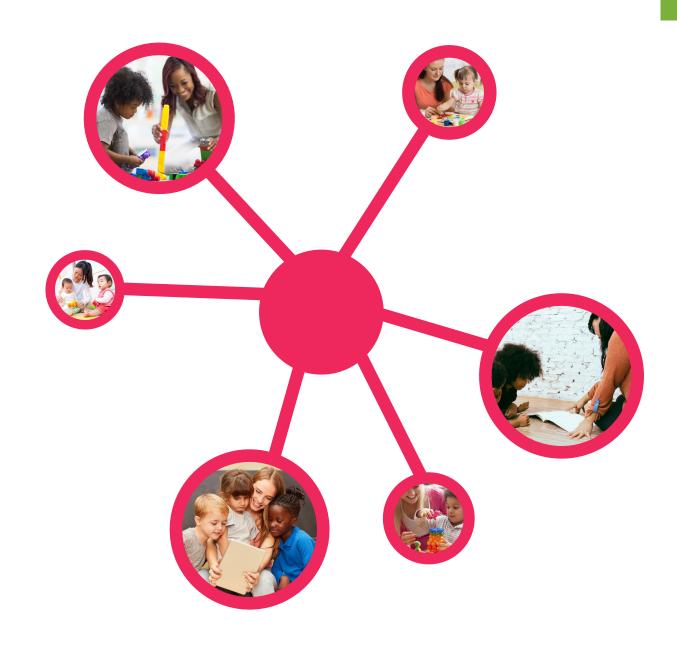# INSIDE FAMILY CHILD CARE NETWORKS: SUPPORTING QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Findings from The National Study of Family Child Care Networks, Case Studies

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PREFACE

The case studies described in this report were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the findings focus on in-person supports for family child care educators such as visits to homes and training sessions. While some of the recommended practices that emerge from this report may not be feasible during the pandemic, we hope that findings can inform broader policy and program decisions about the types of supports that family child care educators need and that are most likely to contribute to positive outcomes for children and families.

INSIDE FAMILY CHILD CARE NETWORKS:
SUPPORTING QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES & TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Home-based child care (HBCC), non-parental care provided in the home of a regulated family child care educator (FCC) or an unregulated family, friend, or neighbor caregiver (FFN), is the most common child care arrangement for children under age five in the U.S. (National Survey of Early Care and Education [NSECE] Project Team 2015a). HBCC settings are more likely to serve infants, toddlers, and children who live in poverty as well as families who need care outside of traditional hours (Laughlin, 2013; NSECE Project Team, 2015b, 2013; Porter et al., 2010). The widespread use of HBCC has heightened concern about the quality of care that these educators offer. At the same time, there is a documented decline of regulated FCC in the U.S. (NCECQA, 2020) which suggests that sustainability of FCC settings as well as the quality of these settings are critical issues for this sector of the early childhood workforce.

HBCC or FCC networks (FCCN) – organizations that deliver a combination of services over time with specialized staff whose primary responsibility is working with HBCC providers – have emerged as a strategy for addressing these two broad issues (Bromer & Porter, 2019). The body of research on network effectiveness is limited. Only two studies have specifically examined effects on quality in regulated FCC settings (Bromer et al., 2009; Porter & Reiman, 2016). Both found positive results: FCC educators who participated in networks were more likely to provide higher quality care than those who did not.

This report presents findings from in-depth case studies of two FCC networks (FFCN) that serve regulated FCC educators – Little People FCCN and Downtown FCCN . The study sought to understand approaches to service delivery implementation, the experiences of educators who received network services and staff who delivered these services, and the relationship between network service delivery and both quality caregiving and business sustainability in affiliated FCC homes.

- In-depth interviews and surveys with FCCN staff offered a portrait of how services are delivered to FCC educators as well as insights into the types of relationships that networks build with affiliated FCC educators

- In-depth interviews and surveys with FCC educators offered insights into educator experiences offering child care and working with a FCCN around quality and sustainability.

- Observations of quality in FCC homes offered data on caregiver-child interactions, materials available for learning, and health and safety materials and practices in the home child care setting.

- Focus groups with parents of children enrolled in FCC homes shed light on how FCCNs interact with and support families.

A total of 105 FCC educators, 12 staff members, and 16 parents participated in the study across the two networks. Data were collected in 2019 through in-person site visits, telephone interviews, surveys, and in-person observations.

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SNAPSHOT OF THE TWO NETWORKS

The two networks served different types of communities, children, families, and educators. They also operated in different state policy contexts (see Appendix D for comparison tables).

- **Little People FCCN** was located in a suburban area and served mostly white, middle- and upper-class professional families with infants and toddlers. Families paid private tuition to the network which paid the educators for their child care work. More than half of the FCC educators who participated in the study self-identified as immigrants from Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, and many reported that English was not their first language. More than half had a college or post-graduate degree. Network supports included visits to FCC homes, training workshops, an apprenticeship program to help new educators become licensed, help with administrative and business aspects of running a child care program, and coaching for educators who participated in the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). In addition to network supports, Little People FCCN also served as a licensing agency, responsible for monitoring compliance with state regulations.

- **Downtown FCCN** operated in a small city and served families, many living in poverty, who were eligible for child care subsidies, were TANF priority populations, and received child welfare services. The majority of educators self-identified as Latinx. Over two thirds had less than a college degree with most having a high school degree or GED as their highest level of education. Downtown FCCN administered subsidy payments to FCC educators as part of a statewide infrastructure of supports for FCC but was not responsible for monitoring compliance with state standards. The network offered supports including twice-monthly visits to FCC homes, a training series for new providers, professional development, and opportunities for community engagement. The network also had staff who offered family support services to parents of children enrolled in affiliated FCC homes.

KEY THEMES & FINDINGS

The ways that networks deliver supports may contribute to the quality of observed educator-child interactions and the child care environment. Educators at both networks demonstrated high-quality engagement with children's learning and learning materials. There were differences in the quality of nurturing practices. Downtown FCCN educators had lower ratings on nurturing practices, with scores in the poor range, compared to Little People FCCN educators, whose nurturing practices with children were rated as acceptable. Some of these differences may reflect educators' levels of education as well as variations in group sizes and ages of children in care. On average, FCC homes affiliated with Little People FCCN enrolled fewer and younger children than FCC homes affiliated with Downtown FCCN.

Differences in quality scores may also be related to approaches to service delivery. The vast majority of educators at Little People FCCN reported that specialist visits focused on discussions about the children in their care, including child development, and the child care environment. Visits at Downtown FCCN, by contrast, primarily focused on crisis management, behavioral challenges of children in care, and personal needs of educators and families. Downtown FCCN's focus on challenges may have been a response to its population of children and families, who experienced many stressors including poverty, trauma, and homelessness.

> *"If we know that a provider is a struggling with doing art with infants and toddlers, we're going to plan a training on that."*
>
> *Little People FCCN Specialist*

Network approaches to relationship-building may contribute to health and safety compliance in FCC homes. Educators at both Little People FCCN and Downtown FCCN had high levels of compliance around health and safety practices overall. However, there were differences in the proportions of educators whose homes had red flag items (items that had the potential to cause serious injury or death). Lower proportions of Little People educators (one third) did not meet red flag health and safety indicators compared to two thirds of Downtown educators. The most common red flag items were lack of electrical outlet covers, gates on stairs for mobile infants and toddlers, and accessible electrical cords.

These differences may be related to the network monitoring and enforcement roles. As a licensing agency, Little People FCCN had an intentional and frequent focus on monitoring, which may explain the educators' high health and safety scores. On the other hand, the surprise unannounced visits created tensions with some educators and may have worked against the predictability and

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consistency of visits that are essential elements of building strong relationships. By contrast, Downtown FCCN was not tasked with this enforcement role, which may have resulted in less attention to health and safety checks and lower scores. Instead, Downtown FCCN focused on building relationships with educators, which may have created tensions around giving difficult feedback about potential health and safety violations.

> *"If there was not this training, I wouldn't know anything, what's going on, or the rules, or the qualifications — what I need for myself, how to take care of the children, to understand them, and to see also if there is something going on at their home, the way to talk to them, the way to communicate with them."*
> *FCC Educator at Little People FCCN*

Networks provided different kinds of support for participation in QRIS. Educators at Little People FCCN received additional visits from a staff member whose primary responsibility was supporting them in the state's voluntary QRIS system. Educators reported that her support helped them overcome initial fears about participating and made it easy to advance to higher levels. Downtown FCCN child care specialists were expected to help educators, who were automatically registered as Level 1 in the state's QRIS, to move to higher levels, and the training coordinator sometimes provided workshops on specific QRIS topics. Yet few educators were willing to move beyond Level 1, and neither specialists nor educators mentioned this support in the interviews.

> *"I will tell them that we all need to keep up with our professionalism... this is not just simple babysitting. We have a lot of responsibilities here."*
>
> *Little People FCCN Specialist*

Network business supports may contribute to the sustainability of FCC businesses. We found that differences in the networks' approaches to business support may have influenced the sustainability of FCC businesses. Little People FCCN offered parent orientations about its child care services and lists of educators who might meet parent needs, but the network expected educators to recruit families. By comparison, Downtown FCCN placed families with educators through its state contracts, and had specific staff who helped with referral and enrollment.

These differences may have affected FCC enrollment, which, in turn, may have contributed to the income educators could earn from their child care businesses. A significant proportion of Little People FCCN educators operated at less than full licensed capacity, which may have meant less income. The relatively high fees paid by parents, however, may have compensated for lower enrollment. Educators at Downtown FCCN, by contrast, were typically full, but the state reimbursement rate was low, which may have presented challenges for educators with limited financial resources.

Direct financial assistance may also help educators maintain sustainable businesses because it can offset the often-limited income that FCC businesses generate. Both networks in our study offered financial assistance to affiliated educators. Little People FCCN absorbed the cost of liability insurance for FCC educators and offered emergency funding to cover the cost of substitutes if educators had to close their business. The network also facilitated access to state-funded scholarships to complete college courses. Downtown FCCN provided no-default loans of up to $5000 for program and home repairs. Like Little People, Downtown also facilitated educators' access to state grants for materials and scholarships for college courses, a degree, or a Child Development Associate credential.

> *"They taught you how to build your business in a way where you make money, not lose money. For example, if I make $400, I can't spend $500, it would defeat the purpose. So, you learn to budget and find ways to make things work for better profit."*
>
> *Educator at Downtown FCCN*

Culturally-responsive network supports may shape educator engagement in services. Some research suggests that culturally-responsive service delivery may shape educator engagement and quality of care (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017), although we do not have evidence from this study about how this aspect of service delivery may have related to quality. Downtown FCCN had an intentional approach to culturally-responsive support. There was a strong cultural match between staff and educators; all of the staff

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self-identified as women of color, consistent with the population of educators in the network. Educators reported positive relationships with staff, including trust and respect, as well as comfort and communication. All staff indicated that they provided personal support to educators.

By contrast, Little People FCCN's approach was less intentional. Most of the staff at Little People FCCN were white women serving educators who were mostly immigrants from the Middle East. Both specialists and educators reported that cultural and linguistic differences sometimes interfered with effective support.

> *"For 30 years, we have been creating strong relationships. Sometimes we feel like a family... When a provider is going through something, they receive the affection and the support.*
> *We feel like this is more deep than just work. It goes more deeply."*
> *Downtown FCCN Director*

Network support for families of children in FCC homes differed across the two networks.
Another notable difference between the two networks was the role of the network in supporting parents and families of children enrolled in affiliated FCC homes. Little People FCCN's referral service for families and processing of parent fees were helpful for families seeking child care, but the majority of network staff and support services were targeted towards FCC educators.

By contrast, Downtown FCCN delivered supports to both FCC educators and to families of children in their programs. The network had specialized staff whose job was to support and connect families in the subsidy and child welfare systems to resources, including a social worker. Another core component of service delivery focused on families was provision of transportation to and from child care.

> *"They are opening doors for you that otherwise, you would not have been able to open. I learned so much with these people, and to do so many other things."*
> *Downtown FCCN Parent*

Neither network offered consistent evidence-based supports such as curriculum help or comprehensive services for children.
We found similar gaps in evidence-based services across both networks. Neither network offered consistent curriculum support for educators, which research indicates is a key feature of high-quality early care and education (Burchinal, 2018; NSECE, 2015b). Nor did we find evidence of delivery of comprehensive supports including developmental screening and mental health consultation for FCC educators such as those offered by FCCNs that operate within Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Neither network offered consistent and intentional reflective supervision for staff. Neither network had a strong infrastructure for reflective staff supervision, which is an essential component of staff support (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017). None of the staff at the two networks reported receiving intentional and regular opportunities to reflect on their work with educators and to think about strategies for improvement.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW NETWORKS CAN SUPPORT FCC QUALITY CAREGIVING

- **Help FCC educators with regular maintenance of health and safety practices.**
  Regardless of a network's enforcement role, network visits to FCC homes can help educators develop strategies and routines around maintenance of daily health and safety precautions and practices. Monitoring visits should help educators strategize systems and procedures for maintaining safe environments.

- **Increase access to high-quality materials for FCC homes including health and safety equipment and learning materials for different age groups.**
  Networks should consider providing funding for educators to purchase health and safety equipment for their FCC programs and developing lending libraries that allow access to materials such as puzzles, fine and large motor materials, and books for different age groups of children in care.

- **Partner with QRIS to offer support through trusted family child care specialists.**
  Networks may be well-positioned to offer targeted QRIS support around FCC participation in quality improvement. FCC educators may be more likely to engage in QRIS if the help comes from a trusted network rather than a state specialist.

- **Use culturally-sensitive practices to recruit, engage, and sustain FCC participation in networks and in quality improvement activities.**
  Culturally-responsive network staffing and approaches to supporting FCC educators may increase FCC engagement in network services. Networks should consider hiring staff who reflect the racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of educators and families served. Materials and trainings should be offered in languages that are preferred by educators and families.

- **Engage in relationship-based practices with FCC educators combined with high-quality early childhood content.**
  Network supports may be most likely to shift FCC educator practices with children when they are rooted in strong, trusting relationships focused on how to translate child development content into evidence-based practices. Relationships without content may not improve quality and content without strong relationships may not engage educators in processes of improvement.

- **Support families of children in FCC homes through specialized staff and comprehensive services.**
  Networks have the potential to support families as well as FCC educators. Supporting families requires additional staffing and referral resources including social work staff, transportation, food, and housing supports as well as access to health services for children and families.

- **Offer training, support, and supervision to network staff who work directly with FCC educators.**
  Staff training, support, and supervision are key components of creating a network culture that values the process of quality improvement at all levels. Regular and intentional reflective supervision of all staff who work directly with FCC educators may help staff increase culturally responsive interactions, improve the quality of support offered, and intensify their focus on quality caregiving.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW NETWORKS CAN SUPPORT FCC SUSTAINABILITY

- **Develop contracts with state subsidy systems to increase recruitment and enrollment of families in FCC homes.**
  Contracts allow networks to guarantee a designated number of slots for children in affiliated FCC homes and to process parent subsidy payments for FCC educators. Contracts may be one strategy for supporting full enrollment in FCC homes.

- **Help FCC educators with required paperwork for licensing and subsidy participation.**
  Networks spend time helping educators with paperwork and other administrative tasks that licensing and subsidy systems require including keeping track of enrollment, child health records, and professional development hours. Networks may address barriers that educators face by translating materials into preferred languages of educators and families or offering computer support for accessing online trainings and applications.

- **Offer training on financial management and marketing strategies that go beyond recordkeeping and contracts with families.**
  Networks have the potential to help educators develop business skills and practices that are most likely to lead to sustainable operations. Educators may need technical assistance around marketing and recruitment strategies as well as financial management.

- **Offer financial assistance for home repairs and other infrastructure supports needed in FCC homes as well as for professional development.**
  FCC educators may need financial help to address the regular wear and tear on their homes that results from doing child care in a home setting. FCC educators may also need direct financial help to enroll in credential and college courses.

- **Facilitate formal peer support activities for FCC educators that support provider leadership and growth.**
  Formal peer support activities may lead to increased educator engagement in quality improvement as well as increased efficacy and professionalism. Networks that work with FCC educators as equal partners have opportunities to develop leadership in the field.

This case study contributes to the relatively small research base on how family child care networks support care and education for young children in FCC homes. The study shows how networks offer educators consistent and reliable support for their daily work with children and families. The study also highlights the ways that networks provide educators with a sense of professionalism through opportunities for skill and knowledge enhancement, peer to peer support, and business development. This report lays the groundwork for future research on network effectiveness. The current study suggests potential links between network practices and quality, including educator-child interactions, health and safety practices, and the child care learning environment. The approaches to network support described in these case studies may be the first step towards identifying models that can be replicated in demonstration studies that examine a range of possible outcomes for participating educators, children, and families.

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Home-based child care (HBCC), non-parental care provided in the home of a regulated licensed family child care provider (FCC) or an unregulated family, friend, or neighbor caregiver (FFN), is the most common child care arrangement for children under five in the U.S. There are far more infants and toddlers in these settings than in centers (National Survey of Early Care and Education [NSECE] Project Team, 2013). Moreover, families of color, families living in poverty and those who in rural areas, and families who need child care outside of traditional hours are more likely to use HBCC (Laughlin, 2013; NSECE Project Team, 2015a; Porter et al., 2010).

The widespread use of HBCC, especially for very young children who are at risk for poor outcomes, has heightened concern about the quality of care that these providers offer. Research indicates that there is wide variation in HBCC quality as there is in centers (Bassok et al., 2016), but studies consistently find that HBCC providers rate lower on global quality measures than centers (Porter et al., 2010). There are also growing concerns about trends in the supply of HBCC, particularly FCC. Nearly one in two licensed FCC providers left the field between 2008 and 2017 (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance [NCECQA], 2020), and the number of providers in the Child Care Development Fund subsidy system dropped by approximately the same percentage between FY 2011 and FY2016 (Office of Child Care, 2014; Office of Child Care, 2019).

HBCC networks or FCC networks – organizations that deliver a combination of services over time with specialized staff whose primary responsibility is working with HBCC providers – have emerged as a strategy for addressing the dual issues of quality and supply (Bromer & Porter, 2019). The body of research on network effectiveness is limited. Only two studies have specifically examined effects on quality (Bromer et al., 2009; Porter & Reiman, 2016). Both found positive results: FCC providers who participated in networks were more likely to provide higher quality care than those who did not.

Other research points to the potential of the services that networks offer – visits to providers' homes, training workshops, and peer support – for improving provider and quality outcomes. These services may contribute to provider knowledge and support provider emotional and psychological well-being which may be related to the quality of care provided (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; Forry et al., 2013; Gray, 2015; Jeon et al., 2018; McCabe & Cochran, 2008; Porter et al., 2010; Porter & Reiman, 2016). Still other research suggests that supports such as help with marketing to attract enrollment, collecting fees from parents, and budgeting and financial management can enhance provider's business skills and capacity to maintain sustainable programs (Etter & Cappizano, 2018; Stoney & Blank, 2011; Zeng et al., 2020).

The ways in which services are implemented is another aspect of service delivery that may shape quality, provider, child, and family outcomes. Implementation science suggests that factors such as fidelity to an existing model, frequency and dosage of services, staff training, and organizational capacity and culture may all contribute to the quality of support services (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; Paulsell et al., 2010). Research from related fields such as home visiting suggests that programs that adhere to a theory of change model, offer intensive service delivery by well-trained and prepared staff, use a relationship-based approach to services, and match the needs and interests of those served (families or providers) are most likely to produce positive outcomes (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017).

The current study is the third in a suite of reports from Erikson Institute's National Study of Family Child Care Networks. Initiated in 2017, the National Study consisted of three components: 1) a survey of networks across the U.S. to document the network landscape; 2) qualitative interviews with a sub-sample of network directors to examine implementation of services; and 3) in-depth case studies of two networks to understand how networks deliver services and the relationship between service delivery and quality of caregiving among affiliated providers. The first report, Mapping the Landscape of Family Child care Networks (Bromer & Porter, 2019), based on a survey sample of 156 organizations that were broadly defined as networks, provided insights into the kinds of organizations that operate networks and the services they provide. The second report, Delivering Services to Meet the Needs of Home-based Child Care Providers (Porter & Bromer, 2020), which was based on in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of 47 network directors, examined the fit between perceived provider challenges and needs, including licensing, subsidy, and quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) demands, and network supports that are most likely to shape provider, child, and family outcomes.

This report presents findings from in-depth case studies of two family child care networks (FCCNs). Findings are based on surveys and interviews with family child care educators[1] and network staff specialists at the two networks that sought to better understand how networks approach and deliver services as well as the relationships between educators and staff that may influence the effectiveness of service delivery. It also includes observations of caregiver-child interactions and child care environments to examine possible associations with network characteristics and quality.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We aimed to address several broad questions in these case studies:

- What types of support services do the networks offer and what are the experiences of educators who receive these supports?

- How do the networks approach service delivery implementation and what are the experiences of staff who deliver services to educators?

- How do educators and staff perceive the quality of staff-educator relationships?

- What is the observed quality of caregiver-child interactions among affiliated family child care educators at each network?

- What is the relationship between support services and caregiving quality?

- Which services have the greatest potential for quality improvement and business sustainability?

ROAD MAP TO THE REPORT

The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter I describes our data collection process and analysis including measures and sample description. Chapters II and III present findings from each of the case studies. Each includes detailed descriptions of the educator and staff characteristics, educator participation and engagement in services, network supports for improving quality and sustainability, approaches to service delivery, staff-educator relationships, and results of the caregiving quality observations. Chapter IV compares findings from the two case studies, examining the strengths and weaknesses of each network and their potential for influencing quality and sustainability of family child care. The report concludes with implications for program and policy development.

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1   Throughout this report, we use the term "educator" to describe family child care providers, not only because it more closely captures the essential role that these individuals play in the lives of children, but also because it is the way that providers have come to see themselves. We only use "provider" in the direct quotes from educators or staff.

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CHAPTER I.
RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

We used a multi-site case study approach (Creswell, 2013) to examine two approaches to operating a family child care network. The case study method allowed us to gather data from multiple sources within each network and to view educators' experiences within each of these network contexts. It also offered an opportunity to take a more in-depth look at how network services are implemented and the experiences of participants within the network setting. The multi-site context allowed us to compare services, approaches, and experiences across the two networks.

RECRUITMENT

We used several criteria to select the two networks for the case studies. One criterion was longevity, because we sought to examine service delivery and approaches that organizations had consistently implemented over time. Another was the number of educators served, because we needed a large enough sample to collect meaningful data on educators and staff as well as observed quality. A third criterion was the community contexts in which the networks operated, because we aimed to better understand possible differences between networks that served families with different socio-economic characteristics.

In fall 2018 we invited Little People Family Child Care Network (Little People FCCN) and Downtown Family Child Care Network (Downtown FCCN) to participate in the study.[1] Each met the criteria for a network: "an organization that offers HBCC providers a menu of quality improvement services and supports including technical assistance, training, and/or peer support delivered by a paid staff member" (Bromer & Porter, 2019, p.1). In addition, each organization was a stand-alone network that supported only HBCC providers, unlike other networks that may be housed in umbrella organizations and also support center-based programs. The research team had previous relationships with both networks, who had participated in prior research projects including the National Study of Family Child Care Networks. Both networks were long standing organizations that had not engaged in any formal evaluations.

The two sites were ideal for a case study approach. Each operated in a different policy context and served different populations of children and families. Little People FCCN primarily served middle-income families and only accepted private pay for child care, while Downtown FCCN primarily served low-income families who used a child care subsidy. The directors and staff at the networks helped recruit staff, educators, and parents through emails, phone calls, and fliers for each activity in the case study research.

PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

Data collection took place in spring and summer 2019. We used four data collection approaches in the case studies: 1) surveys of staff and educators; 2) interviews with staff, educators, and directors; 3) focus groups with parents; and 4) observations of educators' caregiving quality. The study received approval from Erikson Institute's IRB. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

SURVEYS

Two surveys were developed for this study to assess staff and educator experiences. The Staff Experiences Survey assessed staff experiences delivering services, their perceptions of relationships with educators, and experiences of support and supervision at the network and perceptions of organizational culture. Organizational culture includes psychological safety, which covers how comfortable staff feel taking risks, making mistakes, and asking for support, which research shows is related to effective job performance in other employment contexts (Edmondson, 1999). The Educator Experiences Survey assessed educator interest and investment in network services, staff-educator relationship formation and development, and educators' level of engagement and comfort (or "fit") with services received. The staff-educator relationships component of both surveys used the Relationship-Based Support for Home-Based Child Care Assessment Tool (RBS-HBCC: Bromer, Ragonese-Barnes, et al., 2020) which examines emotional connection, goal setting and collaboration, and responsiveness within these professional relationships.

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1   We have changed the names of the networks to protect their confidentiality.

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Online surveys were sent to staff specialists who worked directly with educators and to all educators at each network. Surveys were also available in hard copy for educators or staff who preferred that format. All educator surveys were available in English or Spanish. Educators and staff who completed the surveys were eligible to participate in a raffle for a $50 gift card.

