FAMILY CHILD CARE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON LEAVING, STAYING, AND ENTERING THE FIELD:

Findings from the Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply

"Family child care has been around for such a long, long time. It should have never been at a point where it almost was extinguished."

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FINDINGS FROM THE MULTI-STATE STUDY OF FAMILY CHILD CARE DECLINE AND SUPPLY

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PREFACE

We collected nearly all data for this study during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic and amid uprisings for racial justice across the U.S. Our study research questions and protocols did not focus on the pandemic or on educators' experiences with racism and oppression as possible contributors to shifts in family child care supply. As we started data analyses, however, we pivoted to using a racial equity lens that more intentionally centered the voices of the many women of color who participated in our study. The four authors of this report are all white women who were born and raised in the U.S. We acknowledge that these identities come with positions of racial and economic privilege. Throughout our data analysis process, we sought to explore and examine our own biases and assumptions in relation to the narratives in our data and to assume a stance of cultural and racial humility. We are especially grateful to our collaborators and colleagues of color who reviewed drafts of this report, as well as those scholars who have centered the experiences of educators of color long before us, who deepened our analyses and pushed us to highlight examples of systemic racism and inequality throughout this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Data from national studies show a steep decrease in the number of regulated family child care (FCC) programs operating in the United States over the past two decades. The 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) data indicate a 25% decrease in the number of listed educators since 2012 (Datta et al., 2021), which mirrors the finding from the National Child Care Licensing Studies that the number of small FCC homes fell by half from 2005 to 2017 (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance [NCECQA], 2020a).

Although FCC educators represent a relatively small proportion of home-based child care (HBCC) providers, they may be more engaged in ECE systems and more likely to be influenced by ECE policies compared to other HBCC providers, most of whom are unpaid and may care only for relatives. HBCC providers, including FCC educators, disproportionately care for children from low-income families and infants and toddlers compared to center-based programs (Barnett & Li, 2021; Datta et al., 2021; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team [NSECE], 2015). In addition, families from marginalized communities of color including Black, Latinx, immigrant, and Indigenous as well as families living in rural communities may rely on FCC settings (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021; Henly & Adams, 2018).

The *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply* sought to deepen our understanding, from the perspective of current and former FCC educators, about how the intersecting factors that contribute to actual exit from FCC work as well as the rewards that counter these challenges to keep educators in FCC work. The findings are intended to inform efforts to reverse the decrease in regulated FCC supply. The study used a mixed-methods design including focus groups, interviews, and surveys to explore the following research questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the reasons for exit among FCC educators? Where do FCC educators go after they leave regulated FCC work?

2. What are the factors that keep FCC educators engaged in regulated FCC work?

3. Why do individuals enter regulated FCC and what challenges do they face becoming regulated?

STUDY SAMPLE

- Data collection across 4 states: California (Los Angeles County), Florida, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin

- 25 focus groups with 149 currently operating regulated FCC educators

- Interviews with 30 former regulated FCC educators who left the work between 2007-2020

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KEY FINDINGS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What are the reasons for exit among FCC educators? Where do FCC educators go after they leave regulated FCC work?

Three core challenges intersected to contribute to former educators' decisions to leave the FCC workforce: (1) early care and education (ECE) systems; (2) economics of FCC; and (3) working conditions.

- 80% of former FCC educators reported challenges with ECE systems (i.e., licensing, subsidy, and Quality Rating Improvement Systems).
  - » Inequitable subsidy payment rates and policies
  - » Costs and burdens related to unfunded mandates and increased requirements across ECE systems
  - » Center-centric regulations that did not fit the realities of FCC settings
  - » Disrespectful and distrustful child care licensing staff

- 63% of former educators reported challenges related to the economics of FCC, which often intersected with ECE system challenges such as low subsidy payment rates.
  - » Low child enrollment to support a sustainable income from FCC
  - » Lack of access to benefits, including health insurance, paid time off, and retirement

- 53% of former educators reported difficult working conditions that contributed to exit.
  - » Working long hours, often alone
  - » Managing a business in one's home

Educators' narratives of their FCC career trajectories indicated three types of exit stories from FCC: (1) tipping points; (2) slow burnout; and (3) other reasons.

- For 43% of former educators, personal challenges, such as personal and family illness, loss of housing, or family dynamics served as tipping points that led them to make the decision to close their businesses.
- For 27% of former educators, intersecting challenges of FCC work contributed to a slow burnout over time.
- For 30% of former educators, other reasons led to the decision to leave including failure to successfully launch an FCC business, outgrowing FCC, or the realization that they did not enjoy FCC work.

Two thirds (67%) of former FCC educators stayed in the ECE field after closing their business, indicating an attachment to ECE work.

- Former FCC educators went on to work as teachers or teaching assistants in center-based preschools, Head Start, or public-school programs. Our findings suggest that if FCC were a better job with more supports and equitable compensation and benefits, fewer people would leave the work for center-based and school-based ECE jobs.

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RESEARCH QUESTION 2
What are the factors that keep FCC educators engaged in regulated FCC work?

Although a majority of currently operating FCC educators in our study had not considered leaving in the past year, over a third (35%) had considered exit. Educators emphasized rewards that are inherently part of FCC work when asked what keeps them going in the face of challenges.

- Joy of working with children

- Enduring relationships with families of children

- Satisfaction of doing work that is perceived as a calling to make a difference in the lives of families and children in the community

- Sense of work control and agency that comes from operating a home-based business

Our findings suggest that the rewards that keep educators in the work may vary based on an educator's personal and professional characteristics and experiences.

- Black educators were more likely than white educators to speak of making a difference for children and families in their communities.

- White educators were more likely than Latina and other educators of color who were not Black to report that working with children and work control were factors that keep them in.

- More experienced educators reported relationships with families as keeping them in FCC.

Educators cited supports that helped them stay in the field and that served as buffers against the challenges.

- Peers (including relationships with other educators in FCC associations) provided social, emotional, and information support.

- Family members provided both logistical and emotional support.

- Child care resource and referral agencies, FCC systems and networks, and unions offered financial support and hands-on help navigating ECE systems, but were not cited as the emotional support that kept educators in the work.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3
Why do individuals enter regulated FCC and what challenges do they face becoming regulated?

Educators chose to become regulated for a variety of reasons, including the legitimacy that regulation confers as well as the potential for increased and more stable income.

- Becoming regulated communicated to families that FCC environments and practices were safe and healthy. Regulation provided access to programs that provide additional funding streams which could increase their income. Licensed FCC educators also reported having the potential to care for larger numbers of children.

The most common challenges educators faced during the initial regulatory process included unclear information, system delays, high startup costs, and inspection concerns.

- Many of these challenges paralleled the challenges with ECE systems reported by former FCC educators, particularly those who left after a short time because they could not sustain their FCC businesses. Furthermore, some educators chose to become regulated at different levels (certification and registration), in states where this was an option, in order to avoid these licensing difficulties.

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IMPLICATIONS

This study was the first of its kind to examine the in-depth factors behind educators' decisions to enter, stay, and leave the FCC workforce. Findings suggest that educators who exit as well as those that engage in FCC work are not monolithic. Their individual demographics, lived experiences, and motivations for doing FCC work need to be considered when developing a policy response to decreases in FCC supply.

The findings have implications for future policy and program directions to redress the changes in the supply of regulated FCC. For FCC educators at all stages of their careers, making ECE systems more accessible and responsive to the realities of home-based child care is essential. In addition, systems reforms should prioritize increasing income and access to benefits for FCC educators, especially for educators living in marginalized communities of color and other communities facing inequities.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Family child care (FCC) educators[1] – individuals who offer paid child care in their own home for one or more non-related children – are an essential part of the early care and education (ECE) workforce (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team [NSECE], 2016). Although FCC educators represent a relatively small proportion of home-based child care (HBCC) providers, they may be more engaged in ECE systems and more likely to be influenced by ECE policies compared to other HBCC providers, most of whom are unpaid and may care only for relatives. HBCC providers, including FCC educators, disproportionately care for children from low-income families, infants, and toddlers compared to center-based programs (Barnett & Li, 2021; Datta et al., 2021; NSECE, 2015). HBCC providers are also more likely to offer nontraditional hour care for families compared to center-based programs (NSECE, 2015). In addition, families from marginalized communities of color (including Black, Latinx, immigrant, and Indigenous) as well as families living in rural communities may rely on HBCC settings (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021; Henly & Adams, 2018).

Most FCC educators are regulated by states to offer child care in their homes. Nearly all states license providers, requiring compliance and monitoring to ensure that basic health and safety features of the environment and practices are met (National Association for Regulatory Administration [NARA], 2017). Some states offer different levels of regulation (such as certification or registration) for FCC educators who may opt to care for fewer children than the threshold that requires licensing. In addition, many states exempt HBCC providers from any type of regulation to care for children if they are related to all of the children in care, care for fewer children, or provide care for fewer hours than licensing, certification, or registration requires. These providers are often referred to as "license-exempt" or "legally exempt."

The last two decades have seen steep decreases in the number of regulated FCC programs operating in the United States (Datta et al., 2021; National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance [NCECQA], 2020a). These trends have likely been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting recession that forced thousands of child care programs to permanently close their doors (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020). The economic fallout from the pandemic appears to have disproportionately affected child care businesses owned and operated by people of color, including FCC providers. Although no nationally representative data exists on the experiences of FCC educators during the pandemic, anecdotal data suggests that FCC homes generally weathered it better than centers (NAEYC, 2020). Some reports suggest that Black and Latinx parents may have been more hesitant to continue using child care centers and may have preferred small, home-based settings such as FCC programs, given the significant risk of COVID-19 transmission in their communities (Adams & Minton, 2021). Recent federal investments in the child care sector through pandemic relief funding to states may help to reverse these trends with increased supports around rebuilding the supply of regulated FCC options for families. These changes in child care supply and the dynamics of parent demand highlight an urgent need to understand educators' own experiences with FCC work, the reasons behind this decline, and possible strategies to build back this sector of the ECE workforce.

This report presents findings from the *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply*. The study sought to better understand why regulated FCC educators in four states – California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin – enter the field, why they remain engaged, and why they ultimately may decide to leave FCC. While the study was conducted during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not designed to examine how the pandemic influenced workforce dynamics in FCC, although we asked about educators' experiences broadly. An earlier brief highlights these experiences specifically related to the pandemic (Porter et al., 2020). This study report begins with a brief overview of the literature on the historical and contemporary FCC context, including the conceptual model that informed this research. We then describe our methods and our analytic approach.

