior to issuing a license.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All child care programs are inspected</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>41 states have child care regulations that require at least annual inspections of child care centers. Only 5 states require quarterly inspections.(^f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36 states require inspection before licensing, 25 states require inspections at least once per year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^a\) State counts include the District of Columbia.

\(^b\) Data about licensing for family child care homes is from Leaving Children to Chance. Numbers in this table do not include the Department of Defense.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Reality of Child Care Licensing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All caregivers provide learning opportunities</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>41 state regulations address child development in required activities.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32 states address social, emotional and physical development in required activities.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 states address language/ literacy development activities and cognitive/ intellectual development in required activities.(^a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29 states require books and other literacy materials.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 states require gross motor equipment for indoor and/or outdoor play.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29 states require providers to have toys or equipment for physically active play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 states require science/ experimental/ math materials.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All caregivers are trained in child discipline and behavior/ guidance</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>While 49 states have requirements on behavior guidance and/or discipline, NACCRRA did not find evidence that caregivers are required to be trained in discipline and behavior/guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 states specifically require training in discipline and child behavior/guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All caregivers are required to have training in child development before working with children</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>13 states require child care teachers working in centers to have pre-service training in early childhood education.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 states require lead or master teachers to only have a high school diploma.(^a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 states require a state credential, and 4 states require a CDA or AA in early childhood education or a related field.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 states require child care teachers working in centers to have pre-service training in early childhood education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29 states have no minimum education requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An additional 17 states only require a GED or a high school diploma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 states require college courses in early childhood education. One state requires a state training credential.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for Child Care Improvement Initiatives

Support for strategies to maintain or improve safety in child care was strong among parents, grandparents and voters in the 2008 general elections. A vast majority of parents (96 percent) and voters (95 percent) agreed that all child care providers should be required to undergo comprehensive background checks, including fingerprinting, before they begin working with children. Eighty-one percent indicated they strongly favored comprehensive background checks.

There was similarly strong support among parents (95 percent), grandparents (95 percent) and voters (92 percent) for requiring inspections of child care programs, including family child care homes, before they begin caring for children. Eighty-four percent of parents strongly favored requiring inspections. In terms of frequency of inspections, almost one-third of parents (32 percent) said government should inspect all child care programs four times a year - a standard that is used by the U.S. military. Another 11 percent thought these programs should be inspected three times a year; 25 percent said two times a year and 20 percent thought it should be at least once a year. Unfortunately, 10 states do not even inspect programs once a year; and only five states (Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wyoming) inspect programs four times a year.

Ninety-two percent of parents, 94 percent of grandparents, and 92 percent of voters agreed that training for providers should include classes in child development, first aid and CPR, child guidance and discipline, and recognition of the signs of child abuse. In addition, parents (93 percent) and grandparents (90 percent) thought existing health and safety standards for child care should be improved. Figure 1.3 shows support by parents, grandparents and voters for four specific strategies that support safety in child care programs.

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**Figure 1.3: Support for Strategies to Improve Child Care Quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Parents’ Poll ‘08</th>
<th>Grandparent’s Poll ‘08</th>
<th>Voter Poll ‘08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health/Safety Standards</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require Inspections</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Training</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Background Check</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The grandparent poll was conducted in September 2008 by telephone with 500 grandparents; the voter poll was conducted online in November 2008 after the election with 5,064 voters.
CONCLUSION

Economic reality and solid research on child development should inform decisions made about child care and early learning opportunities. Parents need child care in order to work, and they want their children to be in a learning environment that will help them be ready for school. Parents expect child care that is high-quality, safe, affordable and reliable. They are willing to pay extra taxes to support high-quality, affordable care.

Parents logically assume that child care regulations are in place to make child care safe and of high-quality. They can benefit from comprehensive consumer activities to educate parents about the quality and supply of early childhood programs. States often provide funding to local CCR&Rs to support public awareness and promote early care and education.

The bottom line is that all parents want to be able to provide their children with high-quality early care and learning opportunities whether it is in the parent’s home, a family child care home or a center-based setting. It is time to rethink how decisions are made about child care quality and how child care is financed in America in order to make it affordable for all families.
RECOMMENDATIONS

NACCRRA makes the following recommendations to states:

1. **Require all paid providers to undergo a complete background check, including fingerprints, prior to working with children.**

2. **Require inspection prior to the state issuing a license and regular unannounced inspections throughout the year.**

3. **Require that inspection results and substantiated complaints be publicly posted on the internet so parents have accurate information and can make informed choices about child care.**

4. **Require 40 hours of pre-service training and 24 hours of annual training. Training should include child development, guidance and discipline, first-aid/CPR, recognizing child abuse and neglect, and related health and safety issues.**

5. **Require developmentally appropriate quality standards.**

6. **Support local child care resource & referral agencies in their efforts to promote public awareness to advance safe, affordable, high-quality care and early learning opportunities.**
APPENDIX A: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In November 2008, NACCRRRA commissioned Zogby International to conduct a telephone survey with parents with children under age 6. Interviews were completed November 18-25, 2008. The sample included 1,004 interviews with approximately 71 questions asked. Samples were randomly drawn from Zogby International's internal database of adults with children culled from telephone CDs of national listed sample. Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. Up to six calls were made to reach a sampled phone number. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's approved methodologies¹ and are comparable to other professional public-opinion surveys conducted using similar sampling strategies.² Weighting by region, education, race and gender was used to adjust for non-response. The margin of error is +/- 3.2 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

¹ See COOP4 (p.38) in Standard Definitions; Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates of Surveys. The American Association for Public Opinion Research, (2000).

REFERENCES