INTERVIEWS

During spring 2019 we conducted hour-long telephone interviews with a sub-sample of FCC educators who were affiliated with each of the networks and who responded to our survey. The educator interview was designed to learn about their experiences doing family child care, their experiences with the network services, and the relationships they had formed with network staff. All interviews with educators were conducted in English or Spanish. All interview participants received a $50 gift card for their participation.

We also conducted interviews with staff who worked directly with educators at both networks during site visits. Staff interviews focused on the requirements of the staff's job role, their experiences working at the network, and the relationships they formed with FCC educators. Staff received a $25 gift card for their participation.

Two interviews were conducted with network directors. The initial interview, which was scheduled at the beginning of the study, focused on the network's mission and services. Follow-up interviews were conducted after the case study site visits and were intended to clarify answers to questions that emerged from the site visit data collection.

At Downtown FCCN we interviewed community partners including the director of a local housing agency and a public school social worker who had long-term partnerships with the network around serving the tightknit "Downtown" community. The interviews focused on partners' perceptions of the network's role in the local community.

FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted focus group discussions with parents at each network site in English and Spanish. The parent focus group protocol focused on parents' experiences using FCC and their reasons for choosing their educator as well as their interactions with the network and their perceptions of network support. Parents were recruited through network staff. The two-hour discussions were conducted in English and Spanish. Parents received a $25 gift card for their participation.

QUALITY OBSERVATIONS IN FCC HOMES

We used the Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives (CCAT-R: Porter et al., 2006; 2007), an observational instrument designed to assess quality in HBCC settings. Originally intended to measure quality in relative child care settings, the CCAT-R has been used in several evaluations of HBCC, including family child care educators (Forry et al., 2011). Unlike global quality measures such as the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scales (FCCERS: Harms et al., 2007), the CCAT-R focuses on interactions around communication and engagement between the educator and a single focal child. Four types of educator-child interactions are assessed: Caregiver Nurturing, Caregiver Engagement, Bidirectional Communication, and Unidirectional Communication (see Table 1.1 and Appendix A for definitions). In order to understand quality in a mixed-age group of children in FCC settings, we chose to observe the quality of educator-child interactions with two focal children – the oldest closest to age 5 and the youngest in the setting. The CCAT-R uses time sampling to capture the frequency of educator-child interactions in timed cycles during a two-hour in-person observation. In addition, the CCAT-R includes a Health and Safety Checklist that assesses health and safety practices and equipment, including the presence of "red flag" items that could cause death or serious injury to children in care. The Materials Checklist assesses the availability (not quantity) of materials in the child care home.

TABLE 1.1 CHILD CARE ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR RELATIVES (CCAT-R) CAREGIVER-CHILD INTERACTIONS CONSTRUCTS OVERVIEW	
Caregiver Nurturing	Measures the caregiver's support for social/emotional development
Caregiver Engagement in Activity with Focus Child	Measures interactions that promote cognitive and physical development
Caregiver/Child Bidirectional Communication	Measures interactions around language between the caregiver and the child (i.e. reciprocal interactions), which supports language and social/emotional development
Caregiver Unidirectional Communication with Focus Child	Measures the caregiver's talk to the child, which supports language development

Educators were asked in the interview if they were interested in participating in an observation. We also recruited educators for the observations through their child care specialists. Some educators who had not completed the online Educator Experiences Survey or the telephone interview participated in the observations and completed a short demographic survey that was administered during the observation visit. Each educator received a $100 gift card as an incentive for participation in the observation.

SAMPLE

Detailed sample descriptions for each network site are described in the case study descriptions below and in Appendix A. A total of 105 educators participated in at least one study activity. Nearly all network staff who worked directly with FCC educators at both networks responded to the Staff Experiences Survey and participated in the interviews. Half of the educators at each network (50% at Little People FCCN and 48% at Downtown FCCN)--responded to the survey. Survey respondents were not necessarily representative of educators at the networks as the survey was sent to every educator and was not designed to gather representative data. Additional educators who participated only in the observations completed a short demographic survey. Approximately 10 educators at each site participated in interviews. For Downtown FCCN, we also interviewed three community partners from local organizations and agencies.

DATA ANALYSIS

Audio recordings of interviews and focus groups were transcribed and transcripts were coded with NVIVO 10 qualitative analysis software. Codes were developed based on interview protocol questions and broad themes identified by the research team after initial review of the transcripts and memos. We initially used the same codes across data from both network sites. Emergent codes that were specific to each site were developed in subsequent rounds of coding. Inter-rater reliability of .80 was achieved for all coding. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all survey and observational data. (See Appendix A for more detail.)

We used constant comparative analysis and triangulation across multiple data sources to identify emerging themes about educator experiences with network supports and the connections between educator-staff relationships, quality caregiving, and support services (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Our case study approach, in which all data collection took place within two network sites, allowed us to view educator experiences and support processes at a micro-level both within each network and across both networks.

CHAPTER II.
LITTLE PEOPLE
FAMILY CHILD CARE NETWORK

Little People FCCN was founded in 1983 to help parents who were attending a local college find child care. Today it identifies as a shared service alliance, defined as an agency that helps child care programs with back-office, administrative and business supports. Little People serves several suburban communities in a metropolitan area. The network's mission is to support the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young children in high-quality FCC homes.

The network currently serves 92 FCC educators who are approved under state licensing and provides a range of services including visits to educator homes, training, peer support, business support and financial aid (Table 2.1). It is also a state licensing agency and performs regulatory functions around monitoring and compliance. Families who engage with the network for child care services do not qualify for child care subsidies and pay privately for child care. Most of the network's revenue comes from a percentage of parent fees.

Five staff specialists worked directly with caseloads of 17 to 24 educators. Four child care specialists were responsible for conducting licensing and monthly visits, and one quality specialist supported educators who participated in the state's QRIS, as well as the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). In addition to these five specialists, a workforce development coordinator was responsible for onboarding new educators, including orientation visits and trainings at the network.

TABLE 2.1 SERVICES OFFERED AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN	
Visits to Educators' Homes	Monthly visits; Annual safety inspection visit; 3 CACFP visits annually; QRIS coaching and visits
Training	Workshops or workshop series in evenings or weekends (English only)
Peer Support	40-hour peer-to-peer mentoring by a mentor prior to opening their FCC home, occasional mentoring afterwards; Provider Appreciation event; annual international potluck; networking at trainings
Business Support	Referrals for parents; invoicing of parent fees, payments to educators; training workshops on business management, marketing, and tax preparation; substitute pool
CACFP	Yes
Financial Support	Support with accessing public scholarships or grants for continued education; emergency fund for educators
Other Resources/Supports	Medication administration and health training provided by outside partners

CHARACTERISTICS OF NETWORK STAFF, FCC EDUCATORS, AND FAMILIES SERVED

The following section draws on survey and interview data from network staff and affiliated educators. Table 2.2 shows an overview of the study sample of staff, educators, and families at Little People FCCN.

TABLE 2.2 LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN SAMPLE	Participants in study
Total staff	**6**
Staff experiences survey	6
Staff interview	6
Total educators	**58**
Educator experiences survey	46
Educator demographic survey only	12
Educator interview[1]	12
Educator quality observations[2]	26
Total family members	**4**
Parent focus group	4

[1]The educator interviews are a subsample of the total survey sample;
[2]12 educators who participated in quality observations only completed an abbreviated demographic survey

STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

The five staff specialists and workforce development coordinator ranged in age from 40 to 67 at the time of our interviews (Appendix B, Table B.1). Four self-identified as white, one as Latinx, and the other as Asian or Pacific Islander. Two specialists had prior experience as FCC educators and others had experience teaching preschool or a background in social work. All staff members had a college degree or higher.

FCC EDUCATOR CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 58 FCC educators participated in the study. More than half of the educators identified as Asian or Pacific Islander and many were recent immigrants (Table 2.3). They ranged in age from 24 to 70. In the state, child care educators are required to be proficient in English, but the first language of educators varied and included Spanish, English, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Hindi, and Arabic.

Just over one third of educators had 11 to 20 years of experience, and an additional fifth had more than 20 years of experience. Close to half (47%) had worked with the network for more than 10 years. Just under one half (47%) reported a college or post-graduate degree, and a quarter had some college level coursework. Only 12% of educators reported significant economic hardship with most reporting some difficulty living on their household incomes. See Appendix B, Table B.2 for characteristics of educators by study component.

TABLE 2.3
CHARACTERISTICS OF FCC EDUCATOR STUDY SAMPLE AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Full Sample			Full Sample	
	%	(N)		%	(N)
Gender[1]			**Years as a family child care educator[1]**		
Female	100%	(54)	Less than 2 years	4%	(2)
Race/Ethnicity[2]			2-5 years	15%	(8)
Black or African American	6%	(3)	6-10 years	26%	(14)
White	13%	(7)	11-20 years	35%	(19)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	13%	(7)	More than 20 years	20%	(11)
Asian or Pacific Islander	68%	(36)	**Time spent with network[2]**		
Highest level of education[2]			6 months to 1 year	6%	(3)
High school diploma/GED or Less	26%	(14)	1-3 years	13%	(7)
Some college, no degree	26%	(14)	4-10 years	34%	(18)
Associate's degree	15%	(8)	More than 10 years	47%	(25)
Bachelor's degree	23%	(12)	**Other paid jobs[6]**		
Graduate degree	9%	(5)	Has another paid job	2%	(1)
College or graduate level coursework[3]			Does not have another paid job	98%	(50)
Child development or early childhood education	77%	(30)	**Difficulty level living on household income[6]**		
Psychology	18%	(7)	Not at all difficult	18%	(9)
Business or administration	10%	(4)	A little difficult	41%	(21)
Elementary education	10%	(4)	Somewhat difficult	29%	(15)
Social work	5%	(2)	Very difficult	8%	(4)
Nursing	8%	(3)	Extremely difficult	4%	(2)
None	15%	(6)			
Child development associate credential (CDA)*[4]				**Mean**	**Range**
Has CDA	40%	(17)	**Educator age (estimated from birth year)[7]**		
Does not have CDA	60%	(25)		51.16	24-70
Educator preferred language*[5]					
English only	60%	(27)			
English and one or more language	24%	(11)			
Other language only	16%	(7)			

*Educator Experiences Survey and demographic survey (N=58); [1]N=54; [2]N=53; [3]Out of educators who answered having completed at least some college for highest level of education (N=39); [4]N=42; [5]N=45; [6]N=51; [7]N=49; *Question not asked in demographic survey, all data comes from Educator Experiences Survey sample (N=46)*

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FCC educator motivations. A third of educators at Little People FCCN who responded to the Educator Experiences Survey reported wanting to do FCC in order to stay at home with their own children (Table 2.4). Another third reported that FCC was a personal calling for them and a quarter reported wanting to help children as a primary motivation. A majority reported wanting to continue FCC work as long as they were able.

TABLE 2.4 EDUCATOR MOTIVATIONS FOR DOING FCC AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Primary reason for doing work[1]		
To have a job that lets me work at home	33%	(14)
It is my personal calling or career	31%	(13)
To help children	24%	(10)
It is a step toward a related career	5%	(2)
To help children's parents	5%	(2)
To earn money	2%	(1)
Number of years intends to be an educator[1]		
One more year or less	0%	(0)
Two to five more years	7%	(3)
As long as I am able	79%	(33)
Not sure	14%	(6)

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=46); [1]N=42

Reasons for joining the network. The primary reason educators reported for joining the network was to improve the quality of care they offered children (Table 2.5). Just over half of educators who completed the survey reported wanting help working with parents and families and/or help managing a business and slightly more than a third reported wanting help with enrollment of children or having opportunities to meet other FCC educators.

TABLE 2.5 REASONS EDUCATORS PARTICIPATE IN LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Learn how to improve quality of care for children	83%	(38)
Get help working with parents and families	54%	(25)
Get help with managing business	52%	(24)
Increase enrollment or number of children in my care	37%	(17)
Meet other educators	35%	(16)
Obtain materials and equipment for my child care	26%	(12)

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=46)

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Two of the 12 educators who participated in the interviews explained that the network provided supports that they had not received elsewhere:

"I went there [to the County] and I took orientation class and everything, but it looks still hard for me. Then my friends told me that what [Little People FCCN] provides--everything is in your home every paper in your home. You just have to read it and sign, so it looks better or easiest to me that I think I have to join [Little People FCCN]."

"When I worked, too, in [the County], it is hard to get the families, but for [Little People FCCN], it is easy. They bring family to us. They just email to parents, and parent email to us, so it is easy to find a family... In [the County], we have to advertise, and it is hard to get the kids."

FCC PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Educators at Little People FCCN primarily cared for infants and toddlers (Table 2.6). Approximately 80% reported caring for toddlers, and two thirds for infants. By contrast, fewer than a third provided care for preschoolers, and only one educator in our study offered care to a school-age child. On average, educators cared for four children, although close to a third had an assistant. FCC hours of operation were mostly during standard hours as well as early morning hours. Fewer reported offering evening, overnight, or weekend care.

Little People FCCN serves private paying families. All educators who worked with the network operated under the network's infant toddler state license. About 30% reported participation in the state's QRIS.

TABLE 2.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Age groups[1]		
Infants (0-12 months)	64%	(29)
Toddlers (13-36 months)	80%	(36)
Preschoolers (3-5 years old, not in kindergarten)	31%	(14)
School-agers, 5 years and older	2%	(1)
Nonstandard hours of operations		
Offers evening, overnight, or weekend care	13%	(6)
Does not offer evening, overnight, or weekend care	87%	(40)
Has an assistant[1]		
	29%	(13)
Participates in the state's QRIS		
	30%	(14)
Number of children[2]	**Mean**	**Range**
	3.58	0-6

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=46)); [1]N=45; [2]N=43

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FCC environments. Little People FCCN operates in a suburban metropolitan area. Housing stock consists of multi-story town houses, apartments, and single-family homes. Many of the educators live in town houses. The 12 educators who participated in interviews were asked to describe their child care environments. Six educators described using their whole homes for child care, as the following educator described:

- "I kind of use almost everywhere because I use my living room for almost all of it. I have my couch, my dining room... when [the children] are here, we use the whole thing all the way, the whole place, and then the bedrooms I use them for nap time. I have cribs in there and ... we use them for nap time. It's like the whole thing is for business. Only evening time that it's home."

Five educators used a separate space such as a basement for child care. One educator described the advantage of having her child care program separate from her family's space:

- "It's a big, big room... I had one bathroom for them and one small kitchen. I put refrigerator and microwave and oven toaster. These are stuff I put for kids, and the food, everything [that] belongs to kids, I put it downstairs. I don't need to come upstairs. It is near - I can watch the kids."

Seven of the 12 educators reported that they had their own backyard. Others used local playgrounds.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES SERVED BY THE NETWORK

The majority of families served by FCC educators at the network were working professionals who paid privately for child care. Our focus group included four married, college-educated mothers, three of whom had master's degrees. (See Appendix B, Table B.3.)

APPROACHES TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Approaches to service delivery consisted of both relational and logistical implementation supports. Relational aspects included developing supportive and professional partnerships between network staff and affiliated educators. Logistical aspects of implementation included dosage (frequency and intensity) and content of services.

RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

At Little People FCCN, staff-educator relationships were developed through visits to FCC homes where one-on-one interactions shaped the quality of relationships. Based on educator and staff responses to similar survey questions, approximately equal proportions of educators (30%) and staff specialists (40%) saw their relationships as supervisors. More educators, however, viewed their relationships with staff as like a friend or family (43%) compared to staff who did not describe relationships in this way. Staff were more likely to view their relationships with educators as a mentoring relationship (40%) or a consulting partnership (20%). (See Appendix B, Table B.4.)

In their conceptual model of high-quality support in home-based child care, Bromer and Korfmacher (2017) posit that emotional connections and collaboration around goal-setting may be crucial elements of partnerships between FCC educators and support staff. More than 93% of the FCC educators at Little People FCCN who responded to our survey reported strong endorsement of statements about their specialists offering emotional support, help with goal setting, useful and responsive information, and communication. Smaller proportions of educators, however, indicated that they felt like equal partners with staff (86%) or that their specialist cared about them even if they did things the specialist did not agree with (67%). An even smaller proportion (12%) reported that they did not feel their voices were heard. (See Appendix B, Table B.5.)

Specialists also reported strong emotional connections with educators including appreciation and respect. Survey responses indicated that they set goals with educators, took educators' perspectives when interacting with them and offering support, and accepted educators' views even when they differed from their own.

Cultural responsiveness. Research suggests that cultural sensitivity and responsiveness are important aspects of relationships between staff and educators, especially in terms of engaging educators in services (Blasberg et al., 2019; Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; Porter et al., 2010). Interviews and surveys with staff specialists and educators at Little People FCCN confirmed that language and cultural barriers may have shaped the interactions that occurred at the network between specialists and educators. Staff at Little People FCCN were primarily white and educators were primarily immigrant women from South Asia and the Middle East. None of the specialists interviewed reported that they had any training in cultural responsiveness or relationship-based practices with adult

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learners. A supervisor for some of the specialists explained some of the challenges that specialists faced:

- "We have so many different cultures. … For our child care specialists, some of them didn't have any experience really working with different cultures in this way before they came into this position. I think some do better than others."

Our survey data suggest that two of the five child care specialists found it challenging to work with educators who may have had different beliefs or cultural values around childrearing. Specialists reported not knowing about the cultural values of educators in their caseload. Interviews with specialists confirmed their challenges negotiating different languages and childrearing styles:

- "Making sure that they understand, that's my biggest goal. That can be a challenge sometimes, especially if the language is a big enough of an issue."

- "I don't think they do understand the language, we try-I'm very understanding, because English is not my first language either, but I wish they would make more of an effort. If they're working with American families, they need to speak English. It's like, you need to know who you're talking to and everything like that."

- "I think it's wonderful that they do have different ideas. They do things differently. There are certain things though that culturally sometimes are hard for me. Number one is they forever think that they need to feed these kids. Sometimes they use the same spoon. That's a cultural thing. We tell them, 'You can't do that. The child needs its own spoon. You can feed them, but if you're doing it this way, you need three bowls. You need three spoons.'"

The mismatch in cultural background between specialists and educators may have been challenging for educators as well. Survey responses indicated that 18% of FCC educators reported discomfort with sharing information about their faith or religious practices, and 10% reported feeling uncomfortable sharing information about their culture and cultural values with their specialist (Appendix B, Table B.6). Although these are relatively low percentages, they are notable given the positive reports of relationships in other survey responses. The majority of educators at Little People FCCN who participated in our study self-identified as Asian or Pacific Islanders, and English may have been their second language. A fifth of educators who responded to our survey reported they did not receive help and support in their preferred language.

Personal support. Specialists at Little People FCCN recognized that FCC work could be isolating and took time during visits to listen to educators' personal situations. However, personal support was not a primary focus or purpose of visits. As one specialist noted:

- "Some providers think that's helpful—that when I'm there, it's like an adult to talk to, their concerns, or to just talk. They spend the whole day with children. Some of them really like when I go… I think they enjoy the home visits, as a whole. They do expect me to come, and they have things to share. They do enjoy the conversations we have. I had a provider that said, 'Oh, it was nice when you come, because we can talk,' because we talk about various things. I think they enjoy that, the company."

Another specialist echoed this observation that educators often just needed to share with another adult the things happening in their lives:

- "Sometimes there's a variety of things with their own kids. I had a provider who had a child being bullied in school. Sometimes they don't just talk about daycare. They do have their own lives. Wow, there's someone to talk to."

Specialists at Little People FCCN reported challenges around setting boundaries with educators between professional and personal relationships. As reported earlier, educators at Little People FCCN viewed their relationships with staff like family or friends. Staff viewed the relationships as more professional, although three out of five specialists reported that they gave out their personal con- tact information to educators in their caseloads. One specialist reported that she set limits on when educators could reach and call her. Another specialist explained that she aimed to "keep things professional" by not responding to friend requests from educators on Facebook:

- "I'm not your friend. I do enjoy the time we spend together. [Laughter] I'm happy to listen with you. I like to watch your children grow up, but there's limits to that."

LOGISTICAL ASPECTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Research suggests that the frequency and intensity of services may influence quality as well as provider, child, and family outcomes (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; Fixsen et al., 2005; Halle et al., 2013; Paulsell et al., 2010). Little People FCCN offered services including visits to FCC homes, training, and peer supports. The network did not have separate services or supports for parents and families beyond administration of parent fees and negotiating of educator-family relationships which are discussed in later sections.

Visits to FCC homes. The four child care specialists conducted monthly unannounced visits as well as an annual licensing visit and three annual food program visits. Although licensing and food program visits were based on monitoring protocols, monthly visits could be more flexible. One specialist noted this when she said, "What you do depends on what you walk into." Sometimes she needed to help with care of children depending on what was happening in the moment she arrived at the home:

- "You may walk in, the parent could still be there dropping their child off, maybe they've been to a doctor's appointment and they've come back. Maybe the infant or child's just gotten shots. They could be fussy. You might want to help by holding the baby. If there's anything I can do to help the provider with the kids, and if the kids are willing to come to me, I'm more than willing to do that to assist."

According to survey responses, a majority of educators did not find visits to be disruptive. All four child care specialists reported that educators were engaged in visits and sometimes took initiative in bringing up topics for discussion. However, the unannounced nature of visits may have accounted for a small percentage of educators feeling that visits were stressful, took time away from their care of children, or made children feel uncomfortable. (See Appendix B, Tables B.7-B.8.) Four educators in our interviews described visits as stressful and emphasized the "surprise" nature of unannounced visits. One reported, "I can't handle it. My mind is on the kids." Another educator reported that she felt unfairly evaluated by her specialist for not focusing on children during an unannounced visit where she had to ask her husband to watch the children. She described how her specialist wrote up a report about how she did not "play with the kids" during the visit.

Training. Training workshops offered at Little People FCCN were taught by staff members and outside trainers. Both online and in-person trainings were offered during times that were convenient for educators including evenings and weekends. Educators also acquired training hours through one-on-one specialist visits.

The network offered a variety of training topics that included health and safety, quality caregiving, business management, working with families, and self-care. Training topics were based on educator input and staff reports of needs based on visits to FCC homes. For example, one staff specialist explained, "If we know that a provider is a struggling with doing art with infants and toddlers, we're going to plan a training on that."

Once licensed, FCC educators were required by the state to complete 16 hours of continuing education annually. These trainings were free of charge and offered at the network's office. In addition, specialists played a role in helping educators keep track of these required training hours, notifying them about upcoming training opportunities, and recommending certain training topics.

Peer supports. Three primary peer support strategies to foster connections among educators at Little People FCCN emerged from director and staff interviews: 1) an annual educator appreciation luncheon; 2) an international dinner for educators; and 3) opportunities to network with other educators at training workshops. In addition, the network distributed a directory with educator names and contact information, which served as a vehicle for communication across the network. Little People FCCN did not provide any other formal peer support services such as support groups, learning communities or cohorts nor did the child care specialists see their role as promoting connections among educators.

In the survey, we asked broadly about peer supports. Approximately a third (35%) of educators who responded to the survey indicated wanting to meet other educators as a reason for joining the network. Slightly more than four in ten (44%) reported that they participated in social activities or an educator recognition event. A third (34%) reported that they participated in a peer networking opportunity which was most likely during training, according to our interviews with the director and staff. Nearly a quarter of educators indicated that they did not participate in any peer support activities. See Table B.9.

 Ten of the twelve educators who participated in interviews reported that they attended the appreciation luncheon, the international dinner and/or networking at training. The Provider Appreciation Luncheon was an annual event intended to "honor" the educators in the network, "kind of like Teacher Appreciation Week." Educators cited the event as an opportunity to get together with other FCC educators: "That day you have new faces, so you introduce yourself... and so many things happen." The International Potluck dinner

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for educators, parents, and children was a long-standing annual event and was an opportunity for everyone in the network to get together. The potluck dinner facilitated cross-cultural sharing; the most recent dinner included play workshops where FCC educators set up different activity stations for parents and children.

Besides these two social events, interviews with educators and staff indicated that networking at training workshops was the most common way that educators connected with each other. One educator explained: "Because of the training... we are together, not only the ones in my area, even the other ones. We have a great relationship because of [Little People FCCN]."

SUMMARY: APPROACHES TO SERVICE DELIVERY AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

Relational aspects of service delivery

- Staff specialists and FCC educators at Little People FCCN held contrasting views of their relationships with each other. Educators were more likely to view the relationships as a friend or family compared to staff who were more likely to see the relationship as a mentoring one.

- Specialists reported that they discussed personal issues with educators, but it was not a focus of their work. They tried to set boundaries between personal and professional relationships with educators.

- The majority of educators reported strong endorsement of statements about their specialists offering emotional support, help with goal setting, useful and responsive information, and communication.

- As many as a fifth of educators reported negative aspects of their relationships with specialists including not feeling treated as equal partners and feeling that staff did not care about or were not familiar with their FCC needs and circumstances.

- The mismatch between educator and staff cultural and linguistic backgrounds created challenges in these relationships, especially during network specialist visits to FCC homes.