We present qualitative and quantitative findings from the study in three chapters that showcase the experiences of educators at different phases of their careers. First, we explore the stories of former educators who made the decision to close the doors of their FCC businesses (Chapter 2). Next, we learn from current educators about the aspects of their work that kept them engaged in the field (Chapter 3). Third, we focus on early career educators' experiences becoming regulated (Chapter 4). At the end of this report, we discuss how findings from this study may contribute to local, state, and federal policy decisions about how to expand the FCC workforce, better support current educators, and reverse the trajectory of declining supply (Chapter 5).

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1   In this report, we refer to family child care "educators" based on the preferences of participants in our study and the views expressed throughout our data collection that FCC providers are teachers and should be perceived as educators. Across participants in 21 focus groups, at least some participants in 13 groups preferred the term educator, teacher, or center/school; all participants in seven groups preferred the term provider, day care, or home; and all participants in one group did not have a preference.

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BACKGROUND

THE FCC WORKFORCE

The term "family child care" is used throughout the ECE field, but it often means different things in different contexts. In this report, we define FCC educators as individuals who are regulated (licensed, registered, or certified) by their state government to provide child care to at least one non-relative child in their own home. Our definition of FCC educators does not include HBCC providers who are license-exempt.

Variations in state licensing regulations that determine the threshold for the number of children in care at which a provider must be licensed create challenges for identifying the size and characteristics of the licensed FCC workforce. The 2012 and 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), a nationally representative survey, provides the most comprehensive picture. The data are based on surveys with listed providers, those who appear on state/national registries and lists such as licensing and subsidy. The NSECE did not ask whether these listed providers were licensed, certified or registered.

The NSECE data show a 25% decrease in listed providers between 2012 and 2019 (Datta et al., 2021). By 2019, there were fewer than 100,000 listed providers caring for 785,000 children compared to 121,000 listed providers who cared for close to a million children in 2012 (Datta et al., 2021). The decrease mirrors findings from the National Child Care Licensing Study, which indicated that the number of regulated FCC providers has been steadily declining. The number of small FCC homes, defined as FCC operated by a single adult, fell by half from 2005 to 2017, with the largest decreases from 2011 to 2014 and 2014 to 2017 (NCECQA, 2020a). During the same period, the number of large FCC homes, defined as FCC operated by two or more adults, increased by 7%, suggesting that large FCC programs may be a more sustainable approach to meeting the demands of FCC work. It is also possible that some small FCC providers expanded their programs into large businesses rather than leaving the field entirely. In either case, small FCC programs seem to be closing more rapidly than large FCCs are opening, resulting in a net decrease in the number of slots in regulated FCC homes (NCECQA, 2020a).

Race and ethnicity data are only currently available from the 2012 NSECE, which estimated 61% of listed providers were white, 14% were Black, 15% were Latinx, 5% identified with another racial or ethnic group, and 4% did not answer the race and ethnicity question (Hill et al., 2021). The 2012 NSECE also indicates that 81% of listed providers were born in the U.S. (Hill et al., 2021). The 2019 NSECE indicates that the majority (62%) of listed providers received any kind of government payment (e.g., from state child care subsidy, the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program, or public preschool) and cared for nine children on average (Datta et al., 2021).

Recent comparisons of 2012 and 2019 NSECE data highlight shifts in characteristics of the listed HBCC workforce, particularly the age of providers (Datta et al., 2021). In 2019, nearly half of all listed providers were over age 50, an increase of 10% from 2012, and significantly more providers had more than 20 years of experience working with young children (Table 1). At the same time, the share of listed providers between ages 30-49 and with between five and 10 years of experience fell significantly. These cross-sectional data seem to indicate that over time, the workforce is aging as experienced providers continue doing the work, while younger and less experienced providers leave FCC. These data do not tell us whether listed providers are moving to other child care work (e.g., center-based jobs), deciding to offer license-exempt or even illegal child care, or leaving ECE work completely. These findings suggest the need for additional research to identify the reasons for these workforce dynamics from providers' own perspectives, as well as the factors for entry and engagement in the field.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF FCC

Like other forms of HBCC, FCC has several distinctive features that set it apart from most center-based settings (Blasberg et al., 2019; Bromer, Porter, Jones, et al., 2021). The majority of FCC educators work alone to care for small, mixed-age groups of children. In contrast to a center, where classrooms may mix children within a smaller age range, many FCC educators care for infants through school-aged children together in a single space (Blasberg et al., 2019). In addition, FCC educators typically do not have dedicated administrative staff as a center might. FCC educators report having to perform many roles throughout their day (Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; Hooper et al., 2019) and work many more hours than they are actively caring for children (NSECE, 2016), often without compensation for these additional work hours and tasks.

The home environment and rootedness in the neighborhood or community are also aspects of FCC that may look different from other ECE settings (Blasberg et al., 2019; Bromer, Porter, Jones, et al., 2021). The intimate home spaces are at the heart of FCC and provide unique learning opportunities, such as cooking together in the kitchen or working in the educator's garden. At the same time, the wear and tear on an educator's own home space as well as the complicated dynamics between an educator's own family and child care can create additional financial as well as emotional stress (Faulkner et al., 2016; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; Todd & Deery-Schmitt, 1996).

FCC educators also often share a language and/or culture with the families in their care. Analysis of the 2012 NSECE data on listed HBCC providers indicates that the majority of listed providers shared a racial, ethnic, or linguistic match with the children in their care (Hill et al., 2021). For example, providers who spoke languages other than English were more likely to care for children who did not speak English at home. Providers who were not born in the U.S. were more likely to be caring for Latinx children and children who did not speak English at home. In addition to having benefits for their interactions with children and the provider-child relationship, this cultural and linguistic congruence allows for continuity from home to school and may yield a closer provider-parent relationship built on communication and trust (Downer et al., 2016; Paredes et al., 2018). The resulting long-term relationships between educators, children, and families – often spanning several years in care and sometimes for decades afterward – yield a closeness that is perhaps easier to cultivate in a smaller, home-based setting (Blasberg et al., 2019).

Despite these distinctive features that may appeal to families, FCC educators are historically underappreciated compared to center and school-based teachers (Meek et al., 2020; Vogtman, 2017). As women entered the workforce in increasing numbers and began to rely on out-of-home care in the mid-20th century, the safety – and later quality – of HBCC settings emerged as a significant issue (Nelson, 1990). To address this issue, states enacted regulations for FCC that were largely drawn from center-based care (Phillips et al., 1990). While many researchers went on to compare the quality of centers to FCC programs, a few began to document and critique the ways that negative perceptions of FCC educators are linked to issues of gender, race, and class (Armenia, 2009; Nelson, 1990; Tuominen, 2003). Today, FCC educators continue to push back again this devaluation of their work (Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; Shdaimah et al., 2018), while some scholars note that research, practice, and policy continue to ignore many of the strengths of FCC educators and instead rely on centers to set the benchmarks for high quality care (Blasberg et al., 2019; Bromer, Porter, Jones, et al., 2021; Forry et al., 2013; Goodson & Layzer, 2010; Hooper et al., 2019; Porter et al., 2010; Tonyan et al., 2017). Some researchers have noted that this kind of underappreciation – from families, policies, and society – may be related to greater stress, higher turnover, and/or less engagement in the work (Faulkner et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019).

TABLE 1. AGE & EXPERIENCE CHARACTERISTICS FROM LISTED HBCC PROVIDERS IN THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION 2012 & 2019

	2012	2019
Age		
60+	15%	19%**
50-59	24%	29%**
40-49	27%	23%**
30-39	23%	15%***
18-29	3%	4%
Years of experience		
More than 20 years	26%	34%***
More than 10 and ≤20	35%	35%
More than 5 and ≤10 years	21%	14%***
More than 1 and ≤5 years	14%	11%
1 year or less	2%	1%

***<0.01, **≤0.05, *,<0.1. Note: Data reproduced from A.R. Datta, C. Milesi, S. Srivastava, C. Zapata-Gietl, (2021). NSECE Chartbook - Home-based Early Care and Education Providers in 2012 and 2019: Counts and Characteristics. OPRE Report No. 2021-85, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration

THE FCC POLICY CONTEXT

FCC work takes place in the context of publicly-funded ECE systems, including state licensing systems, state child care subsidy programs funded through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and state or county Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). Small numbers of FCC educators participate in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (Del Grosso et al., 2019) or public preschool initiatives (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2019). Each of these systems has their own requirements, standards, and monitoring protocols.

FCC educators participate in these ECE systems at different rates depending on state policies and individual motivations. By definition, FCC educators, as defined in this report, participate in child care systems that regulate the numbers and ages of children in care. Regulations for FCC vary greatly across states (NARA, 2017). Typically, licensing regulates the threshold of number of children in care, adult-child ratios at which an FCC setting must be licensed, features of the environment, and provider characteristics (such as age and education level) (NCECQA, 2020b). Some states have levels of licensing (e.g., certification or registration) that allow for lower thresholds of children and may have fewer requirements. Over the years, these regulatory requirements have become more complex. Between 2014 and 2017, for example, many states enacted new licensing requirements, including orientation training, higher pre-service training requirements, new in-service training hours, nutrition and health regulations, and inspections before granting a license (NCECQA, 2020b).

FCC educators may also participate in state child care subsidy programs, funded by CCDF, which provide publicly-funded payments for child care in the form of reimbursements for child care providers serving eligible low-income families (Office of Child Care, 2016). Participation in the child care subsidy system varies; some educators may decide to care for only one or two children who receive a subsidy while others may exclusively serve families who are eligible for subsidies, and some may not serve subsidy-eligible families at all (Adams & Dwyer, 2021). Many FCC educators also participate in the CACFP as a source of funding for healthy meals and snacks (Adams & Hernandez-Lepe, 2021).

Requirements for participation in state subsidy programs have become more stringent since the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act that legislates requirements for the CCDF program. The law required states to conduct annual visits to FCC programs to monitor compliance with health and safety requirements, although some states such as California could opt to forgo these annual visits by paying a noncompliance fee. The law also required FCC educators who received child care subsidy payments to complete health and safety training in 10 topics, and participate in comprehensive background checks for all members of their household age 18 and older (Office of Child Care, 2016). Many states have incorporated these changes into their licensing requirements as well (NCECQA, 2020b; 2020c).

