

National Parent Polling Results

The Economy's Impact on Parents' Choices and Perceptions about Child Care



More than 11 million children under the age of 5 regularly spend time in some type of child care setting every week. Considering the importance of child care in the safety and early development of children (and also as a work support for parents), the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies has conducted several national surveys of parents to have a better understanding of what parents look for in child care; what they think about child care; and what is most important to them about child care. The findings related to health and safety (and the quality of child care) listed below are from NACCRRRA's most recent parent poll conducted in the summer of 2010, *The Economy's Impact on Parents' Choices and Perceptions about Child Care*.

Parents' Top Concerns:

- The top two concerns parents have about child care were quality and cost: 38 percent of parents said that quality was their single biggest concern, 20 percent responded cost.

What Parents Think About Child Care:

- Parents overwhelmingly think child care providers undergo a background check (85 percent of all families, 86 percent of families with children under age 5).
- Parents overwhelmingly think child care providers have training before caring for children (73 percent of all families, 77 percent of families with children under age 5).
- Most parents think the government regularly inspects child care programs (67 percent of all families, 73 percent of families with children under age 5).
- The majority of parents think that all child care programs are required to be licensed (55 percent think that is true for most programs, 23 percent think that is true for some).

Specific Categorical Requirements:

Basic Training: 94 percent of all parents (96 percent of parents with children under age 5) support requiring child care providers to have basic training in health and safety and child development before working with children.

Quality Standards: 94 percent of all parents support requiring states to have quality standards in place to ensure the health and safety of all children.

Background Checks: 92 percent of all parents (95 percent of parents with children under age 5) support requiring background checks using finger prints for child care providers caring for unrelated children.

Inspections: 89 percent of all parents (same for parents with children under age 5) support requiring states to inspect all child care programs.

Ongoing Training: 88 percent of all parents (92 percent of parents with children under age 5) support requiring ongoing training for child care providers every year.

Licensing: 84 percent of all parents (88 percent of parents with children under age 5) support requiring states to license all child care for unrelated children.

Affordability: 84 percent of all families (89 percent of families with children under age 5) support requiring states to help low- and middle-income families pay for child care.

The reality:

The reality is the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) does not require a background check for child care providers. The law does not have minimum health and safety protections for children. It does not have any minimum training requirements for providers. It does not have an inspection requirement to ensure compliance with state laws. As a result, state laws vary greatly and many children are left to chance.

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Parents are Willing to Chip In . . .

- There was strong support among parents to provide increased funding to improve the quality of child care by paying \$10 more in taxes each year (73 percent of all parents, 78 percent of parents with children under age 5).
- Support was still strong, but slightly less for increasing taxes by \$10 a year to reduce the cost of child care (65 percent of all parents, 71 percent of parents with children under age 5).

NACCRRRA Recommendations:

Reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in the 112th Congress to strengthen the quality of child care that all children access:

- Set clear expectations about what quality means and establish a floor for what is minimally acceptable to ensure that children in child care are safe and in a setting to promote their healthy development.
- Require all paid child care providers who regularly care for unrelated children (as a business) to have a comprehensive background check, including federal and state criminal record checks using fingerprints.
- Require and enforce basic health and safety protections for children.
- Require child care providers to have 40 hours of initial training (primarily CPR and other basic health and safety training in addition to child development) and 24 hours of annual training.
- Require quarterly inspections of child care settings to ensure compliance with state laws (as Congress required of the military child care system).
- Require that parents have access to information about licensing and oversight. At a minimum, post inspection reports on line for easy parent access.
- Require CCDBG quality funds to be linked to measurable program outcomes, especially training and preparation of the workforce.
- Require states to include child care in disaster planning, response, and recovery efforts.
- Increase the quality set-aside to 12 percent of CCDBG, moving toward 25 percent over time, bringing child care on parity with Head Start.