

Bright from the Start:
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
Key Findings from the Georgia Study of Early Care and Education: Family Child Care

Introduction

- Nationally renowned researchers from FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have conducted three statewide studies of quality across Georgia. Together, the three studies summarize the quality of the early care and education environment in Georgia.
- The first two studies, released in March 2010, focused on quality in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms and quality in preschool and infant/toddler classrooms in child care centers. These studies found that improvements were needed, especially in infant/toddler classrooms.
- The third study, released May 2011, focused on quality of family child care. As with the other two studies, this study utilized a representative sample so that results can be generalized to the population of family child care homes.
- The study used common observational tools that measure varying aspects of quality and can be used to compare results to other states. Observers used *the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (FCCERS-R).
- These studies have been conducted independent of DECAL, and participants were guaranteed confidentiality.

Key Findings

- Observed quality in family child care homes was low.
 - Slightly more than three quarters of the programs fell into the low quality range, with the remaining 23% falling into the medium quality range. There were not any programs that were in the high quality range.
 - On a scale of 1 to 7, the average FCCERS-R score was 2.5.
 - The FCCERS-R rigorously measures many aspects of quality; without coordinated supports, it is very difficult for programs to score in the high range on many of the indicators.
- Many of the specific practices observed in homes underscore the low quality of the family child care homes.
 - In 45% of the homes a book was not read to the child during the three-hour (on average) observation, and in 39% of the homes children did not draw, color or write.
 - In 44% of the homes, children did not participate in gross motor activities, either indoors or outdoors.
- While the overall education level was higher than expected for family child care providers, specific education in early childhood was lacking.
 - 80% of providers reported educational attainment greater than a high school diploma.
 - 48% had attended some college, 20% had an associate's degree, and 11% had a bachelor's degree or higher. However, only 7% of these degrees were with a major in early childhood.
 - Concerning credentials, 9% reported obtaining a CDA, 19% had a Technical Certificate of Credit, and 5% had a Technical College Diploma.
- On the day of the observation, 40% of family child care homes cared for at least one child for whom they were not paid.

- Family child care homes provide an important service to young children and their families.
 - Nationally, 14% of infants, 19% of toddlers and 13% of three and four year olds are cared for in a home by someone other than a relative.
 - Nationally, about one quarter of children are in a family child care home at some point during their first five years of life.
 - In Georgia, 41% of family child care homes provide second-shift care and 25% provide weekend care. These are times when childcare centers are typically not open for business.
- Although the study was not designed to make statistically significant comparisons, the observed quality in family child care was lower than Pre-K, preschool and infant/toddler classrooms.

Recommendations/Changes

- The overall findings concerning quality are concerning. DECAL and our partners are coordinating many efforts to improve the overall quality in family child care homes.
 - In contrast to previous years, all registered family child care providers are now receiving on-site monitoring and technical assistance through their licensing consultants twice a year.
 - Beginning in February 2009, new Family Day Care Home applicants are now required to have obtained 20 hours of Department Approved pre-service training in early childhood as well as business administration topics.
 - New applicants for Family Day Care Home registration must possess a Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent credential and a pre-registration visit is conducted by a BFTS licensing consultant prior to the issuance of a FDCH registration certificate.
 - The Infant Toddler Specialist Network, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is providing direct services in the form of increased training and on-site technical assistance to providers.
 - DECAL contracts with the six child care resource and referral agencies to address benchmarks related to national accreditation specific to family child care providers.
 - The Quality Continuum, currently being piloted, is being revised to include measures and benchmarks specific to family child care providers.
- This study was sampled before the new rule took effect that requires new family child care providers to have a minimum of a CDA credential.
 - DECAL has several initiatives in place to assist new and existing family child care providers in achieving their CDA or higher credential. These include the FIRST Program, funded through ARRA, and the ongoing SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES programs.
- DECAL has made available many resources, both through the department website and through Best Practices Training at Georgia State University, to help family child care providers gain access to information regarding developmentally appropriate activities. Birth-to-eight standards are currently being reviewed, and any subsequent revisions will be made available to family child care providers.

Conclusions

- This scientific study contributes to the overall knowledge of quality in early care and learning environments across the state. DECAL does not dispute the integrity of the research or the findings.
- While observed quality is low for family child care in Georgia, DECAL is committed to improving quality in all early care and learning environments. This includes specific efforts targeted to the family child care population.
- The lead researchers commend DECAL for asking the tough questions related to quality in these difficult times.