QRISs are state or county systems that rate programs on a variety of professional standards and program practices, provide this information to parents to facilitate child care searches, and facilitate quality improvement through financial incentives and professional development. In some states, participation is mandatory for regulated providers and/or those who receive CCDF subsidies; in others participation is voluntary (BUILD Initiative & Child Trends, 2019). FCC participation rates in QRIS are about half that of centers, and most FCCs remain at the lower levels of ratings (BUILD Initiative & Child Trends, 2019; NCECQA, 2019). QRIS participation often comes with quality improvement grants or bonuses that are tied to higher ratings and/or is linked to tiered subsidy reimbursement rates (i.e., increased payments per child at higher QRIS rating levels) (BUILD Initiative & Child Trends, 2019). As is the case with licensing and subsidy requirements, many states are revising or have revised their QRIS standards with new requirements for FCC providers and states have faced challenges engaging FCC in these systems (BUILD Initiative & Child Trends, 2019).

A growing body of literature has explored the challenges and constraints that ECE systems create for FCC educators (Adams & Dwyer, 2021; Adams & Hernandez-Lepe, 2021; Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021; Hallam et al., 2017; Porter et al., 2020). However, little work to date has explored the degree to which these challenges are specifically related to educators' decisions to leave the field of regulated FCC. The present study fills this gap in the literature.

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CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In the companion literature review (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021) that was conducted as part of the *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply*, our team developed a conceptual model for the shifting supply of FCC in the United States, including the factors that may lead current FCC educators either to remain engaged in or choose to leave the regulated FCC workforce (see Figure 1). The conceptual model identified three core factors that may contribute to FCC workforce dynamics, particularly a decrease in supply. Working conditions included long hours, isolation, managing home and child care responsibilities, and working with families; business sustainability included income and benefits, enrollment and parent demand issues, and managing business and administrative responsibilities; and ECE system factors included cross-system inconsistencies, paperwork burden, quality standards that are center-centric, insufficient access to professional development, and low payment rates, particularly from the subsidy system. We hypothesized that these three core factors overlap and intersect with one another to make FCC work challenging. When combined with personal experiences, limited support, and/or economic and social contextual factors (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism,[2] and economic inequality), many educators may ultimately choose to leave regulated FCC work. The extent to which FCC educators leave FCC for other jobs in the ECE sector or related work versus leave child care work altogether is unknown.

FIGURE 1. A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE SHIFTING SUPPLY OF REGULATED FCC
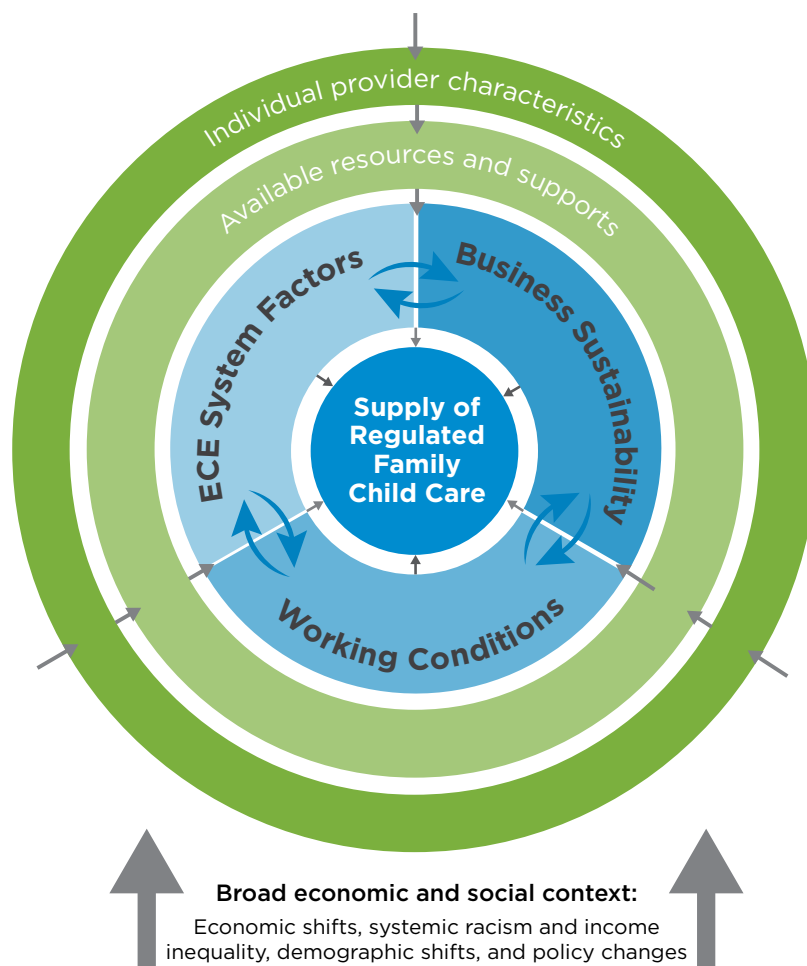
As our literature review indicated, there is some evidence linking working conditions and business sustainability to exit from the regulated FCC workforce. However, there is scant literature that examines ECE systems, or the intersections of these challenges with individual and contextual factors, as reasons for exit. The *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply* sought to deepen our understanding, from the perspective of current and former FCC educators, about how these factors intersect and contribute to actual exit from FCC work as well as the factors that counter these challenges to keep educators in FCC work. The findings are intended to inform efforts to reverse the decrease in regulated FCC supply.

From: Bromer, J., Melvin, S., Porter, T., & Ragonese-Barnes, M. (2021). The shifting supply of regulated family child care in the U.S.: A literature review and conceptual model. Chicago, IL: Herr Research Center, Erikson Institute.

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2   Systemic racism is defined in this report as the policies and institutional practices that work to perpetuate injustice and inequity for people of color, particularly those from Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and immigrant communities. This includes the ways that institutions enact practices that lead to unequal outcomes for different racial and ethnic groups of educators, families, and children; as well as the implicit bias, discrimination, and interpersonal racism that arise from historical legacies of white supremacy and oppression (Andrews et al., 2019; Hawn Nelson et al., 2020).

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

The *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply* used a mixed-methods design including focus groups, interviews, and surveys to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the reasons for exit among FCC educators? Where do FCC educators go after they leave regulated FCC work?

2. What are the factors that keep FCC educators engaged in regulated FCC work?

3. Why do individuals enter regulated FCC and what challenges do they face becoming regulated?

While the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on FCC educators was not a focus of this study, we did ask educators to share their experiences during the early days of the pandemic. Findings from an analysis of these experiences are reported in an earlier brief (Porter et al., 2020).

SITE SELECTION

The *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply* identified four states with diverse policy contexts and changes in supply of regulated FCC across different regions in the U.S.: California (Los Angeles County), Florida, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin (Tables 2 and 3). We reached out to stakeholders working with FCC in each state in order to learn more about the state policy context as well as to help us help us identify partners who could help us recruit educators for the study. Although we do not include specific quotes from these stakeholders, interviews with ECE policy and program stakeholders provided information about implementation of state and local policies which provided insights into the details of educators' narratives. Our partners included a combination of child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies, child care subsidy agencies, and ECE and FCC associations across multiple regions of each state. In addition to assistance with recruitment, partners also provided information about the state policy context and offered feedback on study protocols.

As Table 2 indicates, child care licensing policies varied across the four states. California and Florida make a distinction between small and large family child care programs. Massachusetts allows a program to care for more children if there is another educator present but does not designate small or large FCC programs. Florida, in addition to licensing, has registration for FCC educators, which requires educators to provide certain information annually, including proof of background checks and training. Wisconsin offers certification for providers who want to care for fewer numbers of nonrelative children. Certification requires educators to meet certain requirements including passing a background check, completion of training hours, and receiving an annual on-site inspection. California, Florida, and Wisconsin allow for license-exempt care for small numbers of non-relative children. Providers in Massachusetts cannot regularly care for non-relative children; however, individuals who have certain agreed upon arrangements with neighbors are license-exempt.

TABLE 2. LICENSING POLICIES FOR FCC IN STUDY STATES				
	California	Florida	Massachusetts	Wisconsin
State distinguishes between small and large FCC[1]	Yes	Yes	No	No
Maximum capacity[1]	Small: 6-8 children Large: 12-14 children	Small: 6-10 children Large: 8-12 children	6-8 children or 10 children with an assistant	8 children
Maximum capacity includes children who reside at the licensee's home[1]	Yes (Under age 10)	Yes (Under age 13)	Yes (Under age 10)	Yes (Under age 7)
Certification/Registration[1]	No	Yes (Registration, Max: 6-10 children)	No	Yes (Certification, Max: 6 children, 1-3 non-relative children)[2]
License-exempt care is an option when caring for non-relative children[1]	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Line staff are assigned to only FCC homes[3]	No	No	Yes	No
State requires background checks for licensed child care[3]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fingerprint record checks[3]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Staffing background checks[3]	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Use of inter-rater reliability training or methods[3]	Yes	No	No	No

[1]Respective state licensing regulations: Community Care Licensing Division, 2016; XXIX, Fla. Stat. § 402. 302., 2021; XXIX, Fla. Stat. § 402.313, 2021; 606 C.M.R. § 7.00, 2012; Division of Early Care and Education, 2020; [2]Wisconsin Child Care Certification, n.d.; [3]NARA, 2017

CCDF subsidy and QRIS policies also vary by state (See Table 3). Only Massachusetts has a state- funded infrastructure of FCC systems that manage the subsidy system for FCC educators. The other three states manage subsidy payments through local, state, and county ECE agencies that work with both FCC and center-based programs. Three of the states deliver subsidy payments directly to FCC educators; in Wisconsin FCC educators collect subsidy payments from parents. In all four states, FCC educators are required to collect subsidy co-payments from families, although educators in California may receive assistance with payment collection from their local child care agencies.

Massachusetts and Wisconsin both have statewide QRISs and participation in QRIS is required for subsidy participation. California has a consortium of local QRISs that adhere to similar standards set at the state level; all QRISs in California are voluntary and not required for subsidy participation or by licensing. In Florida, there are voluntary QRISs in some localities as well as a statewide quality performance system which requires FCC educators to be rated at a minimum level on a quality assessment in order to care for children in the state's subsidy system.

