

Policy Case – Child Care

Background

A recent survey in your state found that about 28% of children in child care are in licensed child care programs. In response to this finding, a state legislator introduced a bill to ensure quality care for the other 72% of children not in licensed care. Non-licensed care includes family, friend and neighbor care.

The proposed legislation would require all child care providers serving two or more unrelated children to be licensed by the state. The bill would also require child care providers to comply with applicable state regulations and to adopt a standards-based model of care.

Child care advocates and providers are divided over this proposal. Some strongly support expanding licensed, regulated and standards-based child care. Others strongly support maintaining a role for family, friend and neighbor-based care. Regardless of where your colleagues stand on this proposal, they share a number of questions and concerns.

For example, what role should government, child care advocates and families play in making decisions about what is best for children? How should factors such as cultural differences, socioeconomic status and research on early childhood brain development be taken into account? And everyone seems concerned about cost. Child care is expensive. A recent university study in one state found that low income families with young children, those living at or below 200% of poverty, spent 32% of their family income on child care.

Discussion

1. Why might we want to expand licensed, regulated and standards-based child care?
2. Why might we want to preserve family, friend and neighbor-based child care?