Logistical aspects of service delivery

- Monthly network visits to FCC homes were perceived as positive experiences by most educators who responded to the survey. However, interviews with educators suggested that some found the surprise nature of unannounced visits to be stressful and felt misunderstood by their specialists during visits which may have been related to the cultural and linguistic mismatch between staff and educators.

- Network training included a variety of topics based on educator input as well as staff reports on educators' needs. Training was offered in educator homes, at the network office, or online and could be applied to the state's required training hours.

- Few formal opportunities for peer support, outside of two annual events and informal networking at training workshops, were offered by the network.

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SUPPORTING QUALITY

This section describes the relationship between observed caregiving quality among educators at Little People FCCN and the supports the network offered on improving quality. First we report on findings from observations of educator-child interactions and the learning environment in FCC homes and how the network supports these areas of quality. Second, we report on how the network supported educators around working with families. Third, we report on findings from observations of health and safety practices and how the network enforces compliance to health and safety licensing regulations. Throughout these sections, we describe the tensions between supporting quality caregiving practices and enforcing licensing regulations because Little People FCCN was both a network and a licensing agency. Staff roles at Little People FCCN included both supporters of quality as well as monitors of compliance.

EDUCATOR-CHILD INTERACTIONS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Caregiving quality includes educator-child interactions and educator support for children's social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Caregiving quality also includes responsive and developmentally appropriate learning environments in the FCC setting.

Observed quality of educator-child interactions. The CCAT-R mean scores for educators at Little People FCCN were in the good range (based on the field test mean scores) for Caregiver Engagement with children under age three and children ages three to five, indicating that educators were engaging children in activities, and that children were engaged with materials. Mean scores for both Bidirectional Communication and Unidirectional Communication (see Table 1.1 and Appendix A for definitions of CCAT-R constructs) were in the acceptable range for both age groups, although Bidirectional Communication scores, on average, were closer to the good range scores compared to average Unidirectional Communication scores which were closer to the poor range. This suggests that educators were using higher level language strategies such as serve and return compared to simpler language interactions such as labeling objects for children. Educators scored in the acceptable range on the Caregiver Nurturing construct for infants and toddlers but scored just below acceptable for older children in care (although there were only seven observations of children three years and older). (See Appendix B, Table B.10.)

Network support and quality caregiving. Educators who participated in interviews reported learning new ideas from the network training about how to work with children. Five educators discussed incorporating new techniques for reading books or physical activity plans into their curriculum or daily schedules. One educator talked about the benefit of training classes at the network: "In the home, you have limited boundary and things, so you have no more ideas, but these class[es] really help you to think more variety every day in your day care."

The advice and support around caring for infants from specialists during FCC home visits may partially explain the acceptable to good CCAT-R scores for children under age three at Little People FCCN. Child care specialists reported focusing on children's experience in child care and responding to educator concerns about children's development. Educators were able to put what they learned in training into practice during specialists' visits. Educators who responded to the survey reported that the most common focus for visits was discussing individual children in care (84%). Over two thirds reported they talked about their child care environment at most visits. Fewer, but still more than half, reported discussing concerns that come up with parents, curriculum planning, and child assessment with their specialists during most visits (See Appendix B, Table B.11).

Interviews with educators and specialists supported this focus on caregiving and, in particular, helping educators understand how to use the developmental issues children may face as a basis for responding and planning:

- "There was one provider that was having a hard time dealing with different age groups. I printed out an article, and we talked about, 'What can you do with the older child while you are playing, changing diapers?' The older child was hitting the baby, so I brought an activity for him, and I was playing with him while she was playing with the baby. I said, 'You need to integrate both, so the older child's not jealous of the younger child.' She was having a hard time."

The educator in this example reported that the specialist's guidance was helpful: "I solved this problem… when the older child comes, he is not hitting the baby."

Specialists also offered information to educators around typical developmental issues with infants and toddlers, the majority of children in care at Little People FCCN. One specialist recalled an educator asking why a 12 month old child was not walking. She offered a checklist with developmental milestones to help the educator "check for themselves" whether the behavior was developmentally typical. In another example, a specialist described an educator's struggle with responding to a new infant in care

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who was crying a lot: "Sometimes they cry, and then you don't know why they're crying. Even though their diaper is clean, you fed them, but still they cry." She shared some strategies for soothing the baby but also encouraged the educator to use her own experience as a parent. The educator found the concrete strategies to be most helpful:

- "I used my own ways to help him not to scream, but at the same time, I discussed this with my child care specialist when she came, and then she sent me some good material that helped me to use those tips. I was using those, and it was helping me a lot, so now … it's not as bad anymore. I'm using some tips."

Observed quality of materials in the FCC environment. Educators at Little People FCCN had most of the furnishings and materials for infants and toddlers on the CCAT-R Materials Checklist (See Appendix B. Table B.12). Some items, however, were observed less frequently, especially for older children aged three to five years. For example, in only two-fifths of FCC homes observed were children across ages allowed to find space to be alone, an important aspect of supporting children's social-emotional development, and in just less than a third of homes did children across ages have access to sand or water play, materials that support physical motor development and promote early math and science learning. Older children had less access to fine motor materials, puzzles, or ride-on toys with wheels, although this was only based on observations of seven FCC homes that had preschool-aged children in care. It's possible that educators at Little People FCCN had access to communal backyards as part of apartment buildings that may not have allowed sand or water play or that apartments did not have room for these motor activities indoors. Sand and water tables may have also been expensive for educators to purchase on their own. Instead, some educators may have used local playgrounds with sand boxes and water play spaces.

Network support and activity planning. The high frequencies for materials for infants and toddlers on the CCAT-R Materials Checklist may be related to the types of supports that educators received from Little People FCCN around activity ideas and materials for children. Educators reported that their specialists taught them how to plan projects and activities for different age groups in care. Staff specialists described talking to educators about rearranging their child care space to reduce crowding, make room for new equipment and materials, and create safe spaces for infants to play. The following two examples from an educator and her specialist described efforts to improve quality of the FCC space and environment:

- Educator: "She advised me. I have a big corner in my room, so she advised me, 'Can we move this?' I have a dining table in my upstairs that used to be a sleeping room area. I have a big TV and cable, so she advised me: 'Remove this and organize the things and make the toys accessible. Remove this furniture and secure and put the locks in it.' This type of thing she helped me with."

- Specialist: "[The educator] moved her child care area from the main living level of the home to the lower level, and it's a large room, but she had the child care area squished into one end. Then there was a kitchen area where a lot of personal household stuff was stored and who knows when the sink had last been cleaned. I just made some observations, and I felt like I was being a little hard on her, but at the same time, I wanted her to have a quality child care area. I thought a parent coming in here, this isn't giving a good impression…I pointed out some things to her and made some suggestions and so the next month I went, it was obvious the changes that she made, and we talked about it. She goes, 'I feel so much better.'"

Curriculum planning was not a focus of regular child care specialist visits at Little People FCCN. As one specialist noted, "We don't really have a curriculum, per se. We are more interested in building trust and building relationships." Yet educators reported that they wanted activity ideas. An educator reported that she found most of her activity ideas from YouTube and wished that the network offered more resources around activity planning.

Supporting quality through QRIS. Educators who participated in the state's voluntary QRIS received additional visits from a staff member whose primary responsibility was providing support with the state system. Her visits were conducted on a by-request basis and focused on increasing the professionalism of educators.

- "I will tell them that we all need to keep up with our professionalism… this is not just simple babysitting. We have a lot of responsibilities here."

Her work within QRIS also focused on educators' own goals for their movement up in the quality system. Educators could work at

their own pace on program improvements. With her encouragement and support, an educator in her caseload moved from level one to the highest level in the QRIS:

- "I had this one provider, because we have level one, two, three, and four. She started level one. When she started, she really had this fear that she will not be able to accomplish all the other levels, because it's too much work. She was so hesitant— but she want[ed] me to come. She keeps on telling me that you can guide me. We don't have to rush. Right? I told her that it's always your time. If you want to finish this certain area at this certain timing, then you can do that also. Then I was very surprised, because I thought it will take her a long time… She made it in one month. She was so motivated inside."

Four of the 12 educators who completed interviews echoed this positive experience participating in QRIS and working with the QRIS specialist. All four educators spoke favorably about the specialist and emphasized her encouragement and support for their own professional development. One educator said that the QRIS specialist helped her start to put her "ideas, dreams, and hopes" into action. Another educator reported that because of the level she achieved in the QRIS with the specialist's help, she was hoping to become an FCC educator in the Department of Defense child care program which sets high standards for child care homes. Educators also noted that they were initially afraid to participate in the system but with the specialist's help and support, they found it easy to advance in the quality system. One educator noted that her strained relationship with her child care specialist at Little People FCCN, who she perceived as judgmental, contrasted with her very positive experience working with the QRIS specialist.

SUPPORTING EDUCATOR-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

A component of high-quality caregiving in FCC settings includes a supportive and responsive family-educator relationship (Blasberg et al., 2019; Forry et al., 2012). More than half of educators who responded to the Educator Experiences Survey (54%), joined Little People FCCN, at least in part, to get help working with parents and families (Table 2.5).

The network played a limited role in helping educators navigate this relationship with families of children in care. It offered help around communicating with parents and resolving conflicts on an as-needed basis. For example, the network coached educators on how to talk to parents on the phone. For educators whose first language was not English, this may have been particularly important, especially in interactions with parents about enrollment in their programs. The director explained this challenge:

- "I was just on the phone with somebody yesterday, and I had a difficult time understanding her on the phone. I had to ask her to repeat things, so some parents are gonna have that happen, and they won't— they'll turn off."

Staff specialists also helped educators manage conflicts with families. Four educators discussed a time when their staff specialist intervened directly with a family by calling the parent, reminding her of regulations (e.g. safe sleep, hours for pick up and drop off) or reminding parents about required paperwork (e.g. immunizations). As the following specialist explained, this kind of staff mediation of the educator-family relationship may be particularly helpful for those just starting out in FCC:

- "It's the baby's first day. She had the pacifier with the clip and the beads. She had a swaddle, this zip thing I had never seen before. I thought, well, all that has got to go. I said I would communicate with the parent and the provider said, 'Oh, no, I'll talk with the parent,' but I wonder if it had been a year or so ago if the provider would've taken that responsibility herself. … That was encouraging to me that she said she would talk with the parent."

Staff and educators reported having to navigate inconsistent preferences among parents about how they wanted to engage with educators. One staff member relayed a story where she agreed to follow up with a parent about an issue that an educator was having, but the parent wanted to solve the problem directly with the educator. On the other hand, an educator explained how her parents preferred talking to the network directly when they had a concern. Parents who participated in the focus group echoed this discomfort with communicating directly with educators. They appreciated having a staff specialist who could intervene when needed and help them maintain good relationships with their educators:

- "As I'm thinking of it, both those situations I mentioned could've been awkward, uncomfortable confrontations that, because of the child care specialist, were not huge deals."

Staff specialists at Little People FCCN had minimal in-person interactions themselves with families and parents beyond helping educators navigate these relationships. Specialists would introduce themselves to parents during initial home visits as part of the child's enrollment process in FCC. Yet most of their subsequent interactions occurred over twice-yearly emails with parents about their experiences and satisfaction with their FCC arrangements.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCING REGULATIONS

Compliance with health and safety regulations was a strong focus at Little People FCCN since the network was also a state licensing agency responsible for monitoring compliance to basic licensing standards.

Observed quality of health and safety practices. Observations of FCC homes at Little People FCCN indicated high compliance with health and safety practices as defined by the CCAT-R Health and Safety Checklist. However, at least one red flag item (an item that has the potential to cause death or serious injury) was not met in a third of homes where infants and toddlers were observed and in one home with preschool-aged children. The lack of safety caps on electrical outlets was the most commonly observed red flag item for infants and toddlers. It's possible that the CCAT-R observations included more rooms than licensing covered. It's also likely that educators needed additional support around maintaining safety practices on a daily and even hourly basis (for example, remembering to put an outlet cover back in after vacuuming) in addition to meeting regulations on the day of a licensing visit. (See Appendix B, Tables B.13.)

Other health and safety items that were less frequently observed, although still seen in over two thirds of FCC homes, included: 1) accessible places for infants and toddlers to wash their hands (63%); 2) infants being held while bottle fed (70%); 3) diapers checked and changed often (79% for children under three and 75% for children three and over); and 4) quiet area available for sick children (81% for children under three and 75% for children three and over).

Network enforcement of regulations and standards. As part of its licensing role, Little People FCCN conducted visits focused on licensing compliance in addition to monthly support visits and required CACFP monitoring visits (three times annually). The enforcement role during visits to FCC homes may help explain the relatively high compliance on the CCAT-R health and safety checklist items. As one of the specialists explained, "One of our roles and responsibilities is to ensure compliance with [the state]. If we go in and we see something that's noncompliant, we need to address that."

Staff roles as monitors of compliance with licensing sometimes created tensions in their relationships with educators. One specialist described the challenges of an "inspector" role where she had to "look for things at the house that are not safe" but not have educators think she was there to find something wrong. Another specialist who used to work as an FCC educator herself, explained how her own experiential knowledge of the daily work involved in offering FCC helped her work with educators around compliance: "We can't go in there every day, 'Where's your list? Where's your menu? You have to do this.' It doesn't make your job easy, and it doesn't make their job easy."

Other specialists were more skeptical about educators and felt frustrated when educators did not comply with standards. One specialist described being warned about educators who tried to cheat the system when she first started in the job:

- "When I started in the job, I was warned, or it was brought to my attention, that there were certain cases where the provider is testing you to see what they can get away with... It made me wonder sometimes where perhaps policies and compliance with standards have been budged a little bit and providers – things have been overlooked – they've been allowed to get away with stuff."

Yet another specialist described her frustration with educators who did not comply with regulations despite targeted training. She described an educator who attended a training on safe sleep practices for infants on a Saturday and on the following Monday during a home visit, the specialist observed an infant asleep in a bouncy seat in the educator's home. She explained her reaction: "It's really tough. We come up against where the providers have been through the training. We've maybe even addressed these things with them during home visits, but they continue to do these things."

The focus at Little People FCCN on licensing and enforcement of regulations sometimes took time away from supporting other aspects of quality caregiving. A supervisor at the network noted that, "Our child care specialists don't have a whole lot of time to sit there and do curriculum. They have so many other things with paperwork and just the day-to-day stuff." Two staff specialists confirmed this view and explained the tradeoff between monitoring and supporting quality:

- "I think it's a lot of paperwork. I don't know if it's all necessary, because it's a lot of bureaucratic things... and not much time that you spend [on] quality —like I would like to sit with the kids and do activities, but usually when I go there, it's like, 'Sign this, sign this, sign this,' or 'Fill out this form...' I wish I could visit the providers at least twice a month."

- "I don't know what it is, you know, a couple of us child care specialists have just felt like we're drowning in all this paper. It doesn't leave a lot of time for the really important stuff."

SUMMARY: SUPPORTING QUALITY AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

Educator-child interactions and learning environment

- Overall, educators at Little People FCCN demonstrated high quality care as measured by the CCAT-R, especially for infant and toddlers in care. Care for preschool-aged children in mixed-age groups was lower but fewer educators cared for this age group.

- Educator-child interactions were in the acceptable to good range of quality. Educators scored high on measures of engagement with children in both age groups. Educators also used more high-level language strategies than simpler communication interactions with both age groups of children. Educators demonstrated acceptable nurturing behaviors with infants and toddlers but scored low on this dimension in the few observations of older children.

- Observations of FCC home environments indicate high-quality learning environments. Educators were observed to have nearly all of the materials on the CCAT-R Materials Checklist. Educators were less likely to have space in their FCC homes where children could be alone or materials for sand and water play for children across age groups. Educators were less likely to have puzzles or other fine motor materials for older children.

- Network supports around quality caregiving were delivered through visits to FCC homes. Discussions between specialists and educators during visits to homes focused on children in care, including developmental milestones, as well as designing activities and rearranging the FCC environment.

- QRIS supports through a dedicated specialist helped educators move up in the state's quality system and enhanced their sense of professionalism.

- Network supports did not focus on use of curriculum in FCC.

Supporting educator-family relationships

- Just over half of the educators reported joining the network to obtain help with working with families. The network helped educators navigate relationships – communication and conflicts – with families of children in care. Specialists had minimal interactions with parents outside of these types of communications.

Monitoring compliance and enforcing regulations

- The quality of health and safety practices in FCC homes at Little People FCCN was high although a third of homes serving infants and toddlers failed to meet at least one red flag item that could harm children.

- The network's role as a licensing agency and the regular monitoring and enforcement of health and safety practices may have contributed to the relatively high compliance in this area.

- A focus on enforcement and monitoring may have created tensions in how specialists supported quality caregiving interactions and how they developed relationships with educators.

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SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY OF FCC BUSINESSES

Little People FCCN identifies as a shared service alliance and part of a growing trend in early care and education to offer early care and education professionals support around business and administrative management so they can focus on quality caregiving of children and families. As a shared services alliance, Little People FCCN offered many back-office supports to FCC educators including handling parent fees, licensing paperwork, and facilitating enrollment. To be part of the network and receive these services, FCC educators paid 17.5% of their parent fees to the network. Parents paid a one-time fee for the network services.

This section describes three primary types of services offered by Little People FCCN that were intended to support the sustainability of FCC educators' businesses: (1) licensing preparation; (2) business supports including enrollment, marketing, parent fees; and (3) financial aid.

PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR LICENSING

Educators at Little People FCCN are required to complete specific training courses prior to licensing. These courses include child development, parent communication and interview skills, identification and reporting of abuse and neglect, professionalism, and CPR and first-aid. Little People FCCN offered these courses and educators completed them at their own pace. One educator described the value of the initial training:

- "If there was not this training, I wouldn't know anything, what's going on, or the rules, or the qualification, all the — what I need for myself, how to take care of the children, to understand them, and to see also if there is something going on at their home, the way to talk to them, the way to communicate with them."

In addition to training, Little People FCCN implements a mentoring program based on an apprenticeship model and designed to help new educators prepare for licensing. This program paired new educators with experienced FCC educators at the network and included 40 hours of learning in the home of the experienced mentor educator (see Box 2.1).

BOX 2.1   LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN MENTORING PROGRAM

All new educators at the network were required to participate in and complete the mentoring program prior to licensing. The mentoring program used an apprenticeship model where new educators worked alongside an experienced educator who served as a mentor. Mentors were required to be affiliated with the network for at least two years and have a CDA, a community college certificate, or a degree in early childhood or related field. Mentors were also required to obtain a recommendation from a Little People FCCN child care specialist.

Educators started the mentoring program after they completed initial training related to licensing. They were required to spend 40 hours over several weeks in a mentor's home, learning about routines, activities to do with children, and even how to communicate with parents. One educator described the process:

"The classes, they help me, but the [mentoring], they help more because you stay in the morning from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 or to 5:30 with them, with the kids. In a whole day with them, so you see … how they eat, how they play… the time for sleeping, the time to go to the backyard to play."

A mentor described a similar experience of showing educators how to use blocks and art materials with children, and how to hold a three-month old baby while also reading a book to a group of children. She noted the impact of the mentoring program, "I explained it all. Now they're doing very good work [and] they have no one complaining."

Following the 40-hour apprenticeship, the mentor then visited the educator's home to help them prepare for the licensing visit. These visits involved arranging the child care environment for mixed-age groups, ensuring safe spaces for infants as well as older toddlers. Mentors also helped educators set up gates and other safety equipment in their backyards or homes. Educators reported feeling confident and ready for licensing after these visits.

In some cases, the mentor-educator relationship continued after the initial apprenticeship training process, although continued peer mentoring was not a formal part of the program.

BUSINESS SUPPORTS

Half of the educators who responded to the survey reported that they joined Little People FCCN for help with managing their businesses, and slightly more than one third wanted help with increasing their enrollment. Educator survey responses about the business help that the network provided were mixed. Most educators who responded to the survey reported that they received help with enrollment. Two thirds reported that the network helped them find substitute educators when they needed to take time off, as well as help with paperwork and record keeping. Lower proportions indicated that the network helped them manage their businesses by developing contracts with families, marketing their programs, or preparing their taxes. Only a handful reported the network advocating on their behalf around zoning issues or offering bulk purchasing opportunities (See Appendix B, Table B.14). The following sections provide some insights into these educator perceptions.

Enrollment and capacity. A majority of educators at Little People FCCN were licensed to serve five children, yet less than half of the educators who responded to the survey were operating their FCC programs at full capacity. Educators, on average, cared for 3 to 4 children (Table 2.7). Educators at Little People FCCN were not required to have an assistant to care for five children. However, almost 30% of the educators had an assistant, most often a spouse or other family member (Table 2.6). Educators with an assistant cared for, on average, one more child than educators without an assistant. Of the 12 FCC educators who participated in interviews, only three were serving the maximum capacity of five children, a far smaller proportion than the 40% who reported that they were caring for five or more children in the survey.

TABLE 2.7 ENROLLMENT IN FCC HOMES AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Educators caring for 5 or more children[1]		
Caring for fewer than 5 children	60%	(26)
Caring for 5 or more children	40%	(17)
Average number of children enrolled by assistant[1]	**Mean**	**Range**
Does not have assistant	3.24	0-5
Has assistant	4.23	1-6
All educators	3.55	0-6

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=46)); [1]N=43

Educators and specialists in the interviews shared their explanations for low enrollment. One educator felt that location of FCC homes affected the low enrollment. She observed that FCC homes close to universities or offices had greater enrollment than FCC homes in more residential areas. One specialist attributed low enrollment to competition among FCC educators:

• "Sometimes there is not even a family for a year, because there's so many providers in the area. There's also state-licensed people. There's big centers close to where you live. Your chances are very slim."

Another specialist reiterated this view: "It's the competition. It's like having a bunch of Uber cars show up at the same time." Still another specialist saw the lack of full enrollment as a demand issue:

• "There just doesn't seem to be as much need for child care. I think there are a number of variables. I think there are less families having children. It's gotten so expensive whether it's family child care home or a center and parents are working out alternative arrangements. I've noticed more signs at child development centers and other child care areas as I'm driving around. They have openings, that means they don't have a waiting list, where in the past you'd have to get your kid on the waiting list a year ahead of time."

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Help with recruitment of families. Little People FCCN used two primary strategies to help educators with recruitment of families: 1) an in-person orientation meeting for parents to learn more about the network, its educators, and the services provided, and 2) a website with information about FCC programs to help parents choose educators. Some parents only used the website, but others relied on network staff for referrals. Parents were encouraged to visit FCC homes as part of the selection process.

Ten of the 12 educators in the interviews cited the orientation and the website as a source for recruiting families. Eight of the ten expressed satisfaction with this support. They didn't have to recruit families on their own, which they regarded as very helpful. As one educator explained, "If I go door to door and say I'm a child care provider, it's harder for me to do it. The office is doing that for us." Another educator valued the information the network offered parents about FCC. She recognized the need for a good fit between the parent and the FCC educator.

Parents also appreciated the network's help with enrollment. In the focus group, one parent described her experience:

- "I contacted the network and they said, 'Come in for an informational meeting.' I came for the informational meeting. They printed off a list for me of all the providers within the zip codes that I had provided to them, and my provider was the closest one to me, and so I scheduled her interview and my husband and I went together, and I walked out of it saying, 'She's the one we're gonna go with.' We had a really good connection."

For two educators, however, the network's supports did not help them increase enrollment. One educator joined the network specifically because she had learned that it referred families, but she was disappointed when she did not receive many referrals. At the time of the interview, she was caring for three toddlers: "I was so surprised that [in] one year, I did not receive any phone calls." The other educator, who only had one child in care, was dissatisfied with the network's referral process. She felt that the orientation sessions and the website were not effective in attracting parents, and the parent registration fee might have been a factor.

- "For the business they give me – I'm gonna say it's not that much good 'til now, because still I'm looking for more kids, but I'm not getting any. I think they have to do more advertising for this to get more parents, because I heard from many providers they're not getting that much kids right now. Their fee is also very high. I think it's $400."

Help with marketing. In addition to referrals from the parent orientations and the website, Little People FCCN expected educators to market their own programs. To help them attract families, it offered workshops on how to advertise their FCC program and how to conduct an interview with prospective families. Child care specialists made business cards and fliers and took photos to help educators update their Facebook pages:

- "When they're interviewing, I want them [to be able] to show to the parents, 'That's how my schedule works. I'm flexible, that's my routine,' and they have everything organized. I help them with paperwork, how to organize their files—especially bulletin boards, so parents can look and say, 'Wow! They have all this training and certifications,' 'cause parents, it's important for them."

- "I wish I could help them more. They ask me individually, 'Can you create a Facebook page?' I create it for them, but then, it doesn't depend on me if they are responsive. I remind them. I said, 'Check your email. Check your phone messages to see if a parent is emailing you. Then, as soon as they email you, if you don't know how to reply, just message me, and I will do follow-up.'"

Some educators found this support helpful. The network director viewed the network's support around marketing and enrollment as a "team effort" between educators and network staff, but some specialists heard a different experience from educators in their caseloads:

- "They feel like we owe them something. They do. There are some that do get angry with us if we can't get them the referrals. Again, we try to tell them, 'Well, this is your business. You can't be so reliant upon us. Maybe you need to do some advertising yourself.'"