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TABLE 3. STATE SUBSIDY AND QUALITY SYSTEMS AND POLICIES FOR FCC IN STUDY STATES				
	California	Florida	Massachusetts	Wisconsin
Who manages the subsidy system[1]	Local child care resource & referral agencies	Early Learning Councils	Family child care systems or child care resource & referral agencies	State or county government agency
Who pays the FCC educator the subsidy reimbursement[2]	Agency pays FCC educator directly	Agency pays FCC educator directly	Agency pays FCC educator directly	Agency pays parents, who then pay the FCC educators
Who collects the subsidy copayment[2]	FCC educator or local agency	FCC educator	FCC educator	FCC educator
Family is required to pay the difference between the maximum subsidy reimbursement rate and the FCC educator rate[2]	Always	Always	Never	Always
State has a QRIS or other quality system[3]	State/County	County QRIS, Statewide Quality Performance System	State	State
Participation in quality system is required for subsidy participation[3]	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tiered Subsidy Reimbursement[3]	No	Yes (tied to quality assessment scores, child assessment completion)	Yes (tied to QRIS level)	Yes (tied to QRIS, punitive at level 1-2, base at level 3)

[1]Office of Child Care, 2021; [2]Dwyer et al., 2020; [3]BUILD Initiative & Child Trends, 2019

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DATA COLLECTION

A total of 25 focus groups were conducted across the four states with a total of 149 currently operating FCC educator participants (Table 4). Twenty-three focus groups were conducted virtually by Zoom from March through July 2020. Two in-person focus groups were conducted in Florida in February 2020. Focus groups lasted between 90 and 120 minutes.[3] Thirty former educators who left FCC completed interviews conducted by telephone from February to November 2020. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Seven focus groups and five interviews were conducted in Spanish, while the rest were conducted in English. One focus group was conducted in English with bilingual Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) speakers. All focus groups and nearly all interviews were recorded with participants' consent. For one interview, detailed notes were taken in the absence of consent to record. All focus group and interview recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy. Spanish focus groups and interviews were translated into English and checked for accuracy. In addition, each focus group and interview participant completed a short survey which was available in both English and Spanish. IRB approval was obtained for this study prior to data collection.

TABLE 4. DATA COLLECTION BY STATE					
	CA	FL	MA	WI	Total
Focus groups[1]	7	6	5	7	25
Focus group participants (currently regulated FCC educators)	41	45	28	35	149*
Interview participants (formerly regulated FCC educators)[2]	7	7	6	10	30
Total participants	**48**	**52**	**34**	**45**	**179**

[1]*Seven focus groups with 39 FCC educators were conducted in Spanish, 3 in CA, 3 in FL, and 1 in MA. [2]Five interviews were conducted in Spanish, 3 in CA and 2 in MA. *1 focus group participant did not complete the survey. There was a total of 148 focus group survey responses.*

MEASURES

Focus group and interview protocols were based on our literature review (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021) and piloted in consultation with our state and local partners. Focus group protocols included questions for experienced and newer FCC educators as well as for those who participated in state subsidy and QRIS. Interview protocols were designed to allow educators to tell their story of exit from regulated FCC as well as to probe specifically for factors that may have led to their decision to close their businesses (see Appendix A). Surveys were developed for all study participants and were designed to gather demographic and FCC program information.

All protocols were developed in both English and Spanish. The focus group and interview protocols were piloted in Spanish and English with providers who were not part of our study sample. We used cognitive interviewing techniques to gather information from pilot participants about the protocol questions. Revisions to protocols were made based on feedback received from the pilots.

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3   Focus group administration procedures were changed after the first groups due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Focus group sample

The *Multi-State Study of Family Child Care Decline and Supply* intentionally oversampled educators with a few characteristics of interest for the focus groups with current educators: educators of color, educators whose primary language was Spanish, and those who lived in rural areas. We also sought to recruit newer educators (which we defined as those who had been operating FCC for five or fewer years), although we did not oversample for these educators.

We oversampled educators or color as well as those whose primary language was Spanish, because prior research indicates that women of color are often underrepresented in studies of FCC (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021; Turner, 2020), and less is known about the experiences of this important subset of the FCC workforce (Meek et al., 2020; 2021). Educators of color comprised approximately two thirds of our sample of current educators. Educators whose primary language was Spanish comprised 17% of our interview sample and 26% of our focus group sample (Table 5). Additionally, we intentionally recruited from rural areas[4] in Massachusetts and Wisconsin, which resulted in four focus groups with educators who lived in rural areas.

To better address our research questions about reasons for entering regulated FCC and the components of the work that keep educators engaged long term, we recruited educators who were relatively new to FCC work. A total of 31% of focus group participants had been providing regulated FCC for five or fewer years and were considered new. The remaining 69% were experienced educators (those who had been providing regulated FCC for more than five years) (Table 5).

As Table 5 indicates, most educators in the focus groups were licensed (92%), although five educators in Wisconsin were certified and seven educators in Florida were registered. Just over half of focus group participants reported having an assistant in their FCC program. Of these educators, 64% reported having a relative assistant, and 36% reported a non-relative assistant.

TABLE 5. DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

	Interview participants: Formerly regulated FCC educators N=30		Focus group participants: Currently regulated FCC educators N=148[1]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Language of interview or focus group				
English	83%	(25)	74%	(110)
Spanish	17%	(5)	26%	(38)
Gender[2]				
Female	97%	(28)	99%	(146)
Male	3%	(1)	1%	(2)
Educator age[3,4] (Mean (SD))	48.29	(11.04)	49.78	(10.71)
Associates degree or higher[2]	59%	(17)	57%	(84)
Race/Ethnicity[5]				
Black/African American	34%	(10)	26%	(38)
White	34%	(10)	34%	(50)
Other POC	31%	(9)	40%	(58)
Latinx or Hispanic origin	28%	(8)	33%	(48)
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%	(1)	6%	(9)
Indigenous	0%	(0)	1%	(1)
Have another paid job	37%	(11)	15%	(22)
Prior work in ECE[6]	50%	(15)	32%	(46)
Considered leaving in past year			35%	(52)

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4   We determined an area as rural based on conversations with local partners.

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TABLE 5. DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

	Interview participants: Formerly regulated FCC educators N=30		Focus group participants: Currently regulated FCC educators N=148[1]	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Intent to stay[7]				
<2yrs			9%	(13)
2-5yrs			19%	(28)
As long as able			72%	(106)
Regulation type[7]				
Licensed	93%	(28)	92%	(135)
Registered/certified	7%	(2)	8%	(12)
Years regulated[6]				
5 or fewer years	27%	(8)	31%	(45)
More than 5 years	73%	(22)	69%	(101)
Mean (SD)	10.27	(7.63)	12.88	(9.92)
Number of children in care (Mean (SD)[7]	7.90	(5.48)	8.01	(3.93)
Ages of children in care[8]				
Infants	83%	(24)	62%	(91)
Toddlers	100%	(29)	88%	(130)
Preschool	86%	(25)	81%	(119)
School age	55%	(16)	59%	(86)
Assistant[7]				
Has an assistant	73%	(22)	52%	(77)
Relative assistant	64%	(14)	64%	(49)
Non-relative assistant	36%	(8)	36%	(28)
No assistant	27%	(8)	48%	(70)
Offers care during non-traditional hours[8]	69%	(20)	46%	(68)
Early morning care (4am to 5:59am)	62%	(18)	27%	(39)
Evening care (6pm to 7:59pm)	62%	(18)	38%	(56)
Late night or overnight care (8pm to 3:59am)	45%	(13)	24%	(36)
Weekend care	41%	(12)	23%	(34)
Cares for own child in child care	57%	(17)	34%	(50)
Cares for a child with a disability	63%	(19)	28%	(41)
Participation in systems				
Subsidy	83%	(25)	60%	(89)
Quality System	47%	(14)	47%	(69)
CACFP	90%	(27)	80%	(119)
Participates in an association	60%	(18)	35%	(52)

[1]Although 149 educators participated in the focus groups, we only have survey responses from 148 educators; [2]One missing former educator response; [3]Age when former educator left regulated FCC; [4]2 missing former educator and 4 missing focus group responses; [5]1 missing former educator and 2 missing focus group responses; [6]2 missing focus group responses; [7]1 missing focus group response; [8]1 missing former educator and 1 missing focus group response

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Interview sample

The demographic characteristics of the former educators were similar to those of current educators including race, education, and experience (Table 5), though their work experiences differed in some respects from those of current educators. Twice as many reported holding another paid job in addition to FCC work. A majority reported offering nontraditional hours (69%) compared to less than half (46%) of current FCC educators (Table 6). Former educators were also more likely to care for their own child (57%) when they did FCC work and to care for a child with a disability (63%) compared to current educators. Nearly three quarters reported having an assistant compared to slightly more than half of current educators. Nearly all former educators participated in their state's subsidy system (83%) compared to only two thirds of current educators (60%). Some of these differences may be explained, in part, by the way the questions were asked. Former educators may have been thinking about the entire time they were open while current educators were likely responding based on their situation at the time of data collection.

We did not intentionally sample former educators based on demographic or other characteristics. The primary criterion for selection was having left regulated FCC in 2015 or after (within five years prior to data collection). However, we faced challenges identifying educators who had left FCC during this time frame and decided to interview four educators who had left more than five years prior to data collection (see Table 6). We were also intentional in recruiting former FCC educators who were Spanish speakers in California, Florida, and Massachusetts. In addition, we intentionally recruited Black former FCC educators in Wisconsin, because stakeholders suggested that they had experienced particular challenges with systems.

TABLE 6. YEARS INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS LEFT REGULATED FCC

	Former Educators N=30	
	%	(N)
2007 - 2014	13%	(4)
2015 - 2019	83%	(25)
2020	3%	(1)

ANALYTIC APPROACH

All focus group and interview analyses were conducted using NVivo qualitative analysis software. An initial coding tree was created based on the categories identified in our literature review (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021) and protocol questions (see Appendix A). Every third transcript was coded for reliability, and codes with kappa values below 0.8 were discussed and consensus was reached. In total, 55 transcripts were coded and 20 transcripts (36%) were checked for reliability.

A second round of coding used open and axial methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) in order to first generate more specific subcodes and then to reorganize codes into broader themes. A member of the research team checked all revised codes for accuracy and generated counts for the revised codes.

Following thematic coding, interviews with former educators were analyzed via the creation of concept maps that illustrated each person's story, including codes and quotes for why they entered FCC, the challenges that led to the decision to close their business, and their current work. These maps were used as an initial way to become familiar with the data (Spiers et al., 2019). Maps were reviewed by four members of the research team and then categorized by factor(s) for the decision to leave the FCC workforce. Consensus was reached on these factors and another round of coding was conducted to identify examples from the narratives to support the different factors for exit. When sharing full-length stories about former educators, we use pseudonyms to protect participant confidentiality.

