

NC Early Care & Education Study: Support and Preservation for Family Child Care Providers

Family child care (FCC) homes are a type of home-based early care and education in which providers care for children in their own homes. In North Carolina, these providers may care for two to nine children for at least 4 hours a day, with up to five of those children under the age of 5.

As highlighted in the **2022/2023 NC Early Care and Education Workforce Study**¹, the number of FCC homes in North Carolina decreased from 1,500 in 2019 to 1,200 in 2023. During the same period, the number of children under 5 served in these homes dropped from 6,300 to 4,800. In 2020, the North Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Council cited several contributing factors to this decline, including:

- Low compensation
- Regulatory challenges (often designed with centers in mind)
- Decreased enrollment
- Retirement of long-time providers²

Despite these challenges, FCC homes continue to be a viable source of care for families with non-traditional work schedules, those in low-income and/or child care deserts, as well as those who prefer a familial style of care or who have specific cultural or language needs and preferences³.

This policy brief aims to look at issues of retention, wages and development reported by FCC providers in the 2022/2023 NC Early Care and Education Workforce Study through surveys and personal accounts in interviews and focus groups.

More than 400 FCC providers serving children under 5 in licensed programs participated in the 2022/2023 NC early care and education workforce study. As depicted in Table 1, FCC Providers self-reported wages trailed behind administrators and teaching staff, with a median hourly wage of \$10.20 compared to \$21.63/hour for administrators, \$15.00/hour for teachers, and \$13.00/hour for teacher assistants.

Table 1: Self Reported Earnings of the Early Care and Education Workforce

	2019* Wage in 2023 Dollars	2023 Wage	Percent Change 2019 - 2023
90 th Percentile Wage: Teacher	\$22.13	\$20.00	-9.6%
50 th Percentile Wage: Teacher	\$14.35	\$15.00	4.5%
10 th Percentile Wage: Teacher	\$10.72	\$10.50	-2.1%
90 th Percentile Wage: Teacher Assistant	\$17.23	\$17.00	-1.3%
50 th Percentile Wage: Teacher Assistant	\$13.11	\$13.00	-0.8%
10 th Percentile Wage: Teacher Assistant	\$9.63	\$10.00	3.8%
90 th Percentile Wage: Administrator	\$38.95	\$33.75	-13.4%
50 th Percentile Wage: Administrator	\$22.91	\$21.63	-5.6%
10 th Percentile Wage: Administrator	\$14.14	\$14.00	-1.0%
90 th Percentile Wage: FCC Provider	\$18.74	\$17.90	-4.5%
50 th Percentile Wage: FCC Provider	\$10.83	\$10.20	-5.8%
10 th Percentile Wage: FCC Provider	\$5.61	\$5.60	-0.2%

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Despite low wages, FCC providers reported offering critical services to families, as over 87% provided evening care, 64% provided drop-in care and 41% provided overnight care to children in their programs. Sizeable percentages of providers also provided care on legal holidays, weekends and for sick children. As part of the study, 45 providers participated in either a focus group or an interview to share their experiences in the field throughout the pandemic. One educator stated in a focus group:

“There is no alternative. We are the administrators, we’re the educators, we’re the maintenance crew.”

-FCC provider focus group, statewide

Current Efforts and the Path Forward

Funding and a formal framework of support are needed to ensure the compensation and well-being of FCC providers. In the meantime, there are current programs within North Carolina that are working to provide a network of support. The NC CCR&R Council is currently working on the Family Child Care Project³ based within the Southwestern Child Development Commission (SWCDC). This project aims to create a network of FCC providers, FCC consultants and individuals with expertise in business models, professional development and technical assistance. Making sure that FCC providers are recognized as early childhood professionals is a task that we can all amplify. Ask your local CCR&R about the FCC providers in your area and about the unique services that they provide and encourage your friends and family to enroll their children in your local FCC homes.

What have you noticed in your own community regarding FCC providers and the services they offer to families? *Please share with us any practices you think should be elevated and implemented. All together, we are stronger to better support the well-being of early childhood educators, young children and their families.*

¹ 2023 North Carolina Early Care and Education Workforce Study. earlyyearsnc.org/research/2023-north-carolina-child-care-workforce-study

² NC CCR&R Statewide Family Child Care Home Initiative. 2020. Family Child Care Home Project Report. NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education.

³ Southwestern Child Care Development Commission. 2024. NC CCR&R Family Child Care Resource Guide. NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education.