Collecting parent fees. Little People FCCN managed all of the bookkeeping and billing for affiliated FCC educators and all of the parent contracts. According to the network director, this service was one of the benefits of participating in the network: "Providers like that we do the invoicing of the parents for the parent fees and that they get their check twice a month." A parent in the focus group also saw this as a benefit: "Here you don't have to worry about taxes. You don't have to worry about reporting."

One child care specialist emphasized the security that educators experienced as a result of the network collecting parent fees: "There's no, 'Oh, I'm gonna pay on Friday. Oh, I forgot my checkbook.' Some things like that. They get paid." Four educators echoed this feeling and referred to the advantage of not having to collect fees from parents. As one said: "I don't have to deal with the money issue."

Help with paperwork. Little People FCCN helped educators with paperwork related to enrollment, attendance, and other administrative requirements. Two child care specialists talked about helping educators organize their files. Paperwork was a challenge for educators as this specialist described:

- "Probably the record keeping is where I've done the most. Cleaning out their files and helping them get organized, that's a big area of need. It seems like, I don't know if it's just people who are drawn to working with children tend not to have those administrative organizational skills, and then it's comes to that there is so much paperwork. That can be frustrating to always having to be helping them find things or you sort it out and say well, keep everything here. Then the next time you go look for it, and it's not there."

Educators found this support from the network helpful for getting organized, keeping track of attendance, and making schedules. One educator appreciated the help, because she could concentrate on caring for children rather than administrative tasks:

- "I felt like they're helping me with the paperwork. Those are taken care. Personally, I think I don't have to go through those, so my job is only here to be available for the children."

Liability insurance. Once a child was placed in an FCC home, the network absorbed the cost of liability insurance at approximately $500 a child. As one child care specialist said, "The big [benefit] is the liability insurance." One educator captured the general view: "That's the most thing that we needed for our child care. We don't know when things can happen."

Help with taxes. Once a year, Little People FCCN offered a tax workshop lead by a tax expert who focused on recordkeeping and related issues. In addition, the network prepared 1099 tax forms for educators.

Seven educators, all but one of whom had taken the tax class, found this support helpful. One educator explained how the workshop helped her understand how to complete her taxes and how to report her expenses: "They said don't forget anything, even the soap you wash for the plates or something, you have to put in."

Help with substitute care. Little People FCCN required FCC educators to have a qualified substitute if they had to take time off for vacation or a doctor visit. The network helped educators with this support by maintaining an educator directory with contact information. It expected educators to arrange for substitute care and pay for it on their own. Using network educators as substitutes was comfortable for both educators and families, as this educator explained:

- "If I need to close my day care for one or two days or even one, they give you a name…This happen lots of time that some providers have emergency in their family. They have to go their country, so they give you full moral support and also give you opportunity if anybody wants to go for a vacation with their families…You can send the children there, which is very good … Parents are also comfortable with that."

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FINANCIAL AID

Despite the revenues from their businesses, 15% of educators at Little People FCCN who responded to the survey reported that it was very or extremely difficult to live on their household income, and another 30% reported that it was somewhat difficult (Table 2.3). For some, limited resources meant that obtaining additional education such as an infant-toddler certificate, a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, or even an Associate's degree was out of reach. Little People FCCN provided access to external government-funded scholarships for FCC educators. Specialists helped educators with the applications as well as with the logistics of studying and completing coursework.

Limited income also posed a challenge for educators who needed to travel to their home countries during a family emergency or crisis. The network had an emergency fund for educators. The director explained the purpose of the fund:

- "We also have an emergency fund for our providers because they come from different countries, and sometimes they have to go back to their country with some kind of a last-minute emergency, and they can apply for funds to help them with that emergency. They have to get substitutes for the children, and they pay for the substitutes. Usually, we will help them with making those payments for the substitutes."

SUMMARY: SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY OF FCC BUSINESSES AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

Preparing educators for licensing

- Little People FCCN supported the sustainability of FCC businesses through help for licensing, technical assistance around business management, and financial assistance.

- The network prepared new educators for licensing through training and a 40-hour mentoring program that paired new educators with experienced mentor educators at the network.

- Educators at the network struggled to maintain full enrollment, with only 40% at full capacity.

Business supports

- While the network provided support around enrollment, some educators felt they did not receive enough support with referrals and recruitment of new families. A combination of factors outside the network services may have also partially explained the low enrollment including low parent demand and competition from centers.

- Business supports included marketing training and technical assistance, management of all parent fees, help with paperwork, liability insurance, tax workshops, and an educator directory to help educators find a qualified substitute when they needed to take time off.

Financial aid

- The network provided minimal direct financial assistance. Educators had access to state-funded scholarships to complete college courses and the network offered an emergency fund to cover substitute care if educators had to close their programs for family emergencies or a death in the family.

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STAFF SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Research from related fields such as home visiting and mental health consultation suggest that supervision, and reflective supervision in particular, is a key aspect of effective service implementation (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; Watson et al., 2014). Reflective supervision entails taking time for staff to examine their own experiences and reactions to their relationships with educators (Watson et al., 2014). Reflective supervision may help staff with role clarity, perspective taking, and stress reduction (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017).

The Little People FCCN director reported offering individual supervision to staff on an as needed basis –"when they need things, they come to me" – but she did not intentionally offer reflective supervision. Staff reported that they felt supported when needed by the agency. Fewer staff reported that they felt there was adequate time for having deeper conversations and reflections about the details of their work. It's possible that the lack of reflective supervision around staff-educator interactions and relationships may have contributed to some of the challenges that educators and staff reported about their relationships with each other and particularly around some of the miscommunication regarding cultural and linguistic practices discussed earlier. (See Appendix B, Table B.15.)

Given the small size of Little People FCCN, staff supervision was often shared across the director and more senior staff members who comprised the management team. Staff reported feeling supported by the network and two staff members who were former FCC educators described the opportunities for career advancement that the network offered. Other team members commented that they found it valuable to have these staff members with first-hand FCC experience available "for bouncing ideas and getting input or suggestions and recommendations."

Supervision consisted of monthly all-staff meetings and bi-monthly child care specialists' meetings, but one-on-one supervision occurred only on an as-needed basis. Most staff at the network worked from home and on a part-time basis leaving few opportunities for staff to be together at the network office for supervision. As one specialist explained,

- "I work very independently. I pretty much know this job in and out. I don't need a lot of supervision. Sometimes, there's a question and I'll be like, 'This is how I'm handling it,' and she'll be like, 'Okay. That's great.' It's more bouncing things off of each other."

Specialists noted that the network director had an "open-door policy" and was approachable and available if support was needed. One specialist reported that the support she received from the network leadership team was more responsive than what she experienced in prior jobs:

- "I really appreciate the director because she's just always open, and when there's something that we need to talk about, she's available, and she's very affirming and understanding, and then in light of the situation I came from, it's night and day."

Surveys of staff assessed the extent to which specialists felt safe to try new ideas and felt valued at the network (Appendix B, Table B.16). Most of the staff at Little People FCCN reported feeling supported and recognized in their jobs. Like their relationship with supervisors, most staff reported having good relationships with their co-workers and all staff at Little People FCCN reported it was easy to ask other staff for help. Others described a supportive environment where they could share ideas with each other.

- "I describe it as a very congenial, supportive environment. We can go days without seeing one another 'cause we're out in the field, but it's always nice when we're in the office together to catch up."

SUMMARY: STAFF SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

- Staff at Little People FCCN felt supported by management and coworkers.

- Reflective supervision was not a common practice at the network and staff reported few opportunities for discussing the details of their work with educators.

- The part-time, off-site nature of the staff specialist jobs may have contributed to the lack of opportunities for frequent, in-depth discussions about working with educators.

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CHAPTER III.
DOWNTOWN FAMILY
CHILD CARE NETWORK

Downtown Family Child Care Network (Downtown FCCN) was founded in 1988 as a part of an economic and community development organization that aimed to improve conditions in the neighborhood. Today, it is one of the many state-funded family child care networks that serve educators, families, and children through the state's child care subsidy system. Downtown FCCN serves one small urban industrial area with a large Southeast Asian population as well as a significant population of Latinx immigrants. The network's mission is to support the economic self-sufficiency of women by helping them own and operate high-quality family child care businesses. It currently works with 62 licensed FCC educators. Most of its revenue comes from state contracts for subsidized families.

Downtown FCCN offers a range of services including: visits to educators' homes by child care specialists, transportation by buses owned by the network and subcontracted drivers for children to and from FCC homes, a training series, peer support, business supports and small business loans for FCC educators (Table 3.1). Most of the network's revenues come from the state contract.

Five staff members at the network regularly work with FCC educators: 1) three full-time child care specialists with caseloads of 20 educators each; 2) a training coordinator who plans and leads professional development activities; and 3) a parent engagement coordinator who is responsible for managing contracts with families experiencing homelessness and teen parents. In addition, the network employs a full-time social worker who works with children and families who are referred for placement in FCC homes through the state.

TABLE 3.1 SERVICES OFFERED AT DOWNTOWN FCCN	
Visits to Educators' Homes	Twice monthly visits to FCC homes
Training	80-hour training provided in 5-hour sessions every other weekend; 4 professional days required by state
Peer Support	Educator recognition event; social activities for educators, families, and children; networking at training
Business Support	Parent referrals; administration of child care subsidies; invoicing of parent fees; payments to educators; training workshops on business management, marketing, and tax preparation; substitute pool; transportation for children
CACFP	NA
Financial Support	$1000 to $5000 no-default loans; support with accessing public scholarships for continued education
Other Resources/Supports	Social worker to mediate conflicts with parents

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CHARACTERISTICS OF NETWORK STAFF, FCC EDUCATORS, AND FAMILIES SERVED

The following section presents survey and interview data from network staff and affiliated educators about individual demographics, FCC program, and environment characteristics. Table 3.2 shows an overview of the study sample of staff, educators, and families at Downtown FCCN.

TABLE 3.2 DOWNTOWN FCCN SAMPLE	
	Participants in study
Total staff	**6**
Staff experiences survey	5
Staff interview	6
Total educators	**47**
Educator experiences survey	29
Educator demographic survey only	18
Educator interview[1]	9
Educator quality observations[2]	28
Total family members	**12**
Parent focus group	12

[1]The educator interviews are a subsample of the total survey sample;
[2]18 educators who participated in quality observations only completed an abbreviated demographic survey

STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

The three child care specialists, the parent engagement coordinator, and the training coordinator who worked directly with educators and families at Downtown FCCN and who responded to the survey, ranged in age from 28 to 51 years old. Four self-identified as Latinx, like the majority of educators served by the network (Appendix C, Table C1). Approximately half of staff had worked with the network for 6 to 10 years, the rest for five or fewer. One child care specialist reported in the interview that she had worked at Downtown for close to 20 years. All five specialists held either an Associate's degree or a Bachelor's degree. Two specialists had worked previously as FCC educators and others had prior experience in early childhood or related fields.

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FCC EDUCATOR CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 47 educators participated in this study and completed the Educator Experiences Survey or the demographic survey. Almost all (91%) of the educators who responded to the survey identified as Latinx (Table 3.3). Educators ranged in age from 29 to 63. Approximately a third held a college or post-graduate degree and two-fifths had a high school diploma or GED.

The 47 FCC educators who responded to our survey reported a range of experience working in FCC. Approximately one-fifth had less than two years of experience, while 42% had 11 or more years of experience. Similarly, the number of years with the network varied. Just under one-fifth of educators had been affiliated with Downtown FCCN for a year or less and just over a third had been affiliated with the network for more than 10 years. Fifteen percent of educators reported experiencing difficulty living on their household income. Most did not report economic hardship. See Appendix C, Table C.2 for characteristics of educators by study component.

TABLE 3.3

CHARACTERISTICS OF FCC EDUCATOR STUDY SAMPLE AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Full Sample			Full Sample	
	%	(N)		%	(N)
Gender			**Years as a family child care educator**		
Female	100%	(47)	Less than 2 years	19%	(9)
Race/Ethnicity			2-5 years	19%	(9)
Black or African American	0%	(0)	6-10 years	19%	(9)
White	9%	(4)	11-20 years	36%	(17)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	91%	(43)	More than 20 years	6%	(3)
Other	4%	(2)	**Time spent with network[4]**		
Highest level of education			Less than 6 months	7%	(3)
High school diploma/GED or less	43%	(20)	6 months to 1 year	11%	(5)
Some college, no degree	28%	(13)	1-3 years	28%	(13)
Associate's degree	13%	(6)	4-10 years	20%	(9)
Bachelor's degree	9%	(4)	More than 10 years	35%	(16)
Graduate degree	9%	(4)	**Other paid jobs[5]**		
College or graduate level coursework[1]			Has another paid job	16%	(7)
Child development or early childhood education	92%	(24)	Does not have another paid job	84%	(38)
Psychology	31%	(8)	**Difficulty level living on household income**		
Business or administration	23%	(6)	Not at all difficult	43%	(20)
Elementary education	12%	(3)	A little difficult	28%	(13)
Other	12%	(3)	Somewhat difficult	15%	(7)
Child development associate credential (CDA)*[2]			Very difficult	13%	(6)
Has CDA	59%	(16)	Extremely difficult	2%	(1)
Does not have CDA	41%	(11)			
Educator preferred language*[3]				Mean	Range
English only	14%	(4)	**Educator age (estimated from birth year)[6]**		
Spanish only	71%	(20)		46.05	29-63
English and another language	14%	(4)			

*Sample: All educators (N=47); [1]Out of educators who answered having completed at least some college for highest level of education (N=26); [2]N=27; [3]N=28; [4]N=46; [5]N=45; [6]N=44 *Question not asked in demographic survey, all data comes from full survey sample (N=29)*

FCC educator motivations. Close to half of educators at Downtown FCCN who responded to the Educator Experiences Survey reported being motivated by a personal calling (Table 3.4). A quarter reported wanting to work from home as a primary motivation for doing FCC and a quarter reported wanting to help children. Many educators at the network reported an intention to stay in the FCC field for as long as they were able. A fifth reported not being sure about how long they would continue the work.

TABLE 3.4 EDUCATOR MOTIVATIONS FOR DOING FCC AT DOWNTOWN FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Primary reason for doing work		
It is my personal calling or career	45%	(13)
To have a job that lets me work at home	24%	(7)
To help children	24%	(7)
It is a step toward a related career	3%	(1)
To help children's parents	3%	(1)
To earn money	0%	(0)
Number of years intends to be an educator		
One more year or less	0%	(0)
Two to five more years	10%	(3)
As long as I am able	69%	(20)
Not sure	21%	(6)

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=29)

Reasons for joining the network. The majority of educators reported that they joined Downtown FCCN in order to improve quality of care for children, get help working with families, and get help managing a child care business (Table 3.5). Two thirds reported wanting to increase enrollment of children in care. By contrast, only two fifths reported joining the network to meet other educators, and slightly more than one third, obtain materials or equipment.

TABLE 3.5 REASONS EDUCATORS PARTICIPATE IN DOWNTOWN FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Learn how to improve quality of care for children	90%	(26)
Get help working with parents and families	86%	(25)
Get help with managing business	86%	(25)
Increase enrollment or number of children in my care	66%	(19)
Meet other educators	41%	(12)
Obtain materials and equipment for my child care	38%	(11)
Other	14%	(4)

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=29)

During the interviews, educators described the trust and respect from the network that motivated them to join initially. One educator noted, "When you see people are being treated nicely, you stay." Another described her positive view of the network:

- "I started with [Downtown FCCN] because I think it's a company of integrity, of trust, of open communication. They are honest, all compassion, love, loyalty. They are always present at the training with us. They tell us to give our best toward the

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children. They support us. They are mindful of our personal and career growth so that we can give all the best to the children we have in our care."

FCC PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Educators at Downtown FCCN cared for mixed-age groups of children, with more than 80% caring for toddlers and preschoolers and more than half caring for infants and school-age children (Table 3.6). Most FCC homes were small group homes with an average of six children. Only six educators (21%) reported having an assistant. The majority of educators offered care during standard hours and early mornings before 8 a.m. Only one educator reported offering nontraditional hour care.

While FCC educators are automatically designated level 1 in the state's QRIS, half reported reaching level 2 in the QRIS.

TABLE 3.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Age groups[1]		
Infants (0-12 months)	55%	(16)
Toddlers (13-36 months)	83%	(24)
Preschoolers (3-5 years old, not in kindergarten)	93%	(27)
School-agers, 5 years and older	62%	(18)
Nonstandard hours of operations		
Offers evening, overnight, or weekend care	3%	(1)
Does not offer evening, overnight, or weekend care	97%	(28)
Has an assistant		
	21%	(6)
Participates in the state's QRIS[1]		
Level 1	36%	(10)
Level 2	50%	(14)
Not Sure	14%	(4)

Number of children	Mean	Range
	6.31	1-10

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=29); [1]N=28

FCC environments. The housing stock in Downtown FCCN's community consists primarily of multi-family homes and apartments, many of which were subsidized. Six of the nine educators in our interviews described how they used their homes and backyards for child care:

- "I have my kitchen that [the children] are gonna have all the meals and the wet activities. I have my dining room set up for transitions like changing diapers or other things there. Then in my living room, I have where they wait for the pick-up and drop-off... I have another room that is a playroom, and I have my curriculum, my activities, all the activities over there and outside."

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CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES SERVED BY THE NETWORK

The majority of families served by FCC educators at the network were eligible to receive child care subsidies or TANF, although some educators reported caring for private pay families in addition to families who received government subsidies. According to the directors and staff, many of the families at the network lived in poverty or experienced homelessness. Our focus groups included 12 mothers; all but one were women of color. One mother reported holding a graduate degree and most had a high school degree or less. All but one of the mothers were single at the time of the focus group and all reported having difficulty living on their current household income. (Appendix C, Table C.3.)

APPROACHES TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Similar to Little People FCCN, approaches to service delivery at Downtown FCCN included both relational and logistical aspects.

RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Staff at Downtown FCCN described relationships as the core of their service delivery approach, as this specialist described:

- "For 30 years, we have been creating strong relationships. Sometimes we feel like a family… When a provider is going through something, they receive the affection and the support. We feel like this is more deep than just work. It goes more deeply."

Interviews with community partners confirmed the long tenure of strong relationships between the network and the local community: "They've been in the community for years and years…they know their community. They know the linguistic needs, the cultural needs, the economic needs of their community."

We found strong alignment in staff and educator perceptions of their relationship with each other as reported in similar questions across staff and educator surveys. For educators, over a third reported that they viewed their specialist as a supervisee and staff saw themselves in a consultant role – different from a supervisory one but still a perceived expert. Another third of educators viewed staff as peers and, similarly, a third of staff viewed their role as a mentor to educators – perhaps not as equal as a peer but similar in terms of collaboration. Just over a third of educators and a third of staff viewed the relationship as like a friend or family. (See Appendix C, Table C.4.)

All but a handful of educators who responded to the survey reported that they felt appreciated and listened to by their specialist, received help that was relevant and useful, and felt they frequently had open and responsive communication with their specialist and a voice in decision-making. They also reported setting goals around their care of children and their own professional development, and that they were an equal partner in their work with child care specialists. Specialists also reported strong emotional connections with educators. All three child care specialists gave educators their personal contact information and encouraged them to call at any time. (See Appendix C, Tables C.5.)

Cultural responsiveness. Specialists and educators at Downtown FCCN emphasized the role of cultural responsiveness and understanding in their relationships with each other. All of the educators at Downtown FCCN who responded to the survey reported they felt comfortable or very comfortable sharing their cultural values and practices with their specialists (Appendix C, Table C.6). Two specialists worked primarily with educators who had similar linguistic backgrounds and all three specialists reported knowing about the cultural values of all of the educators in their caseloads. As one specialist explained, "The majority of my providers are similar to my culture." Specialists described how this cultural match with educators facilitated trust and understanding.

Specialists at Downtown FCCN also worked with educators from different cultural backgrounds. One specialist, whose own background differed from most of the educators in her caseload, reflected on the importance of cultural understanding, especially in her work with Latinx educators:

- "I respect other cultures. It's really big for me. I always try to learn about other cultures. For instance, if I go to Asian provider, we don't hug our own kids, but if I go to Spanish provider, that's what I have to do sometimes. I have to remind myself. Yeah. Basically, I think if you're willing to learn—and they can feel it. They can see it. For me, it's really big for me that—to respect other cultures. Just that's one of my goals, so I always try."

Personal support. Personal support to educators at Downtown FCCN stood out as a distinct feature of visits. Staff at Downtown FCCN reported being attuned to the personal needs of educators during visits to their homes. As a specialist explained, "That's a crucial part of being a home visitor. You have to connect with them. They have to trust you." An educator noted that her specialist always "asked how I was doing, what I needed… whether I had eaten… She asked me how I was feeling."

Staff also acknowledged the isolation and hard work that made visiting even more important for FCC educators:

- "Then I get a feel of the educator. Is she having a good day? What's going on? How is she being with the kids? Is her home okay? Because you can tell a lot by the way that they express themselves. It's hard being in a house 24/7 with kids screaming at you and especially if you're going through a family issue or problem. My first and foremost, most important thing that I look for is how the person is."

Another specialist echoed this approach to offering emotional as well as professional support to educators in her caseload:

- "Sometimes, they will tell me about their personal stuff. They stress out. Because they work with kiddos, now they just want to have an adult and talk to and let it out, so just—I just be a good listener and give them advice."

None of the three child care specialists at Downtown FCCN talked about challenges of maintaining boundaries between personal and professional discussions with educators.

LOGISTICAL ASPECTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY FOR FCC EDUCATORS

Downtown FCCN offered supports to both FCC educators and parents or family members of children enrolled in affiliated FCC homes. For educators, logistics of support services included dosage and intensity of visits to educator homes, training, and peer supports. For parents and families, services included specialized staff to support parents and transportation.

Visits to FCC homes. In addition to the monthly visits required for compliance with the subsidy program, the three child care specialists at Downtown FCCN conducted a second monthly visit intended to support educators' professional development and quality improvement. None of the nine educators in our interviews described negative experiences or feelings around visits from specialists. However, 24% of those who responded to the Educator Experiences Survey reported that visits could be stressful for children in care and close to one fifth reported that visits were a distraction from their work with children (Appendix C, Table C.7).

Educators and staff at the network reported that responsiveness to educator needs was a feature of successful visits and was facilitated by the twice-monthly frequency. As one educator noted about her specialist, "She visits twice a month, but in case we need her, she comes right away." Specialists at Downtown FCCN also acknowledged the importance of flexibility in conducting visits:

- "It's not like this is the schedule I have to follow. Just kind of like, if I walk in and the kids are crying and the provider was serving lunch, and let me hold the baby for them—for her to serve lunch, stuff like that and then I'll be able to hand the baby to the provider."

Staff reported that educators frequently took initiative in engaging with their specialists around activities and discussions during the visits, suggesting that frequent home visiting over time may lead to a deeper, sustained focus on professional development. (See Appendix C, Table C.8.)

Training. Downtown FCCN offers a required training series for all educators who join the network. These five-hour intensive trainings were offered every other weekend, totaling 80 training hours over a 32-week period. Some educators started the training before becoming licensed and caring for children, while others started the series after opening their FCC programs. While the program was designed for new educators, others could attend if they wanted to refresh their knowledge. Survey data indicated that 35% of educators attended the network's training series in the past 12 months, indicating that many seasoned educators continued to find the training helpful.

The training series was offered by the network training coordinator, who brought in outside trainers for select topics. Training sessions were discussion-based so that educators could share their experiences which helped facilitate relationship-building, a goal of the network. The series included topics related to caring for children and managing a child care business. Educators found the

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trainings helpful: "It helps our growth, and it helps us more each day to provide the best of us to the children."

In addition to network-required training, Downtown FCCN offered four annual professional development days required by the state. Educators had to close their programs to participate. If an educator chose not to attend, she was not paid for the day and had to make up the training hours elsewhere. The network provided breakfast and lunch and delivered training content in English, Spanish, and Khmer. Despite the learning opportunity, professional days could be challenging. Educators reported that parents expressed frustration about their FCC programs closing on those days and educators felt they could not take additional days off (e.g. for a doctor appointment) near a professional development day.

Downtown FCCN had flexibility over the topics it presented at professional days. Topics were based on educator need and input, which was gathered through educator surveys or staff observations of educator needs. General training topics included health and safety, quality caregiving, business support, work with families, and personal support. A common professional development day topic was changes in regulations or licensing requirements. Often a state licensing representative lead these trainings. One educator explained how helpful this type of training was in informing and helping them navigate regulatory changes:

- "They give us training on what is being updated…The new laws that change, they hold training for us, explain what is going on, what we are going to see. It's something that, as I told you, other agencies do not do."

Peer supports. According to the directors, Downtown FCCN offered program-wide peer support including social activities and events that included educators, families, and children as well as facilitation of more informal peer-to-peer networking among educators during training workshops and professional days. Although only 41% of educators reported meeting other FCC educators as a reason for joining the network (Table 3.5), nearly three quarters of those who responded to the broad survey questions about peer support opportunities reported that they participated in social activities at the network (72%) and half in networking activities with other educators (Appendix C, Table C.9).