Once qualitative codes were finalized, we created a set of quantitative variables for the most prominent themes (e.g., reasons for exit, reasons for persistence). These variables and survey data were analyzed in Stata 16. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics and, where sample sizes allowed, chi square tests and t-tests in order to observe demographic and programmatic differences in educators' responses. We present both qualitative and statistically significant quantitative findings in Chapters 2 through 4.

In Chapter 2, where we discuss findings from our smaller sample of former educators, we conducted Fisher's exact tests due to the small expected cell sizes. These analyses are exploratory, and the results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size.

In Chapter 3, where we analyze data from our full sample of current educators, we conducted logistic regressions on the "rewards of FCC work" theme codes in order to observe statistically significant differences while holding other variables constant. A total of 117 out of 148 educators talked about rewards of the work, with between 28 and 86 references coded at each theme. All logistic

regression models included the same set of predictors (binary variables for Black, other person of color,[5] and whether educators had their own children in their program, as well as a continuous variable for years of experience). Given our moderate sample size, possible predictors were selected based on theoretical motivation (i.e., we expected that these variables might explain some differences in educator persistence) and model parsimony (i.e., we wanted to maximize predictive power by using the same small number of covariates for all models). Although our research questions did not specifically ask how race and ethnicity may influence workforce dynamics in FCC, we decided to include these analyses because our qualitative data strongly indicated that issues around systemic racism and inequities may play a role in FCC educators' experiences. Appendix B includes tables presenting these models. Throughout this chapter, we highlight educator characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, years of experience) in their quotations when there was a statistically significant difference in reports of the theme.

In Chapter 4, we analyze the smaller subset of focus group data from new FCC educators as well as data from experienced and former FCC educators who reported on their initial experiences becoming regulated. We report differences between new and experienced educators in our sample overall, but because of small sample sizes, we did not conduct any bivariate or multivariate analyses on reported themes in this chapter.

We include quotations throughout the report from FCC educator focus groups and interviews. Any identifying information was omitted in order to protect confidentiality. All Spanish language quotations in this report are translated into English in the narrative and are in the endnotes in Spanish.

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5   Educator race/ethnicity was categorized as Black (including any educators who identified as Black or African American, including Afro-Latina educators) or other person of color (POC; including educators who identified as Hispanic or Latina/o, Asian or Pacific Islander; American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous; and/or another racial/ethnic identity), compared to white educators (including educators that identified as white only) as the reference group. Variables were grouped in this way because 1) we were most interested in centering the funds of knowledge of educators of color compared to white educators, rather than between groups of educators of color; 2) we did not have an adequate sample size of Asian American or Indigenous educators to identify them separately and we did not want to exclude them from the analyses; and 3) descriptively, Latinx, Asian American, and other educators' responses were more similar to one another than to Black or white educators, indicating a three-group solution.

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CHAPTER 2: LEAVING FAMILY CHILD CARE

Prior correlational research on the factors behind FCC exit indicate that job-related stress was associated with intent to leave FCC work and with actual exit from FCC work (Swartz et al., 2016; Todd & Deery-Schmidt, 1996). Previous studies also indicate that income from FCC and business factors may also contribute to exit from the work although correlational findings are equivocal. Some studies find educators who generate lower income more likely to exit (Kontos et al., 1995) while others find no relationship between business income and FCC tenure (Weaver, 2002). Several prior descriptive studies have documented the array of challenges FCC educators face when they interact with and engage in ECE systems (Bultinck et al., 2019; Hallam et al., 2017; Henly & Adams, 2018). No correlational research has examined the relationship between ECE systems challenges for FCC educators and intent to exit or actual exit from the work (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021).

In addition to the paucity of research on reasons for FCC exit, no studies have examined the full work trajectories of FCC educators. Prior researchers have hypothesized different pathways of work after FCC exit (e.g., departure from the profession vs. turnover within child care) (Todd & Deery-Schmidt, 1996). Other research has looked at different segments of FCC employment histories including motivations for offering FCC and intentions to leave or stay in FCC work (Kontos et al., 1995).

This chapter draws on findings from interviews with 30 former FCC educators across the four states in our sample. We first present former educators' work trajectories – where they went after they left FCC. Then we describe thematic analysis to explore the primary challenges that led them to close their doors. Next, we share the complete stories of educators to gain a better understanding of their decision-making processes about leaving the field. We conclude with thematic analyses based on educator narratives about what would have kept them in the FCC workforce.

THE WORK TRAJECTORIES OF FORMER EDUCATORS

Although we did not specifically ask former FCC educators about their work trajectories, we did ask about when and why they started their FCC businesses in addition to questions about the work they were doing prior to FCC and the work they were doing after they left FCC. In their descriptions of how they started, many educators reported specific information about their prior work. Our data suggest that analyzing these trajectories may be important for understanding the reasons that educators may exit FCC.

Two thirds (67%, 20) of the former FCC educators in our sample reported staying in the ECE field after they left FCC work, suggesting an attachment to ECE work among many FCC educators (Table 7). Six of these 20 educators went on to become lead teachers in center-based or Head Start programs and four took jobs as teaching assistants or aides. Four

TABLE 7. WHAT EDUCATORS DO AFTER LEAVING REGULATED FCC?		
	Former Educators N=30	
	%	(N)
ECE	**67%**	**(20)**
Center or Head Start teacher	30%	(6)
Center or Head Start assistant/aide	20%	(4)
Informal or license-exempt child care or foster care	20%	(4)
Elementary school teacher K-3	15%	(3)
FCC related, other (coach, specialist, FCC assistant)	15%	(3)
Left ECE	**33%**	**(10)**
Carework related non ECE job	50%	(5)
Other job	40%	(4)
Not working	10%	(1)

continued to care for children in their homes as license-exempt child care providers (which was an option in California, Florida, and Wisconsin), or as foster parents. Three educators obtained teaching positions in K-3 schools and three reported employment in FCC-related work as an FCC assistant, an FCC coach, and a CPR instructor who offered trainings to FCC educators.

Of the third (33%, 10) who left the ECE field after closing their FCC programs, half (5) worked in a carework-related job such as nursing, youth disabilities coordinator, and elder care. Four went to unrelated work (e.g., driving for Uber, administrative work), and one reported being unemployed after closing her FCC home.

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Table 8 shows that half of our sample (50%; 15) reported holding jobs in the ECE field before starting their FCC businesses and half worked in non-ECE jobs or were not working at all. Just under half of the sample (47%; 14) also reported that they started FCC in order to stay home with their own young children. Close to a third (27%; 8) started FCC because they love working with children, 20% (6) thought they could make a good income doing FCC, and 7% (2) needed a job change and decided to try FCC work.

Of the 20 former educators who stayed in the ECE field after closing their FCC programs, 60% (12) held prior jobs in ECE and 55% (11) had started FCC as a way to stay home with their own young children, suggesting that FCC may be a way for those who see themselves as ECE professionals to stay in the field while also staying home with their own young children (Table 8). By contrast, seven of the 10 former educators who left the ECE field after FCC exit had worked in non-ECE unrelated jobs or had been unemployed prior to starting FCC. Equal numbers of these 10 former educators reported that they started FCC to stay home with their own children, they loved working with children, or they wanted to make money from a small business.

TABLE 8. TRAJECTORIES OF EXIT: THE WORK PATHWAYS OF FORMER FCC EDUCATORS

| | Former educators N=30 | | Current Job | | | |
| | | | Stayed in ECE N=20 | | Left ECE N=10 | |
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Prior work						
Had prior jobs in ECE	50%	(15)	60%	(12)	30%	(3)
Had prior jobs not in ECE or not working	50%	(15)	40%	(8)	70%	(7)
Reasons for starting FCC						
Stay home with own children	47%	(14)	55%	(11)	30%	(3)
Love children	27%	(8)	25%	(5)	30%	(3)
Make money/run a business	20%	(6)	15%	(3)	30%	(3)
Job change (laid off or needed a change)	7%	(2)	5%	(1)	10%	(1)

Our analysis of characteristics of former FCC educators who stayed in the ECE or a related field compared to those who left ECE, indicate that a higher proportion of Black FCC educators (70%; 7) left the ECE field after closing their FCC programs compared to non-Black educators (16%; 3, p<0.05). (See Appendix B, Table B1). All but one of these educators reported taking jobs in other industries; one was unemployed. A lower proportion of white FCC educators (10%; 1) left the ECE field compared to non-white educators (47%; 9, p<0.1). These findings could be related to disparities in wealth which may limit Black educators' desire to stay in the ECE field which has historically low levels of compensation.

We found several other characteristics that were related to FCC exit. More FCC educators who had a long tenure (more than five years) in FCC (77%; 17) stayed in ECE than those with a short tenure (five years or less) in FCC (38%; 3, p<0.1), suggesting that individuals who only stay in FCC for a short duration may feel less of a commitment to the field. More FCC educators who participated in any quality system in their state (86%; 12, p<0.1), or who participated in CACFP when they provided FCC (74%; 20, p<0.05), stayed in ECE than educators who did not participate in these ECE systems (50% and 0% respectively). Perhaps participation in ECE quality and monitoring systems was an indicator of attachment to the profession of ECE that motivated them to stay in the workforce. Finally, more educators who cared for any infants in their FCC programs (79%; 19) stayed in the ECE workforce compared to those who did not care for infants (20%; 1, p<0.05). Infant care may be an indication of love for children in general and commitment to ECE work.

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CHALLENGES CONTRIBUTING TO EXIT

In our interviews with former FCC educators, we asked them to tell us the stories about why they left FCC. Our thematic analysis of former FCC educators' reasons for exit revealed a set of core challenges that roughly paralleled our conceptual model (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021) although educators in our study used slightly different language to describe these challenges (see Figure 2). As Table 9 shows, nearly all of our sample of former FCC educators (97%; 29) told stories of exit that described at least one of three core challenges and, in most cases, described challenges that overlapped and intersected. These challenges included: (1) inequitable payment policies, costly and time-consuming requirements from ECE systems (primarily from state licensing and subsidy systems); (2) economics of sustaining an FCC business (including lack of benefits and unstable enrollment of children); and (3) difficult working conditions (including working long hours alone and management of child care and home life).

