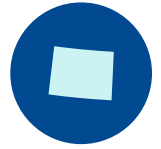




## Child Care Professionals Focus Group Results: Colorado



### Teacher vs. Provider



We had four family child care providers and three center-based teachers in the group. All participants agreed that they do teach, but the family child care providers felt strongly that while teaching is something they do, they see themselves as providers. Center based providers were fine with both terms.

"I don't qualify myself as a teacher, because I have not been to school to be a teacher. Do I feel like I'm adequately able to teach the children? Absolutely. But I don't take offense to that at all. I mean, I am a provider. I provide a home [for] them away from home. I provide the loving care and the quietness and all those things that surround it. So I'm not offended in any fashion by not being called a teacher, because I don't technically consider myself a teacher."

"I agree ... We're a family, we provide a family atmosphere in a home."



### Nutrition



Participants strongly agreed with the nutrition messaging. In particular, they agree that the children's experiences in child care can make an impact at home as well.

Participants indicated that parents ask them for recipes, so having a message that reminds them of their influence will hit home.

Participants stated that having nutrition standards are good, as it gives them some baseline for what healthy means. The group indicated that "healthy food" may be defined differently by different providers, so the standards will mean an even playing field and provide common meaning.

"I do agree with it that they are with us 10-hour days, and we do have a lot of influence on most children."

"But I think if kids can go home and say, Mom, don't buy those. Those are not the healthy ones. Buy these other ones that don't have the junk on the outside. Then it's a win-win for both of us. I know that I'm getting my point across to the kids and the kids are getting their point across to mom and dad."

"But I think knowing that you have those standards certainly keeps 99 percent of [providers] serving the nutrition that they should."

"Well, having it spelled out gives everyone a baseline. One person's idea of healthy eating and healthy foods is maybe completely different from another person's. So this gives a standard baseline for equality. Because if you met five different people, they would tell you five different things that they viewed as a healthy lifestyle."



## Active Play



Participants agreed that active play is important, and that aspect of the message resonated with the group. However, they felt that the message would be stronger if it specified what is meant by one hour per day of active play. There was concern that in the implementation such a standard, providers would interpret it as requiring one hour-long activity or an hour of activity in one stretch. The participants believe it would be a better message if it could also communicate that it is a total of one hour of active play per day.

The group made a distinction between two kinds of messaging needs. One, there is a need to create messages that drive demand for standards generally. Second, there is a need to create messages that help providers understand how standards will be implemented and measured. In both sets of messaging, especially around active play, it needs to be clear that the requirement is for a total of one hour per day, and that hours can include a mix of activities that are child-led and that are adult led.

Participants also did not like including language around structured and unstructured play; they believe that it gives the impression that providers need to engage children in one structured activity for an hour and was too confusing.

“I think, in my instance, I get out there and do what the kids are doing. I mean, if they’re riding trikes and one of them stops, I hop on a trike. If we’re running up and down the sidewalk, then I take my turn and I run up and down. It’s no different than modeling good eating habits. When I get outside, I try to play with the kids as best I can so they see me doing it, so they know that they’re not going to get hurt, they don’t need to be afraid, and they like the interaction.”

“And the kids, actually they encourage each other. They see each other. I mean, it’s a role model here again. Peer pressure as well. They help each other, too. Even a cardboard box makes them active. Absolutely; a cardboard box and duct tape. There is nothing wrong with that.”

“And, you know, active play is not only important outside but inside as well. So you do have to get creative during the times when you can’t go outside. And cardboard boxes are great inside, too.”

“[Rather than calling it structured or unstructured play] Maybe the word’s organized or unorganized. Because I know in my child care, we do have a specific time where we do organized activities, where we all play with the parachute or we do Simon Says or whatever. But we also have that unorganized (time) where the kids are dancing on their own or they’re riding the bikes on their own.”

“I feel like, when you have things like saying, structured hour, it just... the rigidity almost makes it less intentional almost. I just know from like a center perspective, we sometimes, when we’re going through the quality rating system, those kind of rigid amounts of time that you’re supposed to do things, and I feel like it almost gives a teacher or a provider a sense like, I have to come up with something for this. Whereas, as everyone has been saying, that’s just not the reality of how kids work.”

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## Screen Time



Participants made it clear that there needs to be a distinction between sedentary and interactive learning experiences involving screen time. Messages and the standards themselves should make that distinction.

In this discussion, there was a difference between the family child care providers and the center-based providers regarding screen time. What type of media that is used and the purposes were different; messages around standards. In fact, though we used the word standards in other messages (nutrition, active play), it was in this conversation where there was pushback on standards.

Participants recommended that it would be better to start with softer messages, around restricting screen time during meals, for example, rather than restricting overall use of media or setting firm time limits.

Providers also requested that complementary messaging be given to parents, so that parents and providers both help children approach screen time consistently and in a limited way.

Participants responded positively to the “balance” message—screen time is balanced with other activities. However, it was acknowledged that this may be due to of the high number of family child care providers in the group. Family child care homes were reported to allow more screen time than centers do, so the message fits with the family child care community, but less so with centers, which have more restrictions on screen time.

The group recommended saying “intentional learning with screen time” as a way to ensure that the screen time included educational components.

“I feel like it’s far more in tune to home providers than it is centers, because I don’t think centers really deal with screen time. I know, for me, as a provider, there are days where my sanity probably depends on whether or not we get a few minutes of screen time. I think we’re all in the same boat. There are days where you’re just like, all right, guys. You know what? You’ve been awesome. We are going to get 10 extra minutes of cartoons today. It gives us all a time to catch our breath. So I think this probably focuses more on home providers than it does on centers.”

“One of the things that I dislike is the word standard. I mean, I think, when they do those, it would be something where they would... we encourage providers to limit screen time. But when you talk about standards, it’s like, no. People freak out when they hear standard. We’ve got so many things new to us as providers that we have to do now that it just...you don’t want to scare people away.”

“As a home provider, when I think of screen time, I think of a child sitting on their iPad watching a video or using my phone to watch YouTube Kids or...That’s what I portray as screen time. When I...If I have ABC Kids on the laptop projected on the TV screen and we’re doing an activity associated with that or I have it on my laptop and kids are doing a preschool activity on it, technically it’s screen time, but I’m like Irene. I don’t really look at that as being screen time. I mean, it technically it is... [but] it’s very different from one to the other.”