Network leadership recognized the potential value of peer support. Networking was encouraged at training workshops and the four professional development days. The meetings were intentionally designed to support these interactions: "We give them a chance to come in and talk to each other and interact because that doesn't happen often." The training facilitator used discussion-based strategies, "because educators need a chance to talk and compare their experiences. They can use each other's expertise to help each other out."

Educators also described the benefits of networking with their peers during training sessions. One educator saw this opportunity as a buffer against the isolation of working long days alone:

- "During these training sessions, we have the opportunity to interact, to share, to eat together, and that's why I say it's a very good agency in many areas because you feel like a family. We form connections with our other colleagues or co-workers. We collaborate because as you know, it's work that you do on your own and there are times when you need help … it's a job that starts at 7:00 and ends at 5:00."

The management team described ways the network encouraged peer support among educators including educators visiting each other's FCC programs as well as informal support groups. The training coordinator also encouraged these connections in her workshops:

- "We try to make sure that they build relationships so that they can reach out to each other to help. I can only do so much. I have my degree and I have all this knowledge, but I've never worked in a family child care program myself, and I've never worked in a center. I've never worked with children like they do, so I always tell them, 'Hey, make sure to use your colleagues, because they're a great person to bounce off ideas.'"

Educators and families enjoyed the network's opportunities to socialize outside of child care hours. One educator described Downtown FCCN social events in the parks as building a sense of community within the network:

- "We hold fairs, or during a holiday, they take the children to a designated place, there is face painting, they get snacks. The parents can be with them, and they spend time with us… We do activities with the families so they can bring their children and meet. I think that it's a help and more than help that's part of, like, the family that we create for the whole community."

Parents in the focus group shared this view. One parent described these events as "one big happy family, that's what [Downtown FCCN] is."

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LOGISTICAL ASPECTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Parent specialists. Downtown FCCN had a strong focus on supporting families of children in care. The network had two staff whose work focused on families. Both the parent engagement coordinator and the social worker conducted visits to FCC homes to observe children and make referrals for early intervention or other developmental services. The parent engagement coordinator helped match families with FCC homes. She primarily worked with families whom the state defined as "priority populations," including those experiencing homelessness and families with teen parents but also with a small number of private-pay families. Parents in the focus groups cited the parent engagement coordinator several times. They reported that she helped them find an FCC home by driving them around to visit different programs until they found the right fit. Parents felt that she understood their situations and could help them navigate language barriers with educators. The parent engagement coordinator also worked with educators, helping them to develop relationships with families.

The network's social worker primarily interacted with families who were referred to Downtown FCCN through a contract with the state's child welfare system. The state's department of children and families aimed to keep children in their families by placing them in FCC homes during the day and offering social work services to their parents. In this role, Downtown FCCN's social worker helped parents select a FCC educator who was a good fit and then monitored the well-being of these children in FCC while supporting their parents through a range of counseling, goal setting, and logistical supports.

Overall, parents in the focus groups reported having strong, trusting relationships with Downtown FCCN staff. Parents noted that staff were reliable and responsive: "All you have to do is call and they will always take care of you." Many parents also described the personal connections they developed with network staff over time. One mother, whose daughter had been in child care through the network, relayed that after her husband died, the network helped her and her daughter get therapy and counseling. As she described, "They came to the funeral. They came with sandwiches. They gave my daughter a big comfort basket with teddy bears… they helped me get counseling." Another mother had a similar story about how the network supported her after the death of her spouse: "They helped me with the emptiness that my husband left." Other parents noted that they maintained relationships with network staff many years after their children were in FCC: "I'm still connected with them in some way."

Parents in the focus groups also emphasized the help they received from Downtown FCCN around their own economic independence:

- "Now I have enough. I do not have to ask help from anybody. I no longer get food stamps, I pay for my doctor, I pay for everything. But when I started here, I did not even have a GED. When these people tell you, 'I can teach you about this, I can help you with this, talk to so-and-so,' do it …They are opening doors for you that otherwise, you would not have been able to open. I learned so much with these people, and to do so many other things. Before … I was out on the street…but because I came here, I have done a lot of things to help me succeed, I got my GED, I went to college twice, I am going to college again, now to become an RN."

Transportation. The network provided free bus service to and/or from child care for more than 200 children a day as part of their contract with the state subsidy system. The bus service was particularly helpful for parents who did not have a car or whose work hours made it difficult to drop-off and pick-up their children. According to one of the directors, "For a lot of families, it allows them to keep their jobs. It's the difference between their child being in care or not being in care." This service also allowed parents to choose an FCC home based on quality and preference instead of proximity to work or home. While some parents in the focus group had great experiences with transportation, others reported challenges around individual drivers, communication issues, changing schedules, long bus rides, and cancellations due to bad weather. Network directors were unanimous in reporting that the transportation service for families was challenging to implement.

SUMMARY: APPROACHES TO SERVICE DELIVERY AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

Relational aspects of service delivery

- Staff, educators, and community partners emphasized the centrality of relationships in the Downtown FCCN approach to supporting FCC.

- Educator and staff views of their relationships were strongly aligned: FCC educators and network staff reported that they saw each other as friends and colleagues.

- Almost all of the educators reported that staff saw them as equal partners, appreciated them, listened to them, and cared about them. They also reported that they had frequent, open and responsive communication with their specialist and a voice in decision-making, including joint goal-setting.

- Educators and staff also emphasized how delivery of culturally and linguistically responsive support was a core component of service delivery at the network.

Logistical aspects of service delivery

Services for FCC Educators

- Twice monthly visits allowed for a deep focus on educator needs including personal supports as well as professional development.

- The network offered an intensive and tailored training program specifically for network-affiliated FCC educators. Topics were often based on educator input. Workshops were discussion-based and offered in English, Spanish, and Khmer.

- The majority of educators participated in peer support activities at the networks including an annual recognition lunch and networking sessions during training workshops. The network also encouraged informal peer-to-peer networking among educators.

Services for FCC parents and families

- Downtown FCC served many families who were living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or involved in the state's child welfare system. A parent engagement coordinator and a social worker supported parents and families around finding FCC but also around mental health, logistical needs, and goal setting.

- Strong connections and relationships were developed between Downtown FCCN staff and parents of children who were enrolled in affiliated FCC homes.

- The network also offered all enrolled families free bus transportation that helped working parents manage work and family responsibilities.

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SUPPORTING QUALITY

In this section, we present findings about caregiving quality among educators at Downtown FCCN based on the CCAT-R observations and network supports for quality improvement. First, we describe quality of educator-child interactions and the caregiving environment and supports for these aspects of quality. Next, we describe how the network supported educators around working with families based on the educator and staff interviews. Finally, we present findings from the health and safety observations and network supports in this area.

EDUCATOR-CHILD INTERACTIONS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Observed quality of educator-child interactions. The CCAT-R mean scores for educators at Downtown FCCN were in the good range (based on the field test mean scores) for caregiver engagement with children in both age groups, indicating that educators were engaging children in activities with safe materials, and that educators were not forcing their own agendas on children. Mean scores for bidirectional and uni-directional communication (see Table 1.1 for definitions of CCAT-R constructs) were in the middle of the acceptable range for educators' interactions with children in both age groups, indicating that educators were using both higher-level language strategies such as engaging children in conversations by asking questions and building on their answers as well as simpler, more directive language with children such as labeling or naming objects. Educators rated lowest on the nurturing factor, with mean scores in the poor range for both age groups but in the lowest range for older children, suggesting that educators may have faced challenges offering individual attention and care to children in a mixed-age group setting. Since the CCAT-R was originally designed for relative caregivers with only one or two children in care, the nurturing factor may look different in FCC settings such as those at Downtown FCCN that included mixed-age groups of five or six children. (See Appendix C, Table C.10.)

Network support and quality caregiving. Twice monthly visits to homes were a primary way in which Downtown FCCN helped educators improve quality caregiving. Yet, according to both educators and specialists, visits were used for many purposes that may have left less time for a focus on quality practices. According to survey results, only half of educators (52%) reported discussing the child care environment during most visits and fewer than half of educators reported discussing individual children in care (45%), child assessment (45%), and/or curriculum or activity planning (45%) during most visits (Appendix C, Table C.11). For these educators, visits may have focused instead on their own personal needs or other aspects of care.

Specialists reported an array of activities in visits ranging from enrollment and attendance paperwork, keeping children's health records up to date, making referrals and working with therapists for children in care with special needs, and general crisis management related to educators' own families, their own mental health, or crises faced by families of children in their programs. Aspects of care such as supporting children's development in a mixed-age group may have been less of a priority given the many issues educators and families faced.

Children's social-emotional development and challenging behaviors. All three child care specialists reported that a quarter to a half of the educators in their caseloads cared for children with special needs. Many children and families in Downtown FCCN homes experienced the stressors of living in poverty and may have been at greater risk for their children having behavioral challenges because of stress and limited resources. Educators and staff alike described the need for offering trauma-informed care. Much of the advice and guidance offered by specialists was specific and solution-oriented to the immediate and urgent needs of educators around managing children's behaviors.

Four educators with the same specialist reported that their specialist offered advice around strategies to use when faced with children's challenging behaviors. As one educator explained, "They help because they offer guidance, so you can determine what to do with the child." Another relayed two examples of her specialist offering specific activities and actions to solve the problem of a child's behavior and "avoid conflicts":

- "There was another child who was also very rough and hit the other girls. She suggested I'd bring him first to the dining room table, give him an activity to do there, and keep my son with me, while the girls would play in the other space."

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Still another educator talked about visits from her specialist as a way of getting a fast solution or answer to challenges with children:

- "Well, I think that these visits are of great importance and support to us. Because it's like an easy way for us to express what we feel when we receive a child or when we have difficulty, and we want an immediate answer, I think that it's important that if I have a problem with a child, she helps me on the spot. The same day she arrives she tells me, 'We are going to do this, this is how we are going to do it.' Every issue is resolved."

A staff specialist echoed these reports from educators and described how she helped educators learn how to "deal with" difficult child behaviors. The following statement illustrates the network's focus on responding to educators' concerns through staff modeling of how to respond to children:

- "I've had a few providers that they have a hard time dealing with difficult behaviors and stuff, so they let me know what's going on. I go and do an observation on a visit, and I see things because I have experience. I show them how they can better redirect that behavior, and I do it by role modeling. … I demonstrate to them, and then all I tell the provider is, 'See, by me doing this and that, you saw how different he reacted to what I told him.' They're just like, 'Okay,' and then, 'I'm gonna try it next time,' things like that."

Two educators described receiving guidance from specialists that did focus on children's developmental needs and using child development as a way of understanding how to respond:

- "Well, she helped me, give me advice, because when you start work in this business, you don't know everything. You don't know why kids behave that way."

- "She tells me, 'You've got to be patient with kids, and give them as much love and affection as you can, because that's what they need.' They need to be taught that. Because you're like their second mom, and this is like the first school they attend."

Overall, educators who participated in the interviews emphasized that a hard part of doing FCC was experiencing children's difficult behaviors. Concrete advice from specialists was helpful but It's possible that the low nurturing scores on the CCAT-R observations for some educators reflected their frustration and focus on behavior management rather than on nurturing.

Observed quality of materials in the FCC environment. Nearly all educators at Downtown FCCN who participated in the observations had most of the furnishings and materials on the CCAT-R Materials Checklist. Only ride-on toys with wheels and water and sand play were less frequently observed in homes caring for children across age groups. (Appendix C. Table C.12).

Activity and environment planning. Network training and support around activity planning may explain, in part, the "good" CCAT-R scores on caregiver engagement and the high scores on the Materials Checklist among Downtown FCCN educators. Several educators appreciated getting information from their specialists during visits around specific ideas of things to do with children in care. One educator related how she received help including babies and toddlers with older children in her program:

- "She gives me ideas: 'Look, this is a great activity because it will help him to develop gross or fine motor skills' referring to a baby. Or, 'Work with this for their sensory skills because they love to feel.'"

Specialists emphasized the importance of educators' own lived experiences to guide activity planning. Specialists had themselves been FCC educators or parents and valued and respected this experience in the educators as much as formal early childhood knowledge. Specialists explained that they didn't bring lesson plans to FCC homes but, instead, encouraged educators to use online resources as well as their own knowledge to plan for different ages of children in care[1]. One specialist described how she encouraged educators to draw on their lived knowledge as a quality improvement strategy:

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1   Downtown FCCN had a grant in the past to purchase Creative Curriculum for all educators but after the grant ended, educators had to pay for it on their own.

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- "We normally have a lot of issues at the beginning when they first start because they're getting used to it. They don't know. They're, like, 'What do I do?' It's just a matter of giving them examples, 'Okay. Well, with that activity... the answer is always within you.' That's what I tell them. 'You're over thinking it.' What I do when there's little kids, we sit down. 'Okay, if you were a baby, what would you want to do with an activity with an apple? Okay, now, erase that. If you were seven, what would you want to do with an apple?' Because sometimes we look too much for the answer outside of us when it's always inside. I tell them that. The reason why you're gonna succeed is because the program is gonna represent you as a person, and you are somebody amazing, so put that in your work."

This strengths-based approach to activity planning suggests the commitment and respect that the network had for developing educators' confidence and success. However, the lack of formal curriculum use or lesson planning may have resulted in educators' limited access to evidence-based information about quality early childhood education. Most educators reported that they developed their own curriculum and utilized resources they found from their older children's schools or popular online sites.

Supporting quality through QRIS. All licensed educators at Downtown FCCN were automatically registered at level 1 of the state's QRIS. The network's training coordinator sometimes provided workshops on specific QRIS topics that educators needed. The child care specialists were also expected to work with educators to help them prepare for moving up levels in the QRIS although neither specialists nor educators mentioned this in the interviews.

Once an educator was ready to move to level 3, a state QRIS specialist was required to conduct an assessment of the FCC home. Educators' negative experiences with the state QRIS specialists radically shifted their willingness to engage with QRIS. Senior staff described what happened when educators at Downtown FCCN had their first assessment visit from the state's QRIS specialist:

- "You had to have that reliable rater come through, and the very first person who had their visit, when she got her report, it was such a mess. Her name was spelled wrong. Her program number was wrong. The description of her house and her neighborhood and her program were clearly not her house and neighborhood and program. [The QRIS] just dug in their heels and said, 'Nope. This is the report. You didn't make it,' to a point where the provider was feeling like, 'If this is all true, I should close. It's not safe. This isn't a good place for kids.'

  At which point, really, the bulk of the other providers said, 'Yeah, I don't want them coming into my house.' It kind of, for lack of a better phrase, poisoned the well. We haven't had a single provider attempt to change levels since then."

SUPPORTING EDUCATOR-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

A majority of educators who responded to the Educator Experiences Survey (86%), reported that help working with parents and families was a reason for joining the network (Table 3.5). The network offered educators support for working with families (through training workshops and visits focused on building partnerships) and good communication with parents, both core components of high-quality child care. Both child care specialists and the parent engagement coordinator helped educators navigate conflicts or communication problems with families. Child care specialists helped educators obtain required paperwork from families and also intervened on behalf of educators to resolve conflicts with families, as the following educator described:

- "The girl that visits me, if I have a problem with a mother, she comes and calls the mother. She will tell the mother, 'Look, you need to comply with the provider's paperwork because, without that document, she cannot care for your child,' so, from the moment I call the office, very quickly, in under two hours, they're here at the house. They tell them I won't be able to care for their children."

Specialists also offered communication support for non-English speakers. A monolingual Spanish-speaking educator described the help she received from her child care specialist:

- "Yes, my [child care specialist] is mainly the one in charge of that. For instance, she comes—and she just arrived, and I told her, 'I have this problem with a child. I don't speak English. I need for the mother to bring me this, or to bring me that.' She makes those calls, which is a great help to me, because they are helping me with the child, and his necessities."

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MONITORING COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCING REGULATIONS

Downtown FCCN was not a licensing entity and although the network worked with the state's subsidy and licensing systems to support educators' adherence to regulations, compliance was not the primary focus of the network's support approach.

Observed quality of health and safety practices. Educators at Downtown FCCN had many of the items on the CCAT-R Health and Safety Checklist (Appendix C, Table C.13.). However, two thirds of FCC homes (64%) where an infant or toddler was observed, and 55% of FCC homes where a preschool-age child was observed, had at least one red flag item that was not fully met indicating potential injury to children in care. Gates on stairs for mobile infants and toddlers, safety caps on all observed electrical outlets, and inaccessible electrical cords were the safety practices that were most commonly not fully met by educators in our observations.

Other items on the health and safety checklist which were less frequently observed (partially because there were not enough observations of the items) included: 1) infants being held while bottle fed (71%), 2) toddlers seated, or head is propped when holding own bottle (71%); 3) no peeling or chipped paint in areas children have access to (75% for under three and 73% for three and over); 4) diapers are checked and changed often (74% for under three and 67% for three and over); and 5) a covered sandbox (40% for under three and 17% for three and over).

Network enforcement of regulations and standards. The close, often personal, relationships developed between specialists and educators at Downtown FCCN may have made monitoring regulatory aspects of FCC more difficult. Two of the three specialists did not mention health and safety checks as a regular part of their home visiting and support work with educators. All three described challenges they had bringing up violations or practices that they knew were not meeting regulatory standards. One specialist explained that when she tried to focus on compliance in her initial visits with educators - "I came in looking"-- she received pushback from some educators: "Who do you think you are? You think you're licensing." Another specialist acknowledged her own difficulty confronting educators about potential violations: "You have to follow all these regulations. Your home should reflect what we expect. Sometimes to tell a person that she has to organize, to have the environment more clean, is tough for me." Even one of the specialists who said that safety was a priority for her during visits explained later in the interview how hard it was to give feedback to educators when they were out of compliance:

- "Some people have been doing it 30, 40 years, and they're like, okay. I've been doing it for 40 years. You're like, why? Who are you to change me now? Stuff like that. They don't say it out loud, but—and I have to kind of be careful. I cannot be too direct because I like to be polite and, yeah, it can be really challenging."

It is also possible that the long-term positive relationships developed by the network with educators may have prevented some specialists from giving critical feedback to some educators around quality practices. A community partner who had worked with the network for many years described the tension inherent in the Downtown FCCN's support strategy that focused on both educators and children in care. As she noted, "it's hard to say if you don't do these things, then you cannot be taking care of children."

SUMMARY: SUPPORTING QUALITY AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

Educator-child interactions and learning environment

- Educators at Downtown FCCN varied in the quality of interactions with children in care. They rated in the good range on caregiver engagement and in the acceptable range for bidirectional and unidirectional communication for children in both age groups. However, educators scored in the poor range for nurturing with both age groups.

- Educators scored high on materials and environments for supporting children's learning as measured by the CCAT-R Materials Checklist.

- Network visits to FCC homes focused on an array of supports including personal help, crisis management, referrals for children with special needs, recordkeeping around enrollment and attendance, as well as help with activities and behavior management.

- Specialists valued educators' lived experiences as sources of planning for young children.

Supporting educator-family relationships

- Most educators reported that help working with parents and families was a reason for joining the network. The network focused many resources on supporting families of children in FCC homes, including two staff whose jobs were dedicated to working with families.

- The child care specialists in collaboration with the network parent engagement coordinator and the social worker helped educators build relationships and communication with families and navigate potential conflicts.

Monitoring compliance and enforcing regulations

- More than half of FCC homes at Downtown FCCN had at least one health and safety "red flag" item that was not met including stair gates for mobile toddlers, safety caps on outlets, and secured electrical cords.

- Specialists at Downtown FCCN juggled many tasks during visits to FCC homes and may not have had adequate time to regularly check for maintenance of regulatory standards.

- Personal and close relationships between specialists and educators also created challenges for specialists around bringing up child care practices that needed improvement.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY OF FCC BUSINESSES

Downtown FCCN sees its mission as supporting the sustainability of educators' FCC businesses. The network aims to achieve full enrollment across affiliated FCC homes and consistent, timely payments through collecting parent fees for the educators. To strengthen educators' capacity to manage their businesses, the network provided training on topics such as marketing, recordkeeping, and tax preparation. Downtown FCCN also recognized that educators may have other financial needs. It offered a small business loan program as well as access to grants or scholarships for CDAs or higher education courses.

This section describes how the Downtown FCCN helped educators with: 1) becoming licensed; 2) business supports such as enrollment and collection of parent fees; 3) other supports such as business training and substitute care; and 4) financial aid.

PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR LICENSING
Downtown FCCN child care specialists sometimes helped educators prepare for their initial licensing inspection. Since the child care specialists were not licensing monitors themselves, they were able to offer support in this area:

- "They made sure that everything was perfect and with no danger to any of the children. They told me that everything checked out all right."

It's possible that educators viewed specialists as advocates rather than enforcers and that they were able to work together to prepare for the state inspection:

- "They offered advice, they told me, 'Remember you have to cover the outlets, this window, you can only open it like this.' She was very thorough about making sure I met all the requirements before the state licensing representative came to visit."

BUSINESS SUPPORTS
The majority of educators who responded to the survey reported that they joined Downtown FCCN for help managing their businesses and increasing their enrollment (Table 3.5). Two-thirds of educators who responded to the survey reported receiving help with managing a child care business and help with paperwork and record keeping. Just below half of the educators also reported receiving help with finding substitute care and developing contracts with families. (See Appendix C, Table C.14.) The following sections describe educator experiences receiving help with enrollment, marketing, parent fees, business management, and substitute care.

Enrollment and capacity. Economic self-sufficiency for educators was a primary goal of the Downtown FCCN and the majority (72%) of FCC homes affiliated with the network operated at full licensed capacity (Table 3.7). FCC homes affiliated with Downtown FCCN could be licensed by the state as small or large group homes. Small group homes could serve a maximum of eight children including two school-age children. Large group homes could have a maximum of 10 children and required an assistant. Only one-fifth of surveyed educators at Downtown FCCN had an assistant. On average, Downtown FCCN educators cared for six children.

TABLE 3.7 ENROLLMENT IN FCC HOMES AT DOWNTOWN FCCN		
	%	**(N)**
Educators caring for 6 or more children		
Caring for fewer than 6 children	28%	(8)
Caring for 6 or more children	72%	(21)
Average number of children enrolled by assistant	**Mean**	**Range**
Does not have assistant	6.00	1-8
Has assistant	7.50	2-10
All educators	6.31	1-10

Sample: Educator Experiences Survey (N=29)

By supporting full enrollment of FCC homes, Downtown FCCN aimed to help educators achieve their own financial goals, "whether it is buying a house or a car or sending your kids to college or being able to save for retirement." Downtown FCCN helped educators identify potential families and then facilitated the process of families choosing and selecting an FCC program. The network's process entailed identifying three educators who might be a good "match" with parents, and then arranging interviews with educators. The parents chose the educator who best fit their needs. The social worker described the process this way:

- "I've been here long enough that I know our providers. When I get a referral from [the state], we call the parent … They come in and I ask, 'What are you looking for? What hours are you looking for? Where do you live?' Because we do provide transportation and we don't wanna have a child that lives on this side of town with a provider that's all the way on the other side of the bridge. You need care from seven to four or you need care 'til 6:00 in the evening? Then I match them up with the providers that have the openings. I take the parents out to meet the provider and it's [the] parent's choice."

Seven of the nine educators in the interviews had full enrollment based on their licensed capacity. One educator talked about the network's sensitivity and responsiveness to her economic needs:

- "There is a girl there, and she always calls me and asks me, 'Do you have children? Should I come and help you? How many empty spaces have you got?' She said, 'I know this is a job and you have to pay rent, and all the bills at the house. Some of you are single mothers, and you need me to help you'… It feels like she always wants one to be working."

Downtown FCCN's contract with the child welfare system created greater demand for child care placements, but some educators did not want to care for children from families they perceived to be "difficult." Because they already had high enrollment, some educators felt they could turn down prospective families. The director described the situation:

- "Our enrollment's really high, and so providers can be very picky if they want to. If you're a provider and you say, 'You know what? I can close an hour earlier and I'm gonna earn the same amount of money,' what incentive is there? A provider can say, 'This family's difficult. I don't want them.' Then we're calling them the next day to say, 'Oh, my God. You have an opening. Can you take this kid?'

Help with marketing. While the educators at Downtown FCCN were not contractually required to recruit families, the network recognized that it was important to help educators learn how to market their programs to prospective families in order to maintain full enrollment and low turnover among families. The network's training series included a marketing component:

- "He [the outside marketing trainer] came out and was like essentially, 'Let's do a pitch contest.' Each and every one of them had to pitch their program. He was able to ask them all these questions from the standpoint of a parent. For example, someone who's never visited their program before; someone who barely knows about what the business is and encourage them to speak about all of the things that they do."

Two specialists also described the advice they gave educators on marketing their FCC programs to parents:

- "I always advise the provider the fact that the first thing, you meet with the parent, make sure you show them your schedule, your activities, your paperwork, what you do. Show them your kids do not sit here and watch TV all day. You have to make sure that you impress parents so they can choose you.'"