More than three quarters of the sample (24; 80%) reported at least two of the three core challenges and six educators reported all three challenges, suggesting that the intersection of challenges contributes to exit (Table 9). In addition to and often intersecting with these three core work-related challenges, two thirds of educators (63%; 19) in our sample reported other individual challenges such as personal factors (e.g., loss of housing, family dynamics, or illness) or loss of peer support. Across educator stories, we also heard about how systemic inequities including racism and discrimination shaped the experiences of doing FCC work.

FIGURE 2. INTERSECTING CORE CHALLENGES CONTRIBUTING TO EXIT FROM FCC
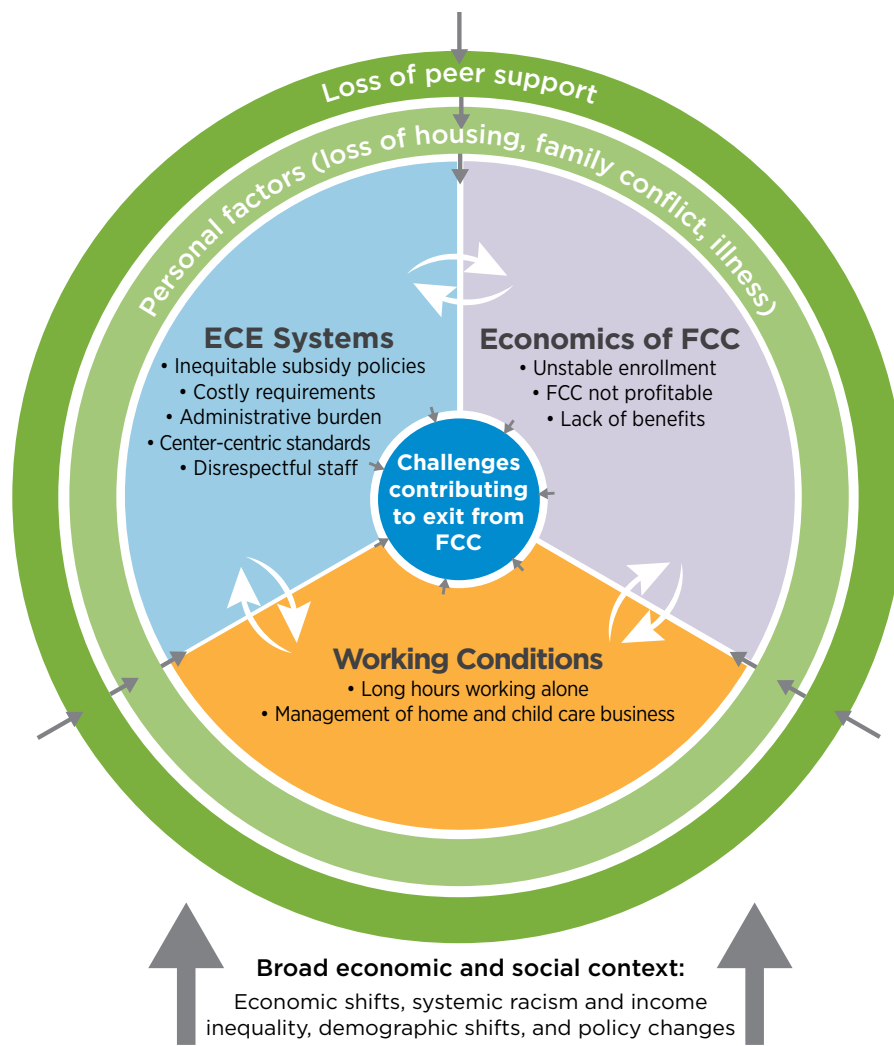
ECE systems was the most commonly reported challenge, with 80% (24) citing ECE systems as at least one of the reasons for closing their FCC program; four of these 24 educators reported that ECE systems alone resulted in their exit from FCC. Two thirds (63%; 19) cited the economics of running an FCC business as contributing to their decisions to leave FCC work and one educator reported that economics of FCC alone was the reason she closed her business. Just over half (53%; 16) reported difficult working conditions as a primary reason for closing their FCC businesses. In this section, we explore these themes related to educators' reasons for exit in more detail.

TABLE 9. CHALLENGES CONTRIBUTING TO EXIT		
	Former educators N=30	
	%	(N)
Core Challenges		
Any core challenge	97%	(29)
Any ECE systems	80%	(24)
ECE systems only	13%	(4)
Any economics	63%	(19)
Economics only	3%	(1)
Any working conditions	53%	(16)
Working conditions only	0%	(0)
Only one challenge	17%	(5)
At least two core challenges	80%	(24)
All three core challenges	20%	(6)
Other Challenges		
Any other challenges	63%	(19)
Personal challenges	60%	(18)
Loss of peer support	10%	(3)

PARTICIPATING IN INEQUITABLE AND BURDENSOME ECE SYSTEMS

A majority of former FCC educators (80%; 24) emphasized the challenges with systems that contributed to decisions to leave FCC work. These systems primarily included state licensing and subsidy programs. Far fewer educators talked about challenges with quality systems, although in Florida, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin, quality system participation was required for FCC educators who participated in the state's subsidy system (See Table 3). Even fewer educators reported challenges with the CACFP.

Reports from educators here are based on their perceptions of systems and policies which may not always align with the realities of how systems and policies are implemented or operationalized. Where possible, we note where educator perceptions may differ from the intention or actual implementation of ECE systems. Recent analyses suggest that states changed aspects of their licensing and subsidy policies between 2015 and 2019 (Dwyer et al., 2020; NCECQA, 2020b). The stories of systems-related challenges for the 20 former educators who had left FCC work prior to 2019, including four who had left prior to 2015, may not reflect these policy changes.

Four primary themes emerged from our interviews: inequitable reimbursement rates and subsidy policies that negatively affected income; increasing regulations and standards across systems that compounded already stressful working conditions; regulations and standards across systems that did not honor the home setting; and disrespectful licensing inspectors.

Inequitable subsidy payment rates and policies

Former educators across the four state policy contexts cited subsidy policies that created challenges around inadequate payment rates, collecting subsidy payments, and inequitable payment mechanisms. Seven former FCC educators in our sample cited inadequate income from their states' subsidy reimbursements that did not cover the cost of providing child care. An educator from Wisconsin summed up the low reimbursement rates when she stated: "I hated the subsidy program … There's no money in it. You just slowly go backwards."

For some educators, participation in their state's subsidy program created tensions with families as the subsidy payments were often set below the rates educators charged families who paid private fees. One educator from Wisconsin struggled with her need to earn a living from FCC relying on families who could not pay more than the low state subsidy rate. She talked about wanting to give herself a raise but had to depend on families paying extra "because Wisconsin Shares isn't going to give you that raise." Here she explained how that state's policy requiring families to pay the difference between the subsidy and private fee rate (See Table 3) created a financially unstable business model:

- "Wisconsin Shares would pay so much, whatever it was. Then they'd say, 'Well, if that's not how much it should be – then you should go after the families for the rest of the money.' If I was to do that, some families would have to pay me 100 and somethin' dollars a week. Sometimes it is half their check. Then you have the family sayin', 'Well, I can't afford that. I can't pay you that.' Then you'd have that argument, and then so I always ended up having to bargain with the families to pay the extra part and what they could afford. I'd work on that, and it just – at the end of the month or when I'd sit and do my finances, I was always negative."

For some educators, the low subsidy rates felt like a system that was stacked against them. They saw themselves as up against an unjust and dehumanizing bureaucracy. An educator in Massachusetts who blamed the subsidy system for her exit described what she saw as the unfair practice behind reimbursements. Educators were often expected to care for children for weeks prior to being paid rather than being paid up front. As a Latina educator whose primary language was Spanish explained, "There is a lot of injustice." This also included the lack of materials in Spanish, systems staff who did not speak Spanish, and a lack of support for educators with low literacy levels and low computer literacy skills. She closed her program in 2016 after 13 years in business, stating that she had "lost her motivation" to stay open as a result of all the hassles she had experienced. After closing, she stayed in the FCC field by offering coaching and consultation services for FCC educators.

More and more requirements and inconsistencies across ECE systems

Fourteen former FCC educators reported reasons for exit that combined costs and burdens related to unfunded mandates for increased requirements across ECE systems with low payment. A certified educator from rural Wisconsin, who reported all three core challenges and who transitioned out of FCC in 2018 to be a teacher in a Head Start program, described the issue of increasing requirements with high costs combined with low pay. In Wisconsin, FCC programs are required to participate in QRIS if they accept subsidy payment for children in care (see Table 3). This educator's frustration speaks to the multiple requirements and rules that she perceived as coming from the state systems:

- "Because the state was coming up with statutes or rules that were very hard for me as an in-home day care provider to meet, and they just don't pay enough. Everything I received went straight back into the day care."

She also pointed to changes in stricter food program requirements from the federal CACFP that meant higher uncompensated costs:

- "When I first started day care years ago, it was a lot more simple … Then it changed towards the end. You have to make it whole grains and no more juice. The whole grain breads that they want you to buy is way more expensive."

Additional requirements across systems also brought new levels of paperwork that lengthened an already long workday. Two educators from rural Wisconsin described increasing administrative tasks and regulations as what led them to give up their licenses. This was most likely related to the increased requirements from QRIS that were tied to the subsidy system. Both left FCC in 2019. One who left FCC after 26 years talked about how the QRIS requirements exacerbated her already difficult working conditions:

- "It was more stuff on my plate that I had to dish out and write every single day. It's like you're always on the computer or you're doing paperwork … A lot of us are sick of the paper trail."

She went on to describe her frustration with the new licensor who was "writing things up that did not make any sense." This frustration peaked when she was cited for failing to paint furniture that was constructed of pretreated wood which chips when

painted. These factors contributed to her decision to close and provide care as a license-exempt provider:

- "It gets to the point of when their business gets in my business, which is my face, I don't appreciate it too much. I love my kids, but I like my day care, my life a little bit more. I told my parents, I'm gonna let you know we're running without a license. They had no problem with it."