One specialist conducted mock parent interviews with educators. She described coaching an educator on her caseload who lived in an area that was "not the greatest spot in [the city], so she had a hard time getting kids there." After practice "selling" her FCC program, the educator was fully enrolled: "It took a year. Now, she's doing great."

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Collecting parent fees. Downtown FCCN managed all of the parent payments and vouchers that came through contracts with the state's subsidy systems. Five of the nine educators in the interviews cited the network support with collecting parent fees as a benefit. One educator articulated the advantage of the bi-weekly checks she received from the network: "They manage them [the payment} for us. The stability that they provide with the business is very important for us." Another educator expressed a similar view: "Getting a check on time was a huge advantage because you didn't have to deal with charging people. For me that would be horrible." Still another educator explained why she liked working with the network:

- "I have my own business. I can pay my bills. I don't have to worry about if I have a mortgage, so I know in the end of the month I'm gonna have my check, I worked with [another agency], and it was not a good experience... I spent two years with no income. I could barely pay the gas. When I started with [Downtown FCCN], there I see the difference."

Training workshops on business management. The network's rationale for business training was straightforward: "They don't just take care of children. They're small business owners as well." The training sessions on recordkeeping, budgeting, and insurance not only enhanced educators' capacity to manage their businesses, they also increased educators' sense of self-efficacy. As one child care specialist put it:

- "I've noticed a lot of them doubt themselves, and I think that confidence has a lot to do with running a business because... they're kind of thrown into a business. 'Here, you're a business owner. Deal with it.' I thought the way [the trainer] did it was awesome because she's finally teaching them, 'You're the business owner.' I see a change in the new providers."

The following reports from educators point to how business and financial management training at the network benefitted their FCC businesses:

- "Before, I practically never saved anything, honestly. Practically everything I earned went to paying for day care and for paying the rent. I didn't get practically anything left over, and sometimes I didn't have anything left. With [Downtown FCCN], I do have some savings."

- "They taught you how to build your business in a way where you make money, not lose money. For example, if I make $400, I can't spend $500, it would defeat the purpose. So, you learn to budget and find ways to make things work for better profit."

Help with substitute care. Downtown FCCN placed substitutes in FCC homes when educators wanted to take a day off, go on vacation, or take a sick day. Five educators reported that this service was a benefit of being affiliated with the network.

FINANCIAL AID

Fifteen percent of the educators at Downtown FCCN who participated in our study reported that it was very or extremely difficult to live on their annual household income, and another 14% reported that it was somewhat difficult (Table 3.3).

Loans. Downtown FCCN provided no-default loans. The loans could be used for program purposes such as retrofitting space or for emergencies such as a broken boiler or refrigerator, a branch that "crashed through the roof [during a storm], or "a water main break and you have four feet of water in your basement." Loans ranged from $1000 to a maximum of $5000; educators paid them back monthly through network deductions from their payments.

Grants and scholarships. The network also supported educators in taking courses towards a degree or a Child Development Associate credential at the community college in the city where the network was located. According to staff, a college grant from the state was available for educators who wanted to take college courses because the state encouraged educators to have a Bachelor's degree. The network helped connect educators to resources and to access the grants for scholarships and materials for their programs that were offered by the State.

Two educators reported that they had used the scholarships towards obtaining an Associate's degree, but one educator complained that the funding was not available for other undergraduate coursework.

SUMMARY: SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY
OF FCC BUSINESSES AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

Preparing educators for licensing

- Downtown FCCN offered educators support and advice around preparing for licensing visits.

Business supports

- Downtown FCCN aimed to achieve full enrollment and a consistent, timely income through collecting parent fees for the educators.

- Nearly three quarters of the educators at the network operated at full capacity. Because enrollment was not an issue, some educators could pick and choose among families or shorten their hours.

- The network helped educators maintain full enrollment by placing families in homes, managing parent fees, offering substitute care, transportation, and offering training and technical assistance on marketing and financial management and planning.

STAFF SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Research suggests that specialized staff training and preparation may be important drivers of quality in HBCC support programs such as networks (Bromer et al., 2009; Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017). Downtown FCCN reported having ample opportunities for staff professional development both at the network and at local community colleges or conferences.

Staff expressed positive views about their working conditions and relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Appendix C, Table C.15). In the interviews, staff talked about the network as being "just like a family." Staff reported working collaboratively with their coworkers and seeking each other out as sources of information and expertise. As one staff person noted, they can always pick up the phone to call for support:

- "I think we have a good relationship. I always feel free to be able to just pick up the phone and call. 'Hey, I have some problem here. Can you help me out?' 'Okay. Let's do this. Let's meet up. Let me help you out. You want me to go with you?' I love that about us."

However, this level of comfort between co-workers also created challenges as the following observations from staff suggest:

- "[Downtown FCCN] is a relatively small agency. We know each other really, really well. It has very little turnover. People don't normally leave. People are really comfortable with one another, so that's good, and that's also not so good, because even if we're in an office setting, people fight. They argue. They say things that are probably not okay to say."

Staff supervision at the network was more informal. Two directors split their supervisory roles with child care specialists and administrative staff. Group staff meetings were regularly held twice a month while one-on-one supervision meetings took place on an as needed basis or in response to a problem. As one staff person described: "We can just meet at any time." Most staff reported feeling supported and trusted by their supervisors and emphasized directors' availability to talk "whenever you want to talk to them." One of the specialists noted, "He trusts me to do my job and he supports me in what it is that we're trying to accomplish in helping the educators."

Some staff members reported frustration with the lack of feedback from supervisors. Staff reported wanting more opportunities for reflection and growth: "Listen, I'm the type of person that I need feedback. 'What am I doing wrong?' That's how you grow." On the other hand, three out of five staff members reported having protected time to talk with supervisors, think about how to improve their work with educators, or how to set professional boundaries in their work (Appendix C, Table C.16).

SUMMARY: STAFF SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

- Staff at Downtown FCCN had ample opportunities for professional development and training in order to improve the quality of their support work with FCC educators.

- Although staff supervision was informal, most staff reported having opportunities to reflect on their work with both supervisors and coworkers at the network.

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CHAPTER IV.
BENEFITS OF NETWORK
PARTICIPATION ACROSS BOTH SITES

The two networks in our case studies shared some common features. Both Little People FCCN and Downtown FCCN are stand-alone networks that have served educators for more than three decades. Each provided visits to educators' homes, training, and peer support with specialized staff whose jobs are dedicated to this work, defining characteristics of networks (Bromer & Porter, 2019).

Little People FCCN and Downtown FCCN provided support to improve the quality of the care that educators offer to children. Staff visits focused on the environment, including health and safety, space arrangement, and activities as well as educators' support for children's social-emotional, cognitive, language and physical development, all of which can lead to positive educator and child outcomes. Training workshops included topics that parallel this content. In addition, each network helped educators work with families. The two networks also provided access to grants and supports for professional development such as college courses or a credential.

Both networks also shared a mission of creating sustainable family child care businesses. Each helped educators maintain licensing. Each collected fees from parents to provide regular stable income for educators and helped educators achieve enrollment in the programs. In addition, both networks offered access to substitutes to enable educators to take vacation or time off for sick or personal days. Each provided some kind of financial support to reduce burdens on educators who may have had limited resources. Little People FCCN absorbed the costs for liability insurance; Downtown FCCN offered no-default loans.

In addition, Little People FCCN and Downtown FCCN provided similar opportunities for peer support. These included educator recognition events, social events for families, children, and educators, and networking at training. Neither offered formal peer support groups or cohorts, which research shows have potential for improving educator outcomes, reducing isolation, and enhancing educator self-efficacy, which may influence the quality of care offered (Lanigan, 2011).

Beyond these general similarities in support services, two themes emerged from our interviews about the benefits for educators of network participation. One theme was the general support that educators could count on in their daily experience of providing child care. The other was the sense of professionalism that the networks provided.

DAILY SUPPORT

Affiliation with a network mitigated the isolation that is a common factor for FCC educators who often work alone for long hours. Educators at both networks cited consistent regular help they received from the network. The network was always there when they had a problem. An educator at Downtown FCCN put it this way: "The support they give us is unconditional." Educators also valued the networks' commitment to their success. One educator at Little People FCCN explained: "I have someone in my back always supporting [me]," and one at Downtown FCCN said, "They don't let you fall on the mud. If they have to pull you out, they do that."

A large part of this support was network responsiveness to questions, which made the work of managing a child care program easier when educators confronted problems. "They help you step-by step," one educator at Little People FCCN explained, and an educator at Downtown FCCN reiterated this sentiment: "The communication and support … makes all our tasks, or each problem that we have, easier."

SENSE OF PROFESSIONALISM

Network affiliation also contributed to educators' enhanced view of themselves as professionals. The following suggests how FCC providers came to view themselves as FCC educators:

- "[Little People FCCN taught us] how to do the business and how to be professional with the parents, and how to take care of the children professionally. Mostly like — people think, this is a babysitter. People make it look like it's just a babysitter, but no, it's not only babysitter. This is more than that. This is education. We are educating the children. We're showing them step-by-step how to start life."

- "[Downtown FCCN] explained to us the difference between [how] to be a babysitter and to be a provider. It changed the view of the parents and the people that I'm not a babysitter... I'm your educator. They help us with that... [Downtown FCCN] always tries to help you grow as a woman, as a person, as a professional. They motivate us all to see ourselves as professionals. They would tell us, 'Remember, you're not a babysitter, you're an educator, you have been trained.'"

Professionalism also meant increased confidence as FCC educators who could support children's development and manage a business. Three statements from educators captured these feelings of self-efficacy:

- "I feel more accomplished. I can say I have advanced in my education and economically speaking."

- "After working with these people, I feel great. I have blossomed, financially. I have succeeded because I feel content."

- "I think they make you more professional and I think they give you opportunity and they give you courage to do work like a professional."

Across both networks, educators talked about support for personal and professional growth when they described how networks could help beginners.

- "If you are a parent, if you know how to take care of a child but you don't have the knowledge and you're new. So [Little People FCCN] is the best for them to start because they're supporting. They're coming with them and they're helping every minute. That's the best way to start and to learn how to do the business."

- "All the support that they need, they gonna have there with [Downtown FCCN]. We have many providers who come from the other agencies, and never go back to the other one when they see the help that they have, the support that they have with Downtown FCCN. Downtown FCCN, we just don't move. We stay here."

CHAPTER V.
DISCUSSION

Our case studies suggest that network services to FCC are shaped by a multitude of factors including the needs and experiences of families and educators in the communities served, and public policy systems such as licensing, subsidy, and QRIS.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

We found distinctive differences between the two networks (see Appendix D for comparison tables). They served different types of communities, children, families, and educators, and they also operated in different state policy contexts. Little People FCCN was located in a suburban area and served mostly white, middle- and upper-class professional families with infants and toddlers. Families paid private tuition to educators for their children's care. More than half of the FCC educators who participated in the study self-identified as immigrants from Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, and many reported that English was not their first language. More than half had a college or post-graduate degree. Approximately a third reported that they viewed their child care work as a calling and another third, as an opportunity to work from home. Little People FCCN was a licensing agency, responsible for monitoring compliance with regulations. It also provided support to educators who participated in the state's QRIS, but who did not receive subsidy reimbursement.

Downtown FCCN operated in a small city and served families, many experiencing poverty, who were eligible for child care subsidies, served TANF priority populations, and families in the child welfare system. The majority of educators self-identified as Latinx. A third reported their highest level of education as a high school degree or a GED. Two fifths saw their work as a career or calling and a quarter, as an opportunity to work from home. Downtown FCCN administered the subsidy system as part of a statewide infrastructure of supports for FCC. The network helped educators comply with licensing, but was not responsible for monitoring.

NETWORK SUPPORTS AND LEVELS OF QUALITY IN AFFILIATED FCC HOMES

We found variations in FCC quality between the two networks. Educators in both networks had good or acceptable CCAT-R ratings on support for children's cognitive, language, and physical development, but there were differences in the quality of their support for children's social-emotional development. There were also differences in the health and safety of the environment and practices between the two networks. Our findings suggest that these differences may be related to the characteristics of the FCC educators and their programs, as well as their service delivery approaches and their relationships to systems.

Educators at Downtown FCCN had lower ratings on nurturing, with scores in the poor range, compared to Little People FCCN educators, who were rated as acceptable. In part, this finding may reflect educators' level of education, which some research indicates is linked to quality (Iruka & Forry, 2018; Schaack et al., 2017). Downtown FCCN educators were more likely to have lower educational levels than those at Little People. The nurturing scores may also reflect differences in group size and child-adult ratios, which studies suggest may be associated with caregiver sensitivity and children's positive outcomes (Forry et al., 2013). Educators at Downtown FCCN cared for larger groups of children, with a wide range of ages compared to educators at Little People FCCN, who cared for smaller numbers of children, mostly infants and toddlers.

Our findings also pointed to significant differences in the ways that supports were delivered, which may explain some of the variation in the quality of educator-child interactions. The vast majority of Little People FCCN educators reported that specialist visits focused on discussions about the children in their care, including child development, the child care environment, and mixed-age groups as well as curriculum and activities. Visits at Downtown FCCN, by contrast, primarily focused on crisis management, behavioral challenges of children in care, and personal needs of educators and families. Fewer than half of the educators at Downtown FCCN reported discussing child assessment, curriculum, or activities for children. This focus on challenges rather than on children's development, in general, may have been a response to Downtown FCCN's population of children and families, who experienced many stressors including poverty, trauma, and homelessness.

Differences in the networks' approaches to relationship-building may have also had an effect on their capacity to support FCC health and safety practices. As a licensing agency, Little People FCCN had an intentional and frequent focus on monitoring, which may explain the educators' high health and safety scores. On the other hand, the surprise unannounced visits created tensions with some

educators and may have worked against the predictability and consistency of visits that are essential elements of building strong relationships. By contrast, Downtown FCCN was not tasked with this enforcement role, which may have resulted in less attention to health and safety checks and lower scores. Instead, Downtown focused on building relationships with educators, which may have created tensions around giving difficult feedback about potential health and safety violations.

NETWORK SUPPORTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FCC BUSINESSES

We also found differences between the two networks' approaches to supporting sustainable FCC businesses. Little People FCCN offered parent orientations about its child care services and lists of educators who might meet parent needs, but the network expected educators to recruit families. By comparison, Downtown FCCN placed families with educators through its state contracts, and had specific staff who helped with referral and enrollment.

These differences may have affected enrollment, which, in turn, may have contributed to the income educators could earn from their child care businesses. A significant proportion of Little People FCCN educators operated at less than full licensed capacity, which may have meant less income. The relatively high fees paid by parents, however, may have compensated for lower enrollment. Educators at Downtown FCCN, by contrast, were typically full, but the state reimbursement rate was low, which may have presented challenges for educators with limited financial resources.

CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE NETWORK SUPPORTS

The two networks in this study operated in different cultural communities and served educators and families from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some research suggests that culturally- responsive service delivery may shape educator engagement and quality of care (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017), although we do not have evidence from this study about how this aspect of service delivery shaped quality outcomes. Downtown FCCN had a more intentional approach to culturally-responsive support than Little People FCCN. At Downtown FCCN, there was a strong cultural match between staff and educators; all of the staff self-identified as women of color, consistent with the population of educators in the network. Educators reported positive relationships with staff, including trust and respect, as well as comfort and communication. All staff indicated that they provided personal support to educators. Community partners noted the network's ability to work with diverse populations of educators and families as a unique strength of the organization.

By contrast, both specialists and educators at Little People FCCN discussed the cultural and linguistic differences that sometimes interfered with effective support. Most of the staff at Little People FCCN were white women serving educators who were mostly immigrants from the Middle East.

NETWORK SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN FCC HOMES

Another notable difference between the two networks in this study was the role of the network in supporting parents and families of children enrolled in affiliated FCC homes. In one of the first studies to examine FCC networks, Hershfield et al. (2005) made a distinction between networks that served only providers and those that served providers as well as families of children in care. The networks in this study shed light on these different approaches to support. Although Little People FCCN's referral service for families and processing of parent fees were certainly helpful services for families seeking child care, the majority of network staff and support services were targeted towards FCC educators. Little People FCCN child care specialists helped navigate and sometimes mediate educator-family relationships, but this was not a core component of their service delivery model.

By contrast, Downtown FCCN delivered supports to both FCC educators and to families of children in these programs. The network had specialized staff whose job was to support and connect families in the subsidy and child welfare systems to resources, including a social worker. Another core component of service delivery focused on families was provision of transportation to and from child care.

GAPS IN SERVICES ACROSS BOTH NETWORKS

We found some gaps in evidence-based practices across both networks. Neither network offered consistent curriculum support for educators, which research indicates is a key feature of high-quality early care and education (Burchinal, 2018; NSECE Project Team, 2015b). Nor did we find evidence of delivery of comprehensive supports including developmental screening and mental health consultation such as those offered by Head Start and Early Head Start.

Neither network had strong infrastructure for reflective staff supervision, which is an essential component of staff support across youth and family serving agencies (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; Watson et al., 2014). Staff specialist jobs that require visits to educator homes require many different skills including relationship-building, observation, knowledge about child development, ability to offer emotional and personal support while still maintaining a professional stance. Staff at both networks, although particularly

those at Little People, reported challenges around setting professional boundaries in their work with educators. Several staff reported giving out their personal cell phone numbers or being on call for educators outside of formal work hours. This challenge is one that is cited across related fields including home visiting (Spielberger et al., 2013). Staff in our case studies did not report receiving intentional and regular opportunities to reflect on their work with educators and think about strategies for strengthening these professional relationships while maintaining healthy boundaries between professional and personal aspects of the work.

LIMITATIONS

Several aspects of this research limit the generalizability of the findings. The small sample size inherent in the case study design limited the analyses we could conduct. For example, we were not able to detect any meaningful differences in quality levels by educator characteristics because of the small numbers of educators who participated in observations at each site. Much of our data for this case study included self-report surveys and interviews, which may have contributed to selection bias. We could only hypothesize connections between quality observations and network service delivery strategies based on triangulation of observational, survey, and qualitative interview data. Finally, we were not able to collect data at both networks in all of the languages spoken by affiliated FCC educators which limited the scope of our research and the validity of some of our self-report data where educators were responding to research prompts not in their preferred language.

CHAPTER VI.
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

We conducted these case studies in 2019 before the advent of the pandemic, which has dramatically shifted the landscape of providing face-to-face support. The strategies proposed here apply to pre-COVIID and post-COVID conditions if and when "normal" social interactions can occur. Findings from these case studies have implications for future development of networks as a promising quality improvement and supply-building strategy for the FCC sector.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW NETWORKS CAN SUPPORT FCC QUALITY CAREGIVING

HELP FCC EDUCATORS WITH REGULAR MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES.

Regardless of a network's enforcement role, network visits to FCC homes can help educators develop strategies and routines around maintenance of daily health and safety precautions and practices. Research suggests that continuous maintenance of health and safety practices are a core component of high-quality HBCC (Blasberg et al., 2019). Continuous quality improvement approaches that allow educators to use rapid cycle testing to improve practices may help educators implement better monitoring systems for themselves (Bromer, Molloy, et al., 2020). Monitoring visits should help educators strategize systems and procedures for maintaining safe environments.

INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS FOR FCC HOMES INCLUDING HEALTH SAFETY EQUIPMENT AND LEARNING MATERIALS FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS.

Networks should consider providing funding for educators to purchase health and safety equipment for their FCC programs as well as developing lending libraries that allow access to high-quality materials such as puzzles, fine and large motor materials, and books for different age groups of children in care.

PARTNER WITH QRIS TO OFFER SUPPORT THROUGH TRUSTED FAMILY CHILD CARE SPECIALISTS.

Networks may be well-positioned to offer targeted QRIS support around FCC participation in quality improvement. FCC educators may be more likely to engage in QRIS if the help comes from a trusted network rather than a state specialist.

USE CULTURALLY-SENSITIVE PRACTICES TO RECRUIT, ENGAGE, AND SUSTAIN FCC PARTICIPATION IN NETWORKS AND IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES.

Culturally-responsive network staffing and approaches to supporting FCC educators may increase FCC engagement in network services. Networks should consider hiring staff who reflect the racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of educators and families served. Materials and trainings should be offered in languages that are preferred by educators and families.

ENGAGE IN RELATIONSHIP-BASED PRACTICES WITH FCC EDUCATORS COMBINED WITH HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CONTENT.

Network supports may be most likely to shift FCC educator practices with children when they are both rooted in strong, trusting relationships as well as in how to translate child development content into evidence-based practices. Relationships without content may not improve quality and content without strong relationships may not engage educators in processes of improvement.

OFFER SUPPORT TO STAFF AROUND SETTING CLEAR BOUNDARIES BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ASPECTS OF WORKING WITH FCC EDUCATORS.

Network staff, like those at many other social service agencies, may feel compelled to extend support to educators and families beyond their work hours. Network staff who offer support and develop personal connections with FCC educators may find themselves engaged in what social work practice refers to as "dual relationships" (Dewane, 2010). This blurring of professional and personal relationships may compromise the quality of support and lead to staff burnout. Networks might consider giving staff work cell phones or helping them set up "on call" evening hours for educators that help formalize the extended support.

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SUPPORT FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN FCC HOMES THROUGH SPECIALIZED STAFF AND COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES.

Networks have the potential to support families as well as FCC educators. Supporting families requires additional staffing and referral resources including mental health consultation, social work staff, financial, transportation, food, and housing supports as well as access to health services for children and families. Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer an evidence-based model of comprehensive, two-generation support structures that serve both early childhood educators and the children and families in their programs.

OFFER TRAINING, SUPPORT, AND SUPERVISION TO NETWORK STAFF WHO WORK DIRECTLY WITH FCC EDUCATORS.

Staff training, support, and supervision are key components of creating a network culture that values the process of quality improvement at all levels. Regular and intentional reflective supervision of all staff who work directly with FCC educators may help staff increase culturally responsive interactions, improve the quality of support offered, and intensify their focus on quality caregiving.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW NETWORKS CAN SUPPORT FCC SUSTAINABILTY

DEVELOP CONTRACTS WITH STATE SUBSIDY SYSTEMS TO INCREASE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT OF FAMILIES IN FCC HOMES.

Contracts allow networks to guarantee a designated number of slots for children in affiliated FCC homes and to process parent subsidy payments for FCC educators. Contracts may be one strategy for supporting full enrollment in FCC homes.

HELP FCC EDUCATORS WITH REQUIRED PAPERWORK FOR LICENSING AND SUBSIDY PARTICIPATION.

Networks spend time helping educators with paperwork and other administrative tasks that licensing and subsidy systems require including keeping track of enrollment, child health records, and professional development hours. Networks may address barriers that educators face by translating materials into preferred languages of educators and families or offering computer support for accessing online trainings and applications.

OFFER TRAINING ON FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGIES THAT GO BEYOND RECORDKEEPING AND CONTRACTS WITH FAMILIES.

Networks have the potential to help educators develop business skills and practices that are most likely to lead to sustainable operations. Educators may need technical assistance around marketing and recruitment strategies as well as financial management.

OFFER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HOME REPAIRS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS NEEDED IN FCC HOMES AS WELL AS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

FCC educators may need financial help to address the regular wear and tear on their homes that results from doing child care in a home setting. FCC educators may also need direct financial help to enroll in credential and college courses.

FACILITATE FORMAL PEER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES FOR FCC EDUCATORS THAT SUPPORT FCC LEADERSHIP AND GROWTH.

Formal peer support activities may lead to increase educator engagement in quality improvement as well as increased efficacy and professionalism. Networks that work with FCC educators as equal partners have opportunities to develop leadership in the field.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This case study report sets the groundwork for future research on network effectiveness. The current study suggests potential links between network practices and quality of educator-child interactions and the child care environment. Future research could further examine how specific implementation practices such as use of curriculum or monthly versus twice monthly visits are linked to quality practices. For example, we identified cultural responsiveness as a promising implementation practice. Future research might examine whether cultural alignment between network staff and FCC educators leads to greater quality outcomes.

Another area ripe for future research regards how networks support families. The two networks in our case study took different approaches to working with very different populations of families. For networks that offer services to parents in addition to supporting FCC homes, how do these specific supports shape child and family outcomes? Additionally, how do networks support FCC educator-family relationships? This is an area of inquiry that we did not fully examine in this study. Beyond mediating conflicts that arise around policies between educators and parents, how do networks help FCC educators build lasting and meaningful partnerships with families that encourage family engagement in their children's learning?

Our study examined how FCC enrollment might be shaped by network business supports around recruitment and marketing and subsidy system facilitation. Future research might look deeper at other business or sustainability outcomes such as financial well-being, economic self-sufficiency, or percent of household income from FCC. Links between specific network supports and measures of economic sustainability in FCC homes may offer new insights into network effectiveness.

Finally, no research currently exists on how network affiliation may shape child outcomes. Such research would require an experimental design. The approaches to network support described in these case studies may be the first step towards identifying models that can be replicated in demonstration studies that examine a range of possible outcomes for participating educators, children, and families.

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APPENDIX A:
METHODS SUPPLEMENTAL DETAIL

QUALITY OBSERVATIONS IN FCC HOMES

The CCAT-R assesses quality of caregiver-child interactions on four factors: 1) *Caregiver Engagement* in Activity with Focus Child; 2) *Caregiver/ Child Bidirectional Communication*; 3) *Caregiver Unidirectional Communication* with Focus Child; and 4) *Caregiver Nurturing. Caregiver Engagement* in activity with child measures support for cognitive and physical development. *Bidirectional Communication* assesses high-level support for language development through reciprocal interactions between the caregiver and the child. By comparison, *Unidirectional Communication* measures lower-level language support that is primarily directed at the child. *Caregiver Nurturing* measures support for children's social-emotional development (Porter et al., 2007). Quality ratings are reported separately for children under age three and those ages three through five.

The factor scores are calculated by adding up the items observed on the Action Communication Snapshot (ACS) which includes ten 20-second observations per cycle and Summary Behavior Checklist (SBC) which is based on the observations over each 6-minute 40-second cycle (Appendix A, Table A.1). If a factor includes items from both checklists, the two totals are averaged for the final score. The CCAT-R sets thresholds for poor, acceptable, and good.

The *Materials Checklist* measures the availability, not quantity, of items like books and puzzles that could be found in the home. The *Health and Safety Checklist* measures the presence of standard safety equipment such as electrical outlet covers and safety gates as well as accepted practices such a putting babies to sleep on their backs and washing children's hands after toileting. Items that have the potential to cause death or serious injury are categorized as red-flag items. There are two versions of each Checklist, one for children under age three, and another for children ages three through five.

Four observers were trained for reliability on the CCAT-R in spring, 2019 during a two- and a-half day in-person training at Erikson Institute with the developer of the measure. All four observers achieved the CCAT-R standard for reliability, 80% accuracy on each item, with a "gold standard" observer. Teams of two observers, one of whom was fluent in Spanish, completed observations in FCC homes affiliated with each network during July through September, 2019. Each observer completed between 14 and 38 observations of focal children. We modified the CCAT-R protocol by conducting observations of educator-child interactions with children of different age groups separately on the same observation day. An educator may have two observations within the same age group depending on the age of the oldest and youngest child.

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TABLE A.1 CCAT-R FACTOR SCORE ITEMS

Caregiver Nurturing

1	SBC: Kiss or hugs child (caregiver interaction with FC)
2	SBC: Holds, pats or touches child (caregiver interaction with FC)
3	SBC: Comforts child (caregiver interaction with FC)
4	SBC: Caregiver does own activities excluding FC*

Caregiver Engagement in Activity with Focus Child

1	ACS: Names or labels (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
2	ACS: Other talk (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
3	ACS: Caregiver does activity with FC alone or with other children
4	ACS: Caregiver directs FC's activity without regard for child's interests*
5	ACS: Safe materials or objects (FC interacts with or attends to)
6	SBC: Smiling/laughing (predominant caregiver tone with FC)
7	SBC: Engaged (predominant caregiver tone with FC)
8	SBC: Not engaged (predominant caregiver tone with FC)*

Caregiver/Child Bidirectional Communication

1	ACS: Responds to FC language or vocalization (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
2	ACS: Requests language or vocalization (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
3	ACS: Verbally directs FC action (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
4	ACS: Repeats or builds on what child says (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
5	ACS: Names or labels (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
6	ACS: Other talk (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
7	ACS: Caregiver does activity with FC alone or with other children
8	ACS: FC talks or vocalizes to caregiver
9	ACS: FC interacts with or attends to caregiver
10	SBC: Smiling/laughing (predominant caregiver tone with FC)
11	SBC: Engaged (predominant caregiver tone with FC)
12	SBC: Not engaged (predominant caregiver tone with FC)*
13	SBC: Holds, pats or touches child (caregiver interaction with FC)
14	SBC: Comforts child (caregiver interaction with FC)

Caregiver Unidirectional Communication with Focus Child

1	ACS: Responds to FC language or vocalization (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
2	ACS: Requests language or vocalization (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
3	ACS: Verbally directs FC action (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
4	ACS: Repeats or builds on what child says (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
5	ACS: Names or labels (caregiver verbal communication with FC)
6	ACS: Caregiver directs FC's activity without regard for child's interests*
7	ACS: Self-talk (FC talks or vocalizes to)
8	ACS: FC interacts with or attends to caregiver
9	SBC: Kiss or hugs child (caregiver interaction with FC)
10	SBC: Holds, pats or touches child (caregiver interaction with FC)

*FC=Focus Child; ACS=Action Communication Snapshot; SBC=Summary Behavior Checklist; *Negative item*

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SAMPLE

TABLE A.2 STUDY SAMPLE OVERVIEW			
	Little People FCCN	**Downtown FCCN**	**Total**
Staff experiences survey and interview	6	6[1]	12
Educator experiences survey	46	29	75
Educator demographic survey only	12	18	30
Educator interview[2]	12	9	21
Educator quality observations[3]	26	28	54
Parent focus groups	4	12	16

[1]One staff member at Downtown FCCN did not complete the survey; [2]The educator interviews are a subsample of the total survey sample; [3]18 educators at Downtown FCCN and 12 educators at Little People FCCN who participated in quality observations only completed an abbreviated demographic survey

Our sample of educators varied depending on the type of data collected. Overall, 105 educators participated in at least one activity in our study. A total of 75 educators responded to the Educator Experiences Survey, including all 21 educators who participated in the telephone interviews. A total of 54 educators participated in the quality observations. Of these educators, only 24 responded to the Educator Experiences Survey. The remaining 30 educators completed a demographic questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

Every 4th transcript was double coded and inter-rater reliability was checked. The research team discussed any thematic codes that had a kappa coefficient below .80 and consensus was reached. In an iterative process, broad codes were analyzed further using sub-codes.

Stata 14 was used for all quantitative data analysis. Several Educator Experiences Survey responses were incomplete. The research team made the decision to keep survey responses as long as at least 10% of the survey questions were answered. For this reason, some tables may have higher numbers of missing responses than others.

CCAT-R factor scores were calculated following the instructions in the user manual (Porter et al., 2007). The number of cycles for each observation varied from 4-6. In order to compare scores across observations with a different number of cycles, an average score per cycle was calculated by dividing each score by the number of cycles. Likewise, the thresholds for poor, acceptable, and good were divided by 6 (the number of observation cycles used during the field test). For the materials checklist, percent of educators with an item on the checklist was calculated by dividing the number of homes where a material or furniture item was observed by all of the homes with an observation. The percentages for the Health and Safety Checklist were calculated out of applicable homes. All CCAT-R analyses were done by the age group of the focal child (under three years old and three to five years old).

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APPENDIX B:
LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN TABLES

TABLE B.1 STAFF CHARACTERISTICS FROM SURVEY AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN		
	%	(N)
Gender		
Female	100%	(6)
Male	0%	(0)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black or African American	0%	(0)
White	67%	(4)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	17%	(1)
Asian or Pacific Islander	17%	(1)
Highest level of education		
Bachelor's degree	33%	(2)
Masters degree	67%	(4)
Time employed by the network		
2-5 years	33%	(2)
6-10 years	33%	(2)
11-20 years	17%	(1)
More than 20 years	17%	(1)
Prior job		
Family child care educator	33%	(2)
Other early care and education	33%	(2)
Related field	17%	(1)
Other	17%	(1)

Age (estimated from birth year)	Mean	Range
	50	40-67

Sample: Staff experiences survey (N=6)

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TABLE B.2 EDUCATOR CHARACTERISTICS BY DATA TYPE AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Entire Sample		Educator Experiences Survey		Interviews[1]		Observations[2]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Gender		(N=54)		(N=42)		(N=12)		(N=26)
Female	100%	(54)	100%	(42)	100%	(12)	100%	(26)
Male	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)
Race/Ethnicity		(N=53)		(N=41)		(N=12)		(N=26)
Black or African American	6%	(3)	7%	(3)	17%	(2)	4%	(1)
White	13%	(7)	17%	(7)	17%	(2)	15%	(4)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	13%	(7)	12%	(5)	0%	(0)	15%	(4)
Asian or Pacific Islander	68%	(36)	63%	(26)	67%	(8)	65%	(17)
Highest level of education		(N=53)		(N=41)		(N=12)		(N=26)
High school diploma/GED or Less	26%	(14)	20%	(8)	25%	(3)	35%	(9)
Some college, no degree	26%	(14)	22%	(9)	8%	(1)	27%	(7)
Associate's degree	15%	(8)	20%	(8)	8%	(1)	8%	(2)
Bachelor's degree	23%	(12)	24%	(10)	33%	(4)	27%	(7)
Graduate degree	9%	(5)	12%	(5)	25%	(3)	4%	(1)
College or graduate level coursework[3]		(N=39)		(N=32)		(N=9)		(N=17)
Child development or early childhood education	77%	(30)	75%	(24)	89%	(8)	88%	(15)
Psychology	18%	(7)	6%	(2)	22%	(2)	29%	(5)
Business or administration	10%	(4)	6%	(2)	33%	(3)	24%	(4)
Elementary education	10%	(4)	6%	(2)	22%	(2)	24%	(4)
Social work	5%	(2)	6%	(2)	22%	(2)	12%	(2)
Nursing	8%	(3)	6%	(2)	11%	(1)	12%	(2)
None	15%	(6)	19%	(6)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)
Child development associate credential*		(N=42)		(N=42)		(N=12)		(N=14)
Has CDA	40%	(17)	40%	(17)	25%	(3)	43%	(6)
Does not have CDA	60%	(25)	60%	(25)	75%	(9)	57%	(8)
Years as a family child care educator		(N=54)		(N=42)		(N=12)		(N=26)
Less than 2 years	4%	(2)	5%	(2)	8%	(1)	4%	(1)
2-5 years	15%	(8)	14%	(6)	25%	(3)	19%	(5)
6-10 years	26%	(14)	29%	(12)	25%	(3)	19%	(5)
11-20 years	35%	(19)	29%	(12)	33%	(4)	38%	(10)
More than 20 years	20%	(11)	24%	(10)	8%	(1)	19%	(5)
Time spent with network		(N=53)		(N=41)		(N=12)		(N=25)
6 months to 1 year	6%	(3)	7%	(3)	8%	(1)	4%	(1)
1-3 years	13%	(7)	15%	(6)	25%	(3)	20%	(5)
4-10 years	34%	(18)	34%	(14)	25%	(3)	28%	(7)
More than 10 years	47%	(25)	44%	(18)	42%	(5)	48%	(12)
Other paid jobs		(N=51)		(N=40)		(N=12)		(N=25)
Has another paid job	2%	(1)	3%	(1)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)
Does not have another paid job	98%	(50)	98%	(39)	100%	(12)	100%	(25)
Difficulty level living on household income		(N=51)		(N=39)		(N=12)		(N=26)
Not at all difficult	18%	(9)	15%	(6)	33%	(4)	23%	(6)
A little difficult	41%	(21)	38%	(15)	17%	(2)	42%	(11)
Somewhat difficult	29%	(15)	31%	(12)	33%	(4)	27%	(7)
Very difficult	8%	(4)	10%	(4)	8%	(1)	8%	(2)
Extremely difficult	4%	(2)	5%	(2)	8%	(1)	0%	(0)
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Educator Age (estimated from birth year)		(N=49)		(N=38)		(N=11)		(N=23)
	51.16	24-70	50.53	24-70	50.27	33-69	53.35	39-69

Samples: Full educator sample (N=58) (included 46 responses from educator experiences survey and 12 responses from demographic survey); Educator experiences survey (N=46); Interview sample (N=12); Quality observation sample (N=26); [1]The interviews are a subsample of the total survey sample; [2]There is some overlap between survey sample and observation sample; [3]Out of educators who answered having completed at least some college for highest level of education; *Question not asked in demographic survey, all data comes from full survey sample (N=46)

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TABLE B.3 PARENT FOCUS GROUP CHARACTERISTICS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	%	(N)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black or African American	0%	(0)
White	100%	(4)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	25%	(1)
Asian or Pacific Islander	25%	(1)
Highest Level of Education		
High school diploma/GED or less	0%	(0)
Some college, no degree	25%	(1)
Associate's degree	**0%**	**(0)**
Bachelor's degree	0%	(0)
Graduate degree	75%	(3)
Employment Status		
Employed	100%	(4)
Not Employed	0%	(0)
Relationship Status		
Married/Live with a partner	100%	(4)
Single	0%	(0)
Non-traditional hours work[1]		
Only work traditional hours	33%	(1)
Work non-traditional hours	67%	(2)
Difficulty living on household income		
Not at all difficult	25%	(1)
A little difficult	25%	(1)
Somewhat difficult	25%	(1)
Very difficult	25%	(1)
Extremely difficult	0%	(0)
	Mean	**Range**
Parent age (estimated from birth year)	37.25	30-45
Length of time in community[1]	13.00	8-19
Number of children	2.75	1-6

Sample: Parent focus group survey (N=4); [1]N=3

TABLE B.4 EDUCATOR AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Educator Perceptions[1]		Specialists Perceptions	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Supervisor/supervisee	30%	(13)	40%	(2)
Like a friend	27%	(12)	0%	(0)
Like family	16%	(7)	0%	(0)
Mentor/ mentee	11%	(5)	40%	(2)
A colleague or peer	11%	(5)	0%	(0)
Employer/ employee	2%	(1)	0%	(0)
Consultant/ client	2%	(1)	20%	(1)

Samples: Educator experiences survey (N=46) and staff experiences survey of child care and quality specialists (N=5); [1]N=44

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TABLE B.5 EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SPECIALISTS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Agree[1]		Disagree[2]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Emotional Connection				
My specialist respects my child care work[3]	98%	(41)	2%	(1)
I feel that my specialist appreciates me[3]	93%	(39)	7%	(3)
I feel that my specialist cares about me even when I do things she does not agree with[4]	67%	(26)	33%	(13)
My specialist offers help in response to my needs around caring for children[3]	95%	(40)	5%	(2)
My specialist/visitor recognizes my strengths[3]	93%	(39)	7%	(3)
I feel that my voice is heard[5]	90%	(38)	12%	(5)
Goal Setting				
We work together on setting goals[5]	95%	(41)	5%	(2)
We agree on what is important for me to work on[5]	98%	(42)	2%	(1)
It is easy to work with my specialist when planning for children in my care[5]	91%	(39)	9%	(4)
I am an equal partner in the relationship I have with my specialist[5]	86%	(37)	14%	(6)
Support Received				
My specialist/home visitor is available when I have a problem or question[6]	98%	(40)	2%	(1)
Talking with my specialist/visitor helps me with difficult situations[7]	93%	(37)	8%	(3)
I feel comfortable sharing difficult situations with my specialist/visitor[3]	93%	(39)	7%	(3)
Working with my specialist/visitor has made me feel more capable[6]	93%	(38)	7%	(3)
My specialist/visitor understands my concerns[6]	98%	(40)	2%	(1)
I feel I can pick up the phone and call my specialist/visitor[6]	95%	(39)	5%	(2)
My specialist/visitor provides me with good information about how to take care of children[6]	95%	(39)	5%	(2)
My specialist/visitor provides me with good information about how to work with parents and families[6]	93%	(38)	7%	(3)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=46); [1]Agree or Strongly Agree; [2]Disagree or Strongly Disagree
[3]N=42; [4]N=39; [5]N=43; [6]N=41; [7]N=40

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TABLE B.6.   EDUCATOR COMFORT SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR PROGRAMS AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE OF EDUCATOR CIRCUMSTANCES AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Educators		Staff	
	Comfortable[1]		Majority of Educators[2]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
If there are other adults and children living in your household[3]	92%	(36)	100%	(5)
Your child care schedule[4]	93%	(37)	80%	(4)
Your financial situation[4]	83%	(33)	40%	(2)
The role that faith and religion play in your child care[4]	83%	(33)	20%	(1)
Your culture and values[4]	90%	(36)	80%	(4)
Changes in your home[4]	95%	(38)	60%	(3)
Health or mental health issues you may experience[5]	86%	(32)	60%	(3)
Health or mental health issues family members in your home may experience[5]	89%	(33)	20%	(1)
Other jobs you may hold in addition to child care[3]	85%	(33)	40%	(2)

Sample 1: Educator experiences survey (N=46); 1Comfortable or Very Comfortable; ³N=39; ⁴N=40; ⁵N=37
Sample 2: Staff experiences survey of child care and quality specialists (N=5); ²Most or All

TABLE B.7 EDUCATOR REPORT OF THEIR COMFORT WITH HOME VISITS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Agreement[1]		Disagreement[2]	
Comfort with home visits	%	N	%	N
Visits from a specialist make me feel uncomfortable[1]	16%	(7)	84%	(37)
Visits take time away from caring for children[2]	14%	(6)	86%	(37)
Visits are stressful for children in care[3]	10%	(4)	90%	(38)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=46); ¹Agree or Strongly Agree; Disagree or ²Strongly Disagree; ¹N=44; ²N=43; ³N=42

TABLE B.8 STAFF REPORT OF EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT IN VISITS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Half of visits to every visit		Never to occasionally	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Educators bring up things discussed in past conversations	40%	(2)	60%	(3)
Educators try out new suggested activities	20%	(1)	80%	(4)
Educators try out a new approach that was discussed	40%	(2)	60%	(3)
Educators initiate a discussion about their work with a child or family	80%	(4)	20%	(1)

Sample: Staff experiences survey of child care and quality specialists (N=5)

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TABLE B.9 EDUCATOR PARTICIPATION IN PEER SUPPORTS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN[1]

	%	N
Social activities for educators and families	44%	(18)
An educator recognition event	44%	(18)
A support group or networking meeting with other FCC educators	34%	(14)
Peer mentoring from another FCC educator	15%	(6)
Other	2%	(1)
None	24%	(10)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=46);
[1]N=41; Note: Survey asked educators if they had participated in any of these activities within the last 12 months

TABLE B.10 CCAT-R SCORES FOR EDUCATORS BY AGE GROUP AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Actual Scores				CCAT-R Ranges		
Under 3 years old	**N**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**	**Poor**	**Acceptable**	**Good**
Caregiver Nurturing	38	1.21	-0.17	2.4	<1.17	1.17-1.83	>1.83
Caregiver Engagement	38	11.83	4.92	16.75	<7.83	7.83-9.50	>9.50
Bidirectional Communication	38	16.2	8.92	30.08	<13.17	13.17-17.92	>17.92
Unidirectional Communication	38	8.99	4.08	17.42	<8.08	8.08-11.42	>11.42
Three to five years old	**N**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**	**Poor**	**Acceptable**	**Good**
Caregiver Nurturing	7	0.45	-0.33	1.67	<0.50	0.50-0.83	>0.83
Caregiver Engagement	7	11.24	8.08	13.25	<7.33	7.33-9.42	>9.42
Bidirectional Communication	7	17.36	13.5	21.25	<12.83	12.83-18.08	>18.08
Unidirectional Communication	7	9.05	6.42	11.67	<6.58	6.58-10.17	>10.17

Sample: Quality observations by focus child (N=45)

TABLE B.11 EDUCATOR REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS DURING SPECIALIST VISITS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Half of visits to every visit		Never to occasionally	
Activities	**%**	**(N)**	**%**	**(N)**
Discuss individual children[1]	84%	(37)	16%	(7)
Discuss the child care environment[2]	67%	(29)	33%	(14)
Plan curriculum and activities[2]	60%	(26)	40%	(17)
Get help with child assessments[3]	55%	(22)	45%	(18)
Discuss issues or concerns that come up with parents of children[3]	51%	(22)	49%	(21)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=46); [1]N=44; [2]N=43; [3]N=40

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TABLE B.12 CCAT-R MATERIALS CHECKLIST AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN		
Items	Under 3	3-5 Years[1]
Furnishings		
Soft materials in area used for child care	96%	100%
A high chair or booster seat available for children who need them	88%	~
Adult chairs with materials used to boost child to table level, OR child size table and chairs available	80%	86%
Children are allowed to find space to be alone	40%	43%
Materials		
Cuddly, soft or pretend play toys like dolls or teddy bears	100%	~
Children's books	100%	86%
Toys that teach color, size shape	~	100%
Push or pull toys available	96%	~
Pretend play materials	96%	100%
Toys that talk or make music or sounds	96%	100%
Toys that have pieces that fit together	88%	~
Construction toys that can be put together in different ways	88%	86%
Toys that permit free expression	~	86%
Toys that help learn numbers	~	86%
Toys that let child work his/her muscles	80%	~
Painting, coloring or writing materials	72%	86%
Toys that require fine motor movements	~	57%
Puzzles	~	43%
Toys with wheels that children can ride on	64%	43%
Materials for sand and water play	32%	29%

Sample: FCC homes with a quality observation (N=25 for children under 3 and N=7 for children 3 and over); ~Item not included in checklist for age group

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TABLE B.13 CCAT-R HEALTH & SAFETY CHECKLIST AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

Items	Under 3	3 and over+
Food Preparation		
Infants and toddlers are not put to bed with bottles, or only with bottles of water	100%+	~
Hands are washed before food is prepared	94%	100%
Toddlers seated or head propped when holding own bottle	93%	~
Pot handles turned to back of stove*	86%+	N/A
Infants held while bottle fed	70%	~
Raw meat and fish handled appropriately	N/A	N/A
Environment		
Clean, safe indoor space	100%	~
Blind cords out of infant's reach*	100%	~
No peeling or chipped paint in area children have access to	100%	100%
Smoke detector [or sprinkler] installed	100%	100%
Rotary fan or space heater is child-safe (heating coils or blades protected)	100%!	100%!
No protruding nails on furniture or boards	100%	100%
Dangerous substances are locked away or out of reach*	100%	100%!
Crib or playpen slats no more than 2 inches apart*	100%	~
Toys and objects small enough to be swallowed kept away from children*	100%	100%
Children do not use walker	100%	~
Area used for child care has enough light to read by	100%	100%
Temperature in area used for child care is comfortable enough that children or are not shivering or sweating	100%	100%
Some fresh air in the area used for child care	100%	100%
Good space for resting (home is quiet)	100%	100%
Radiators and pipes covered	100%!	100%!
Electrical cords are inaccessible or secured*	96%	86%
Educator can see or hear children age 5 and under at all times*	96%	86%
Children are not left in play pens, swings, jumpers, strollers or other restraints for more than half of the observation period unless sleeping	92%	86%
Gate on stairs for mobile infant or toddler*	89%	~
Quiet area for sick children available	81%	75%!
Safety caps on electrical sockets*	77%	100%
Routines		
Children's hands are washed after using the toilet	100%!	100%!
Extra clothes available to change children	100%+	100%!
Babies under one are put to sleep on back or side*	100%+	~
Feeding is appropriate: cereal fed with spoon, sandwiches and finger food in small pieces	100%	100%
Children are safe while being changed*	100%	100%!
Caregiver washes hands with soap and water or sanitizing lotion after each diapering or when helping children with toileting	94%	100%!
Diapers are checked and changed often (observe at least one checking during observation period, no prolonged odor)	79%	75%!
Accessible place for children to wash hands (e.g., steps or stool near sink)	63%	100%
Outdoor Play		
Covered sandbox	100%!	100%!
No protruding nails on outdoor play equipment	100%	100%!
Outdoor play area free of animal feces and/or broken glass	100%	100%!
Soft surface under swings (e.g., grass or dirt)*	90%	100%!