Inconsistencies and lack of uniform rules in licensing systems also exacerbated what FCC educators saw as burdensome requirements. Oversight around monitoring consistency through licensor inter-reliability checks was only required in California (see Table 2). Wisconsin educators talked about these inconsistencies. An educator who left licensed FCC after 13 years to provide license-exempt care, described feeling overwhelmed by inconsistencies in the licensing monitoring process:

- "Every time you switch licensors, they can come in and re-evaluate everything, because rules and things that were okay with the first licensor aren't necessarily okay with the next licensor. She deems it unsafe. She deems it this or that. It's written in black and white, but there is a whole grey ocean and it's completely up to them and how they decide. If they write you up for something, you're not even allowed to – not fight it, but get an opinion on it. If I get a speeding ticket, I can go to court and explain my side of the story. You're not allowed to do that with Wisconsin licensing. Whatever they say goes. You can talk to their supervisor, but at the end of the day, they can just make your life a living H-E-double-hockey-sticks later on."

She cited the inflexible licensing rules as one of the reasons for her decision to close her FCC business: "There's no level of common sense when it comes to licensing. They have pretty much removed that. It's just papers and filling in bubbles." An educator from Florida who left FCC in 2019 after eight years to become a third-grade teacher echoed these concerns from the Wisconsin educators when she indicated that the lack of clarity around licensing expectations was one of the reasons for her decision:

- "A lot of the stress was licensing … It's not that I couldn't deal with them, but it definitely made it a lot more challenging. I felt like during the time that I was a provider, even from the beginning, not getting a clear answer of guidelines to meet."

Regulations that don't fit the realities of FCC

Six FCC educators described regulations and standards that did not fit the realities of FCC settings, and that had a center-centric bias. Massachusetts was the only state in our four-state study that had licensing staff who exclusively worked with FCC programs (see Table 2). In the other states, licensing staff worked with both center-based and FCC programs and may have been less familiar with home-based child care settings. The educator from rural Wisconsin who described challenges with inconsistencies across systems also explained that the state licensing system was not designed to work well for FCC. Describing an instance when she was cited during a licensing visit for turning her shoulder away from an infant in a highchair while reaching for another child, she explained:

- "It's to such an insane level. What happens in the center can't always happen in a home. What happens in a home can't always happen in a center. You need separate guidelines, separate rules, separate – and they want to do this one size fits all. At the end of the day, all it did was take advantage of family providers."

An educator from California described what she saw as the state's licensing requirements making FCC programs look like centers:

- "'Remove your living room furniture and remove your table because we can't send you the children if you have all that.' That is wrong. That's why it's called family child care. It is your home. It doesn't have to look like a day care. But who am I to say? They have the upper-hand."

A few educators also noted that increasing pressure to make the home look more like a center came with financial burdens that were untenable, as this educator from Wisconsin explained:

- "I felt they were pushing me towards going into one of those magazines and ordering all the expensive stuff, and I just couldn't do it. They wanted my day care to look a certain way."

This perceived lack of respect for the FCC home environment also exacerbated the difficult working conditions involved in offering FCC. Educators described the long hours, the management of work and family, and the additional administrative burden from licensing, subsidy, and sometimes QRIS. Despite FCC-specific licensing staff in Massachusetts (see Table 2), an educator from this state, who left FCC after 11 years to become an early intervention specialist, described her frustration with enforcement of licensing

rules that did not accommodate the unique aspects of running child care in a home setting:

- "If it was naptime, my laundry was on the … same floor where I had all the kids sleeping. I'd fold a load of laundry. The laundry basket, I would put in my living room on the floor but out of the way, and I guess the licensor started to nitpick some of that. It was kind of like, 'Oh, that's a safety violation because you have a folded basket of laundry there,' and it's like, 'We're family child care. I don't have all day to just do laundry in a separate area. I'm also trying to multi-task in my household with my day care.'"

Disrespectful and distrustful licensing staff

Eight former FCC educators across all four states shared how the intrusive and unfair treatment by licensing staff contributed to their decisions to leave FCC. These educators described licensing staff whom they felt misinterpreted regulations and were not adequately informed about the FCC setting. They also described licensing visits that were focused on "harassing" educators, and monitors who searched for violations rather than supported educators around compliance issues. Five of these eight educators were women of color. Although they did not use the word racism to describe their experiences with licensing, their narratives evoked their experiences with racism over time when interacting with regulatory systems. The following comments from three former Black educators in an urban area in Wisconsin illustrate these challenges:

- "Towards the end we weren't partnering with the state. It was them against us. That is how I felt. They came into our home looking for what is wrong."

- "No matter what it was, no matter how hard I worked with making sure my T's were crossed and my I's were dotted, they found something every single time. It was frustrating."

- "They was just there to see how many write-ups that they could give on you to get you shut down. I can remember this one licensor. She was new – she came on real unlikable. If I do somethin' and it's not correct, I don't mind taking the bump for what I did wrong. But this woman, she was – any little thing, like, it was ridiculous. Then you have some licensors that lay on the floor – and look up under everything just to see it was – that's just too much."

Educators who left FCC between 2011 and 2019 elaborated on their experiences with distrustful licensing staff, using language of surveillance that evoked the criminal justice system. One of the Black educators who talked about harassment described her licensor as a "prison warden." The stress of interacting with licensing staff and feeling alone in her FCC work without the "freedom" to leave her own home were part of what helped her decide to close her business and take a job as a center-based teacher. A white educator from Wisconsin noted: "With licensing, you're guilty until proven innocent… It's never that you're proven innocent, they just couldn't figure it out." A Latina educator from California who had been licensed for 18 years described licensing staff as "police." She explained her experience:

- "I had everything under control … Everything in the files, everything, but just the way they come in. It seemed like a police officer when he comes inside your house. It's not good. Not a really good feeling."

The stress of these visits combined with her long working hours with no breaks created "pressures" that she thinks eventually led to a series of heart attacks that pushed her to give up her license and care for her grandchildren informally:

- "Sometimes I didn't have time to eat on time and whatever. I guess it was too much pressure –too much pressure and I couldn't help it … Sometimes another thing that I really didn't like was licensing. Sometimes they come and check you and they're very rude – very rude. Not all of them, but most of them. You feel a lot of pressure. You feel a lot of pressure."

MAKING FCC FINANCIALLY VIABLE: LOW ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN AND LACK OF BENEFITS

Two thirds of former FCC educators (63%; 19) in our sample reported challenges with the economics of operating an FCC business. These challenges included low and unstable enrollment of children as well as lack of benefits such as health insurance and paid time off. For educators who reported low incomes as a reason for exit (whether due to subsidy policies, lack of benefits, lack of marketing strategies around child enrollment, or parents' inability to pay for the full cost of care), the low wages from doing FCC work were inadequate to support themselves and their own families.

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Challenges with enrollment

Eleven educators cited challenges with enrolling enough children to make a living from their FCC businesses as a contributing factor in their exit. An experienced educator from Florida who left FCC in 2016 after 10 years in business explained the challenge of operating a business that relied on unpredictable enrollment and subsidy reimbursements:

- "It was all up and down when you got kids and when you don't have kids cause that's the way your money went ... I know they couldn't advance me money if I had less kids ... the part with kids is you're not making it ... you've got to go to the next thing."

Some former FCC educators in our study explained how universal preschool and other no-cost ECE programs in their communities presented a challenge to the viability of their FCC programs. An educator from California who also closed her program in 2016 after 15 years explained the impact of these programs on her enrollment:

- "The schools started to do after-school. Before school, they have all these government programs. Then they started to keep the kindergarten longer hours, so you couldn't keep a five-year-old anymore. Now they are in preK. That means the four-year-olds are going to be going there. Why is that? Because it's free ... What do I end up with? Okay. I did the infant part. After a while, now they started taking the infants, too."

An educator in rural Wisconsin also talked about losing enrollment to recently opened preschool programs within the public schools in her community. Another educator in a rural area of Florida, who offered the state's public pre-kindergarten program in her FCC program, explained that she could not compete with the centers nearby that offered public pre-kindergarten. She perceived that the large school-based preschool programs were more centrally located and easier for families in her rural area to access.

Two new educators from California described the lack of anticipated referrals from their subsidy agencies and the resulting lack of enrollment. These educators had the expectation that their subsidy agency would actively send families to their FCC programs and blamed the agency for their inability to sustain their FCC programs. However, regulations in California do not allow CCR&R agencies that manage the subsidy program to recommend specific child care programs for families; rather they can only offer lists of providers in the community. This misunderstanding of the agency's role suggests a lack of clear communication with FCC educators about recruitment expectations. In addition, these two educators described agency staff as dismissive and they felt that some staff were discriminatory against their FCC businesses, prioritizing center-based programs with families. They also reported that subsidy agencies did not offer help with marketing resources, recruitment strategies, or financial management strategies that could have helped them build sustainability. Neither of these educators fully launched their FCC programs and both left formal ECE work.

Operating an FCC business with no benefits

Five educators reported that lack of benefits – either health insurance or paid time off – contributed to their decision to close their businesses. These educators described how the changes in their own health and their own aging forced them to reconsider their lack of access to affordable health insurance. They described moving from FCC to more stable ECE jobs. An educator from Wisconsin emphasized how the lack of benefits and unstable income led her to move to a school district teaching position where she could receive "a more stable income to provide for my family, one that didn't go up and down and one that provided benefits and security."

Other educators talked about how a lack of time off was a contributing factor in their exit from FCC. These educators described multiple and intersecting challenges, and often contrasted their inability to take time off in FCC with their current work in ECE centers and schools. An educator from Massachusetts left FCC after six years primarily because of the lack of vacation pay or other benefits. She described the multiple roles and long hours, unresponsive licensing and subsidy offices with which she frequently interacted, and the unstable enrollment from families' changing eligibility in the subsidy system. After closing her FCC program and taking a job with benefits at a Head Start center, she reflected on the differences between settings:

- "You get burned out. We're taking care of so many children and deal with so many different situations because a day care provider has to do everything that a person that works in a school does. The psychologist, therapist, counselors, the teachers, the nurse, the cleaning person. Educators at home they do so many things. ... I had to close because I was tired. There was no vacation pay."

Doing FCC without family support, especially from a spouse, made the lack of benefits particularly challenging. A single educator from Florida talked about the difficulty of operating a successful FCC business without the second income and benefits of a spouse.

She left FCC for a job in the corporate world where she could obtain a good benefits package for herself:

- "Honestly the ones that stay, you need a spouse. When you're by yourself, it is super rough. You need a spouse to help you when you have those ebbs and flows. You need a spouse to give you ... where you can invest without it hurting. You need a spouse for benefits. I could go on and on. It was rough."