Sample: FCC homes with a quality observation (N=25 for children under 3 and N=7 for children 3 and over). The total N per item varies from 1-25 depending on the number of households where the item was applicable. ~Item not included in 3 and over checklist; *red flag item; !Fewer than 5 observations; + Fewer than 10 observations, interpret with caution

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TABLE B.14 EDUCATOR REPORT OF BUSINESS SUPPORTS AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN[1]		
	%	**(N)**
Any Business Support	**90%**	**(37)**
Enrolling families	73%	(30)
Finding substitute care	63%	(26)
Paperwork and record keeping	61%	(25)
Managing a child care business	59%	(24)
Developing contracts with families	51%	(21)
Marketing	41%	(17)
Tax preparation	34%	(14)
Advocacy around zoning or budget cuts	15%	(6)
Bulk purchasing opportunities	15%	(6)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=46); [1]N=41

TABLE B.15 STAFF EXPERIENCES WITH REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN				
	Frequently occurs[1]		**Infrequently occurs[2]**	
My supervisor made my supervision a priority regardless of what was going on within our program	100%	(6)	0%	(0)
I was able to think about what I've learned from recent visits to FCC homes	67%	(4)	33%	(2)
My supervisor helps me to set appropriate professional boundaries with educators I work with	67%	(4)	33%	(2)
Supervision sessions provided me with protected time to talk about my work amidst the busyness of our program	50%	(3)	50%	(3)
We focused on my work with educators free from other program distractions	50%	(3)	50%	(3)
I had adequate time to "just talk" about the work I do with educators without feeling rushed	50%	(3)	50%	(3)
I talked about my actions and how they affect the work I do with educators	50%	(3)	50%	(3)
My supervisor helped me "process" how my work can be done successfully	50%	(3)	50%	(3)
We scheduled and maintained weekly individual supervision sessions	33%	(2)	67%	(4)

Sample: Staff experiences survey (N=6); [1]Occurs at least sometimes; [2]Occurrs occasionally or rarely

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TABLE B.16 STAFF REPORT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT LITTLE PEOPLE FCCN

	Agreement[1]		Disagreement[2]	
People at this agency will support me if I try something new in my work	100%	(6)	0%	(0)
No one at this agency would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	100%	(6)	0%	(0)
I receive sufficient recognition for my work	83%	(5)	17%	(1)
My unique skills and talents are valued and utilized by other staff at this agency	67%	(4)	33%	(2)
It is difficult to asks other staff at this agency for help*	0%	(0)	100%	(6)

*Sample: Staff experiences survey (N=6); [1]Agree or Strongly Agree; [2]Disagree or Strongly Disagree; *negative item*

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APPENDIX C:
DOWNTOWN FCCN TABLES

TABLE C.1 STAFF CHARACTERISTICS FROM SURVEY AT DOWNTOWN FCCN	%	(N)
Gender		
Female	100%	(5)
Male	0%	(0)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black or African American	0%	(0)
White	20%	(1)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	80%	(4)
Asian or Pacific Islander	20%	(1)
Highest Level of Education		
Associate's degree	40%	(2)
Bachelor's degree	60%	(3)
Masters degree	0%	(0)
Time employed by the network[1]		
Less than 2 years	25%	(1)
2-5 years	25%	(1)
6-10 years	50%	(2)
Prior job		
Family child care educator	40%	(2)
Other early care and education	20%	(1)
Related field	40%	(2)
Other	0%	(0)

Age (estimated from birth year)[1]	Mean	Range
	38	28-51

Sample: Staff experiences survey (N=5); [1]N=4

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TABLE C.2 EDUCATOR CHARACTERISTICS BY DATA TYPE AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Entire Sample		Educator Experiences Survey		Interviews[1]		Observations[2]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Gender	**(N=47)**		**(N=29)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=28)**	
Female	100%	(47)	100%	(29)	100%	(9)	100%	(28)
Male	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)
Race/Ethnicity	**(N=47)**		**(N=29)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=28)**	
Black or African American	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)
White	9%	(4)	7%	(2)	11%	(1)	11%	(3)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	91%	(43)	97%	(28)	89%	(8)	82%	(23)
Other	4%	(2)	3%	(1)	11%	(1)	4%	(1)
Highest level of education	**(N=47)**		**(N=29)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=28)**	
High school diploma/GED or less	43%	(20)	38%	(11)	44%	(4)	54%	(15)
Some college, no degree	28%	(13)	28%	(8)	22%	(2)	21%	(6)
Associate's degree	13%	(6)	17%	(5)	11%	(1)	14%	(4)
Bachelor's degree	9%	(4)	10%	(3)	0%	(0)	4%	(1)
Graduate degree	9%	(4)	7%	(2)	22%	(2)	7%	(2)
College or graduate level coursework[3]	**(N=26)**		**(N=17)**		**(N=5)**		**(N=13)**	
Child development or early childhood education	92%	(24)	88%	(15)	80%	(4)	100%	(13)
Psychology	31%	(8)	41%	(7)	60%	(3)	23%	(3)
Business or administration	23%	(6)	18%	(3)	0%	(0)	31%	(4)
Elementary education	12%	(3)	18%	(3)	20%	(1)	0%	(0)
Other	12%	(3)	12%	(2)	40%	(2)	8%	(1)
Child development associate credential (CDA)*	**(N=27)**		**(N=27)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=10)**	
Has CDA	59%	(16)	59%	(16)	56%	(5)	70%	(7)
Does not have CDA	41%	(11)	41%	(11)	44%	(4)	30%	(3)
Years as a family child care educator	**(N=47)**		**(N=29)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=28)**	
Less than 2 years	19%	(9)	28%	(8)	56%	(5)	14%	(4)
2-5 years	19%	(9)	14%	(4)	11%	(1)	25%	(7)
6-10 years	19%	(9)	21%	(6)	11%	(1)	14%	(4)
11-20 years	36%	(17)	34%	(10)	22%	(2)	39%	(11)
More than 20 years	6%	(3)	3%	(1)	0%	(0)	7%	(2)
Time spent with network	**(N=46)**		**(N=29)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=27)**	
Less than 6 months	7%	(3)	10%	(3)	11%	(1)	0%	(0)
6 months to 1 year	11%	(5)	17%	(5)	22%	(2)	4%	(1)
1-3 years	28%	(13)	24%	(7)	33%	(3)	33%	(9)
4-10 years	20%	(9)	14%	(4)	11%	(1)	26%	(7)
More than 10 years	35%	(16)	34%	(10)	22%	(2)	37%	(10)
Other paid jobs	**(N=51)**		**(N=40)**		**(N=12)**		**(N=25)**	
Has another paid job	2%	(1)	3%	(1)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)
Does not have another paid job	98%	(50)	98%	(39)	100%	(12)	100%	(25)
Difficulty level living on household income	**(N=47)**		**(N=29)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=28)**	
Not at all difficult	43%	(20)	45%	(13)	33%	(3)	39%	(11)
A little difficult	28%	(13)	21%	(6)	33%	(3)	29%	(8)
Somewhat difficult	15%	(7)	14%	(4)	11%	(1)	18%	(5)
Very difficult	13%	(6)	17%	(5)	11%	(1)	11%	(3)
Extremely difficult	2%	(1)	3%	(1)	11%	(1)	4%	(1)
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Educator Age (estimated from birth year)	**(N=44)**		**(N=28)**		**(N=9)**		**(N=25)**	
	46.05	29-63	45.46	29-63	45.33	33-61	46.96	33-61

*Samples: Full educator sample (N=47) (included 29 responses from educator experiences survey and 18 responses from demographic survey); Educator experiences survey (N=29); Interview sample (N=9); Quality observation sample (N=28); [1]The interviews are a subsample of the total survey sample. [2]There is some overlap between survey sample and observation sample; [3]Out of educators who answered having completed at least some college for highest level of education; *Question not asked in demographic survey, all data comes from full survey sample (N=29)*

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TABLE C.3 PARENT FOCUS GROUP CHARACTERISTICS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN	%	(N)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black or African American	33%	(4)
White	8%	(1)
Hispanic origin or Latinx	58%	(7)
Asian or Pacific Islander	17%	(2)
Highest Level of Education		
High school diploma/GED or less	67%	(8)
Some college, no degree	17%	(2)
Associate's degree	8%	(1)
Bachelor's degree	0%	(0)
Graduate degree	8%	(1)
Employment Status[1]		
Employed	80%	(8)
Not Employed	10%	(1)
Other	10%	(1)
Relationship Status		
Married/Live with a partner	8%	(1)
Single, live alone with my child(ren)	67%	(8)
Single, live in a shared household (with relatives or friends)	8%	(1)
Other	17%	(2)
Non-traditional hour work[2]		
Only work traditional hours	33%	(3)
Work non-traditional hours	67%	(6)
Difficulty living on household income[3]		
Not at all difficult	0%	(0)
A little difficult	64%	(7)
Somewhat difficult	27%	(3)
Very difficult	9%	(1)
Extremely difficult	0%	(0)
	Mean	**Range**
Parent age (estimated from birth year)[2]	31.56	19-45
Number of years in community[2]	6.36	0.2-19
Number of children	2.08	1-4

Sample: Parent focus group survey (N=12); N=4; [1]N=10; [2]N=9; [3]N=11;

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	Educator Perceptions		Specialists Perceptions	
TABLE C.4 EDUCATOR AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN				
	%	**(N)**	**%**	**(N)**
Supervisor/supervisee	38%	(11)	0%	(O)
A colleague or peer	31%	(9)	0%	(O)
Like a friend	24%	(7)	33%	(1)
Like family	7%	(2)	0%	(O)
Mentor/ mentee	0%	(0)	33%	(1)
Employer/ employee	0%	(0)	0%	(O)
Consultant/ client	0%	(0)	33%	(1)

Samples: Educator experiences survey (N=29) and staff experiences survey of child care specialists (N=3)

TABLE C.5 EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SPECIALISTS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN	Agree[1]		Disagree[2]	
	%	**(N)**	**%**	**(N)**
Emotional Connection				
My specialist respects my child care work	97%	(28)	3%	(1)
I feel that my specialist appreciates me	93%	(27)	7%	(2)
I feel that my specialist cares about me even when I do things she does not agree with[3]	93%	(26)	7%	(2)
My specialist offers help in response to my needs around caring for children	97%	(28)	3%	(1)
My specialist/visitor recognizes my strengths[3]	100%	(28)	0%	(0)
I feel that my voice is heard	93%	(27)	7%	(2)
Goal Setting				
We work together on setting goals[3]	93%	(26)	7%	(2)
We agree on what is important for me to work on[3]	93%	(26)	7%	(2)
It is easy to work with my specialist when planning for children in my care[3]	100%	(28)	0%	(0)
I am an equal partner in the relationship I have with my specialist[3]	96%	(27)	4%	(1)
Support Received				
My specialist/home visitor is available when I have a problem or question	100%	(29)	0%	(0)
Talking with my specialist/visitor helps me with difficult situations	97%	(28)	3%	(1)
I feel comfortable sharing difficult situations with my specialist/visitor	97%	(28)	3%	(1)
Working with my specialist/visitor has made me feel more capable	93%	(27)	7%	(2)
My specialist/visitor understands my concerns	97%	(28)	3%	(1)
I feel I can pick up the phone and call my specialist/visitor	100%	(29)	0%	(0)
My specialist/visitor provides me with good information about how to take care of children	93%	(27)	7%	(2)
My specialist/visitor provides me with good information about how to work with parents and families	93%	(27)	7%	(2)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=29); [1]A lot like or Exactly like my specialist; [2]Not at all or a little like my specialist; [3]N=28

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TABLE C.6 EDUCATOR COMFORT SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR PROGRAMS AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE OF EDUCATOR CIRCUMSTANCES AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Educators		Staff	
	Comfortable[1]		Majority of Educators[2]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
If there are other adults and children living in your household[3]	96%	(27)	67%	(2)
Your child care schedule[3]	100%	(28)	100%	(3)
Your financial situation[3]	79%	(22)	67%	(2)
The role that faith and religion play in your child care	97%	(28)	33%	(1)
Your culture and values	100%	(29)	100%	(3)
Changes in your home[3]	100%	(28)	100%	(3)
Health or mental health issues you may experience	90%	(26)	33%	(1)
Health or mental health issues family members in your home may experience[3]	79%	(22)	33%	(1)
Other jobs you may hold in addition to child care[4]	93%	(25)	100%	(3)

Sample 1: Educator experiences survey (N=29); [1]Comfortable or Very Comfortable; [3]N=39; [4]N=40; [5]N=37
Sample 2: Staff experiences survey of child care specialists (N=3); [2]Most or All

TABLE C.7 EDUCATOR REPORT OF THEIR COMFORT WITH HOME VISITS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Agreement[1]		Disagreement[2]	
Comfort with home visits	%	N	%	N
Visits from a specialist make me feel uncomfortable	14%	(4)	86%	(25)
Visits take time away from caring for children	17%	(5)	83%	(24)
Visits are stressful for children in care	24%	(7)	76%	(22)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=29); [1]Agree or Strongly Agree; Disagree or [2]Strongly Disagree

TABLE C.8 STAFF REPORT OF EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT IN VISITS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Half of visits to every visit		Never to occasionally	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Educators bring up things discussed in past conversations	67%	(2)	33%	(1)
Educators try out new suggested activities	33%	(1)	67%	(2)
Educators try out a new approach that was discussed	33%	(1)	67%	(2)
Educators initiate a discussion about their work with a child or family	100%	(3)	0%	(0)

Sample: Staff experiences survey of child care specialists (N=3)

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TABLE C.9 EDUCATOR PARTICIPATION IN PEER SUPPORTS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	%	N
Social activities for educators and families	72%	(21)
An educator recognition event	69%	(20)
A support group or networking meeting with other FCC educators	48%	(14)
Peer mentoring from another FCC educator	21%	(6)
Other	7%	(2)
None	3%	(1)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=29); Note: Survey asked educators if they had participated in any of these activities within the last 12 months

TABLE C.10 CCAT-R SCORES FOR EDUCATORS BY AGE GROUP AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Actual Scores				CCAT-R Ranges		
Under 3 years old	**N**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**	**Poor**	**Acceptable**	**Good**
Caregiver Nurturing	29	0.34	-0.75	1.25	<1.17	1.17-1.83	>1.83
Caregiver Engagement	29	10.86	8.08	15.58	<7.83	7.83-9.50	>9.50
Bidirectional Communication	29	15.45	7.63	24.58	<13.17	13.17-17.92	>17.92
Unidirectional Communication	29	9.06	4.75	14.25	<8.08	8.08-11.42	>11.42
Three to five years old	**N**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**	**Poor**	**Acceptable**	**Good**
Caregiver Nurturing	24	-0.08	-0.75	0.25	<0.50	0.50-0.83	>0.83
Caregiver Engagement	24	11.44	7.25	14.75	<7.33	7.33-9.42	>9.42
Bidirectional Communication	24	17.86	11.6	26.08	<12.83	12.83-18.08	>18.08
Unidirectional Communication	24	9.68	5.88	15.25	<6.58	6.58-10.17	>10.17

Sample: Quality observations by focus child (N=53)

TABLE C.11 EDUCATOR REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS DURING SPECIALIST VISITS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Half of visits to every visit		Never to occasionally	
Activities	**%**	**(N)**	**%**	**(N)**
Discuss the child care environment	52%	(15)	48%	(14)
Get help with child assessments	45%	(13)	55%	(16)
Discuss individual children	45%	(13)	55%	(16)
Plan curriculum and activities	45%	(13)	55%	(16)
Discuss issues or concerns that come up with parents of children	38%	(11)	62%	(18)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=29)

TABLE C.12 CCAT-R MATERIALS CHECKLIST AT DOWNTOWN FCCN		
Items	**Under 3**	**3-5 Years**
Furnishings		
Children are allowed to find space to be alone	100%	100%
Adult chairs with materials used to boost child to table level,	88%	~
OR child size table and chairs available	96%	100%
Soft materials in area used for child care	96%	95%
A high chair or booster seat available for children who need them	84%	~
Materials		
Toys that have pieces that fit together	100%	~
Pretend play materials	100%	100%
Painting, coloring or writing materials	100%	100%
Construction toys that can be put together in different ways	100%	100%
Children's books	100%	100%
Toys that talk or make music or sounds	100%	95%
Cuddly, soft or pretend play toys like dolls or teddy bears	96%	~
Toys that permit free expression	~	95%
Toys that help learn numbers	~	95%
Toys that teach color, size shape	~	86%
Toys that let child work his/her muscles	92%	~
Push or pull toys available	84%	~
Toys that require fine motor movements	~	91%
Puzzles	~	91%
Toys with wheels that children can ride on	56%	64%
Materials for sand and water play	48%	45%

Sample: FCC homes with a quality observation (N=25 for children under 3 and N=22 for children 3 and over); ~Item not included in checklist for age group

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TABLE C.13 CCAT-R HEALTH & SAFETY CHECKLIST AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

Items	Under 3	3 and over
Food Preparation		
Hands are washed before food is prepared	100%	100%
Infants and toddlers are not put to bed with bottles, or only with bottles of water	100%!	~
*Pot handles turned to back of stove**	92%	89%
Infants held while bottle fed	71%+	~
Toddlers seated or head propped when holding own bottle	71%+	~
Environment		
Clean, safe indoor space	100%	~
Rotary fan or space heater is child-safe (heating coils or blades protected)	100%+	100%+
No protruding nails on furniture or boards	100%	100%
*Toys and objects small enough to be swallowed kept away from children**	100%	100%
*Educator can see or hear children age 5 and under at all times**	100%	100%
Area used for child care has enough light to read by	100%	100%
Temperature in area used for child care is comfortable enough that children or are not shivering or sweating	100%	100%
Some fresh air in the area used for child care	100%	100%
Quiet area for sick children available	100%	100%
Radiators and pipes covered	100%!	100%+
Children do not use walker	100%	~
Smoke detector [or sprinkler] installed	100%	94%
Children are not left in play pens, swings, jumpers, strollers or other restraints for more than half of the observation period unless sleeping	96%	100%
Good space for resting (home is quiet)	96%	95%
*Blind cords out of infant's reach**	96%	~
*Crib or playpen slats no more than 2 inches apart**	95%	~
*Dangerous substances are locked away or out of reach**	89%+	88%+
*Electrical cords are inaccessible or secured**	76%	73%
No peeling or chipped paint in area children have access to	75%	73%
*Safety caps on electrical sockets**	65%	67%
*Gate on stairs for mobile infant or toddler**	47%	~
Routines		
Caregiver washes hands with soap and water or sanitizing lotion after each diapering or when helping children with toileting	100%	100%+
Children's hands are washed after using the toilet	100%	100%+
Extra clothes available to change children	100%+	100%+
*Babies under one are put to sleep on back or side**	100%+	~
*Children are safe while being changed**	100%	100%+
Accessible place for children to wash hands (e.g., steps or stool near sink)	90%	84%
Feeding is appropriate: cereal fed with spoon, sandwiches and finger food in small pieces	94%	94%
Diapers are checked and changed often (observe at least one checking during observation period, no prolonged odor)	74%	67%
Outdoor Play		
No protruding nails on outdoor play equipment	100%	86%
*Soft surface under swings (e.g., grass or dirt)**	100%!	75%!
Outdoor play area free of animal feces and/or broken glass	95%	88%
Covered sandbox	40%+	17%+

*Sample: FCC homes with a quality observation (N=25 for children under 3 and N=22 for children 3 and over). The total N per item varies from 1-25 depending on the number of households where the item was applicable. ~Item not included in 3 and over checklist; *red flag item; !Fewer than 5 observations; + Fewer than 10 observations, interpret with caution*

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INSIDE FAMILY CHILD CARE NETWORKS

TABLE C.14 EDUCATOR REPORT OF BUSINESS SUPPORTS AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	%	(N)
Any business support	**93%**	**(27)**
Managing a child care business	66%	(19)
Paperwork and record keeping	66%	(19)
Finding substitute care	48%	(14)
Developing contracts with families	45%	(13)
Enrolling families	38%	(11)
Marketing	38%	(11)
Advocacy around zoning or budget cuts	21%	(6)
Tax preparation	14%	(4)
Bulk purchasing opportunities	3%	(1)

Sample: Educator experiences survey (N=29)

TABLE C.15 STAFF REPORT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Agreement[1]		Disagreement[2]	
My unique skills and talents are valued and utilized by other staff at this agency[3]	100%	(4)	0%	(0)
People at this agency will support me if I try something new in my work	80%	(4)	20%	(1)
No one at this agency would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	80%	(4)	20%	(1)
I receive sufficient recognition for my work[3]	75%	(3)	25%	(1)
It is difficult to asks other staff at this agency for help*	0%	(0)	100%	(5)

*Sample: Staff experiences survey (N=5); [1]Agree or Strongly Agree; [2]Disagree or Strongly Disagree; [3]N=4; *negative item*

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TABLE C.16 STAFF EXPERIENCES WITH REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION AT DOWNTOWN FCCN

	Frequently occurs[1]		Infrequently occurs[2]	
I was able to think about what I've learned from recent visits to FCC homes	100%	(5)	0%	(0)
I talked about my actions and how they affect the work I do with educators	100%	(5)	0%	(0)
We focused on my work with educators free from other program distractions	80%	(4)	20%	(1)
I had adequate time to "just talk" about the work I do with educators without feeling rushed	80%	(4)	20%	(1)
My supervisor made my supervision a priority regardless of what was going on within our program	60%	(3)	40%	(2)
Supervision sessions provided me with protected time to talk about my work amidst the busyness of our program	60%	(3)	40%	(2)
My supervisor helped me "process" how my work can be done successfully	60%	(3)	40%	(2)
My supervisor helps me to set appropriate professional boundaries with educators I work with	60%	(3)	40%	(2)
We scheduled and maintained weekly individual supervision sessions	40%	(2)	60%	(3)

Sample: Staff experiences survey (N=5); [1]Occurs at least sometimes; [2]Occurrs occasionally or rarely

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APPENDIX D:
COMPARISON TABLES

TABLE D.1 SELECTED EDUCATOR CHARACTERISTICS	Little People FCCN	Downtown FCCN
Race/Ethnicity		
Black or African American	6%	0%
White	13%	9%
Hispanic origin or Latinx	13%	91%
Asian or Pacific Islander	68%	0%
Other	0%	4%
Highest level of education		
High school diploma/GED or Less	26%	43%
Some college, no degree	26%	28%
Associate's degree	15%	13%
Bachelor's degree	23%	9%
Graduate degree	9%	9%
Primary reason for doing work		
To have a job that lets me work at home	33%	24%
It is my personal calling or career	31%	45%
To help children	24%	24%
It is a step toward a related career	5%	3%
To help children's parents	5%	3%
To earn money	2%	0%

Note: This is a summary table. For more detail and information about the sample, please see tables 2.3, 3.3, 2.4, and 3.4.

TABLE D.2 EDUCATOR PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS	Little People FCCN	Downtown FCCN
Age groups		
Infants (0-12 months)	64%	55%
Toddlers (13-36 months)	80%	83%
Preschoolers (3-5 years old, not in kindergarten)	31%	93%
School-agers (5 years and older	2%	62%
Has an assistant	**29%**	**21%**
Mean number of children	**3.58**	**6.31**

Note: This is a summary table. For more detail and information about the sample, please see tables 2.6 & 3.6.

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TABLE D.3 SELECTED STAFF CHARACTERISTICS		
	Little People FCCN	Downtown FCCN
Race/Ethnicity		
Black or African American	0%	0%
White	67%	20%
Hispanic origin or Latinx	17%	80%
Asian or Pacific Islander	17%	20%
Prior work as a family child care educator	33%	40%
Prior work in other ECE	33%	20%

Note: This is a summary table. For more detail and information about the sample, please see tables B.1 & C.1

TABLE D.4 NETWORK SERVICES		
	Little People FCCN	**Downtown FCCN**
Visits to Educators' Homes	Monthly	Twice monthly visits to FCC homes
	Annual safety inspection visit	
	3 CACFP visits annually	
	QRIS coaching and visits	
Training	Workshops or workshop series in evenings or weekends (English only)	80-hour training provided in 5-hour sessions every other weekend
		4 professional days required by state
Peer support	40-hour peer-to-peer mentoring by a mentor prior to opening their FCC home	
	Provider appreciation event; annual international potluck	Educator recognition event; social activities for educators, families, and children
	Networking at trainings	Networking at trainings
Business Support	Parent referrals	Parent referrals
	Invoicing of parent fees	Invoicing of parent fees
	Payments to educators	Payments to educators
	Training workshops on business management, marketing, and tax preparation	Training workshops on business management, marketing, and tax preparation
	Substitute pool	Substitute pool
		Transportation for children
Financial support	Support with accessing public scholarships or grants for continued education	Support with accessing public scholarships for continued education
	Liability insurance	
	Emergency fund for educators	$1000 to $5000 no-default loans
Family supports	Referral service and processing of parent fees	Specialized staff to support and connect families to resources
		Transportation to and from care

Erikson Institute

TABLE D.5 NETWORK CHARACTERISTICS

	Little People FCCN	Downtown FCCN
Geographic areas served	Suburban	Small urban
Characteristics of families served	Mostly white, middle- to upper-class professionals	Mostly families of color who were eligible for CCDF child care subsidy, TANF priority populations, and/or child welfare child care supports
Revenue sources	Private tuition from parents, membership fees from educators	State child care subsidy programs
Regulatory role	Licensing and monitoring	Subsidy administration
Number of educators	92	62
Number of staff child care specialists	5, including a QRIS/CACFP specialist	3
Other staff	Workforce development director	Training coordinator, parent engagement coordinator, social worker

TABLE D.6 AVERAGE OBSERVED QUALITY OF EDUCATOR-CHILD INTERACTIONS ON THE CCAT-R

	Little People FCCN	Downtown FCCN	CCAT-R Ranges		
Under 3 years old	**(N=38)**	**(N=29)**	**Poor**	**Acceptable**	**Good**
Caregiver nurturing	1.21	0.34	<1.17	1.17-1.83	>1.83
Caregiver engagement	11.83	10.86	<7.83	7.83-9.50	>9.50
Bidirectional communication	16.2	15.45	<13.17	13.17-17.92	>17.92
Unidirectional communication	8.99	9.06	<8.08	8.08-11.42	>11.42
Three to five years old	**(N=7)**	**(N=24)**	**Poor**	**Acceptable**	**Good**
Caregiver nurturing	0.45	-0.08	<0.50	0.50-0.83	>0.83
Caregiver engagement	11.24	11.44	<7.33	7.33-9.42	>9.42
Bidirectional communication	17.36	17.86	<12.83	12.83-18.08	>18.08
Unidirectional communication	9.05	9.68	<6.58	6.58-10.17	>10.17

Note: This is a summary table. For more detail and information about the sample, please see tables B.10 & C.10.