LONG WORKING HOURS AND JUGGLING CHILD CARE AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Sixteen former FCC educators described difficult working conditions that intersected with other challenges and contributed to their decision to close their FCC programs. Working conditions were described as long hours, often working alone, physically demanding work, wear and tear on their home space and management of family life with the child care business. These educators told stories of how difficult working conditions were exacerbated by other core challenges, such as: low income from FCC and high costs, strict and unfair licensing regulations, and lack of benefits.

Working long hours alone

Eight educators who described working conditions as part of why they left FCC talked about the long hours involved in FCC work. Two educators from Florida, both of whom offered 24-hour child care, talked about the intersection of long hours working alone with the lack of benefits such as paid time off:

- "Because in family child care, you have limited time to be able to personally go get a mammogram and all those things that we need to do to take care of ourselves. Right after I stopped, I was able to do those things, get my eyes examined, go to the dentist. Where when you have child care and you're open those times, you don't have the time to do those things."

An educator from Wisconsin emphasized the long 50-hour weeks that included cleaning and shopping and preparing. Working these long hours in her own home without a separate child care space was difficult. As she explained:

- "It was never done, ... I felt like there was never a break. I would always be working on something for the day care. I would spend time with my kids, but then I would go back to the day care. They'd go to bed, and I'd go back to preparing or laminating or cutting or rearranging furniture, sanitizing toys."

An educator from Florida closed her FCC program after a year because she realized she did not like the isolation of working alone in her home: "I just didn't like bein' home all day. I'd rather be outside workin' with adult conversation and adult interaction."

Managing a business in your home

Seven educators described how the management of home-based child care with their own family was a challenge that eventually led to exit. Educators who left over 10 years ago as well as educators who left more recently told these stories, suggesting the pervasiveness of this challenge in FCC work. The long hours of child care put pressure on family dynamics, as the following narratives detail:

- "Well, I wanna say it was more so my husband, because he was tired of toys in the backyard, or families in there when he got home from work. Just in his general space. Because like I said, even though my day care was separate than my home, my parents would come looking for me. Most of the time I was making dinner when they got there. Then I'd have maybe one would come and take off, and then another would come before that one would leave. Then my husband would come and he would give me that evil eye that people were in our space instead of in the day care space ... It overwhelmed him that they were taking over his personal space."

- "Our kids were getting older, and so some of the reasons that we started it in the first place were no longer holding effective. The kids were starting to verbalize to us, 'We don't want them in our rooms.' They slept in their rooms, because every kid had their own sleeping space. They didn't want them in their rooms. They would get frustrated when they would take their things, which I would always tell my kids, during these hours, anything you leave out is for sharing. If you don't want it played with, put it away. I was upfront with my own children, too. It was just getting to a point that they were frustrated with it ... Our kids were like, 'Ugh, I just wanna come home and not have any other kids here.'"

OTHER CHALLENGES

In addition to identifying the core challenges that were most influential in educators' decisions to close their businesses, we explored the ways these experiences were connected to other components of our conceptual model, including individual circumstances and access to supports, in order to paint a more complete picture of educators' decisions to leave the field.

Personal challenges

Close to two thirds (60%; 18) of former FCC educators reported personal challenges that contributed to their exit from FCC work. In most cases, these personal circumstances or events intersected with at least one of the three core challenges. These circumstances included their own or family members' illness, family dynamics, changes in family employment, loss of housing, and age. These challenges are elaborated later in this chapter.

Loss of peer support

Close to two thirds (60%; 18) of former FCC educators reported participating in an FCC association when they were actively offering FCC. A small group of educators (10%; 3) talked about losing peer support from local FCC associations as one reason they decided to close their business. An educator from a rural area of Wisconsin described how her local association "fell apart" when it unexpectedly lost funding. She talked about the camaraderie that she had when the association was active, and how she missed it when she no longer had that support:

- "It was wonderful to see all these other people that are out there struggling just like the rest of us, like another person. Finding out that their day care was going through about the same thing you were … It was wonderful … [Then] all of a sudden, it was just like, we didn't have any more for a long time."

Two other educators, one from Massachusetts and another from Florida, talked about how their FCC associations became "catty" and lost their value over time. The educator from Florida talked about how the loss of this support impacted her attachment to FCC work:

- "I lost connection with some of my other child care providers … In this particular profession, you do need to have support, a supportive base, and when you lose that, you can get isolated. That was always important to me for growth is networking with other providers. When I had a camaraderie, I felt more of a sense of belonging."

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DECIDING TO LEAVE FAMILY CHILD CARE

Through analyzing educators' narratives of their FCC career trajectories, we identified five types of decisions related to exit from FCC: (1) tipping point due to a single life event or circumstance; (2) burnout due to an accumulation of challenges over time; (3) growing out of FCC or career progression; (4) lack of fit in FCC work; and (5) inability to successfully launch FCC due to low enrollment.

FIGURE 3. DECISIONS TO EXIT FCC
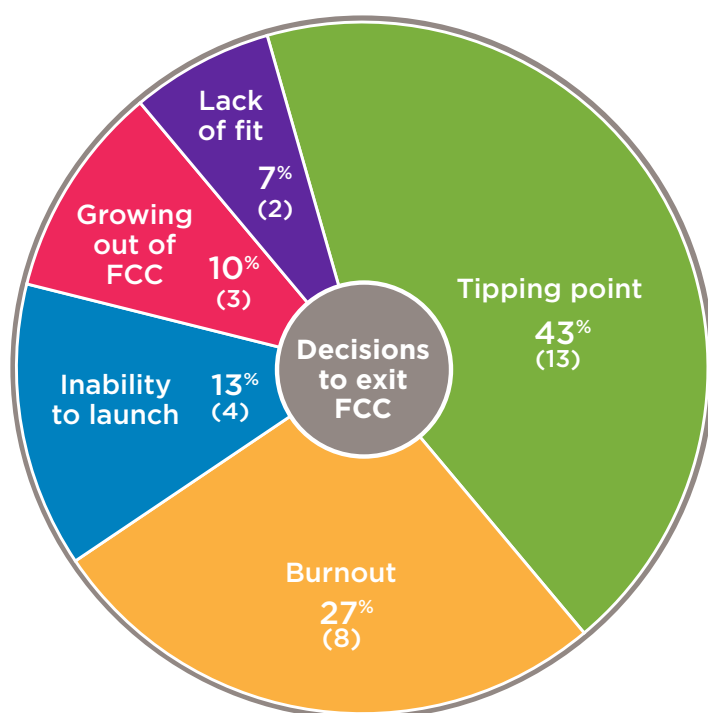
As Figure 3 and Table 10 show, 13 educators (43%) described a tipping point or single personal event or experience that led them to make the decision to close their business. For some educators, these tipping point events came at the end of long careers and were the final straw that led to a business closure. For others, the tipping point came earlier in their FCC journey. Over three quarters of these educators (6) moved to other ECE or ECE-related jobs after closing their FCC programs.

Eight educators (27%) described a slow burnout process where challenges accumulated over time. These educators' stories of leaving FCC described a long process of experiencing stress that led to a feeling of being burned out from FCC work. Six of the eight took ECE or ECE-related jobs after closing their FCC programs.

The remaining nine educators (30%) in our sample described other types of decisions related to exit including inability to successfully launch an FCC business, growing out of FCC as their own children aged out of child care or using FCC as a steppingstone to an ECE career, and deciding FCC work was not a good fit. Only one educator who couldn't successfully launch FCC stayed in ECE. All three educators who grew out of FCC or used FCC as a steppingstone moved to other ECE jobs. Neither of the two educators who reported that FCC was not a job they liked stayed in the ECE workforce.

Years of experience, working during nontraditional hours, and caring for a child with a diagnosed disability were all associated with educators' decision types. (See Appendix B, Table B2.) Almost all of the educators who left due to a tipping point (92%; 12) or burnout (100%; 8) were experienced: all eight who left as a result of burnout had worked in the field for eight or more years, including three who had more than 15 years of experience. Newer educators were more likely to report a reason other than tipping point or burnout (p<0.001). Every educator who left due to burnout (100%; 8) and 69% (9) of those who left due to a tipping point offered care during nontraditional hours, compared to just 38% (3) of educators who left for other reasons (p<0.05). Three quarters (75%; 6) of educators who reported burnout also reported offering late night or overnight child care, which may be more taxing than

early morning or early evening care, compared to less than half of those who reported leaving because of a tipping point (46%; 6) or other (13%; 1) reasons. Over three-quarters of educators who left due to burnout or a tipping point (75%, 6 and 85%, 11 respectively) cared for a child with a diagnosed disability compared to 22% (2) of educators who left for other reasons ($p<0.05$); however, it's unlikely that this alone was a reason for exit since we have no evidence from the qualitative interviews that working with children with disabilities was challenging or contributed to work stress. The following sections detail the stories associated with these different types of exit decisions.

TABLE 10. DECISION POINT FOR LEAVING FCC						
Types of exit decisions of former educators						
	Tipping point N=13		Burnout N=8		Other N=9	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Core challenges						
Any ECE systems	69%	(9)	100%	(8)	78%	(7)
Any economics	54%	(7)	63%	(5)	78%	(7)
Any working conditions	54%	(7)	50%	(4)	56%	(5)
Only one challenge	23%	(3)	13%	(1)	11%	(1)
At least two core challenges	69%	(9)	88%	(7)	89%	(8)
All three core challenges	15%	(2)	25%	(2)	22%	(2)
Other challenges						
Personal factors	100%	(13)	0%	(0)	56%	(5)
Loss of peer support	15%	(2)	0%	(0)	11%	(1)
Current job						
Current ECE work	77%	(10)	75%	(6)	44%	(4)

PERSONAL CHALLENGES AS TIPPING POINTS

All 13 educators who described a tipping point story also described a personal challenge that contributed to their decision to leave FCC work (see Table 10). Two types of stories emerged from these educators: a culminating personal event or challenge that followed many years of the core FCC work-related challenges, and a single personal event or challenge that made it logistically impossible for the educator to continue with FCC despite her motivations to continue the work. All but one also reported at least one of the three core FCC work-related challenges.

Educators' stories of reaching a tipping point and deciding to leave FCC highlighted the vulnerable nature of FCC work and the ways that personal factors intersect with other FCC work-related factors. Care in the home and within the family are two distinct aspects of FCC that are different from center-based ECE programs. For many families, these are the very strengths and reasons they choose these FCC arrangements. Personal factors such as wanting to be home with their own young children or love of children overall may be the initial reasons that women choose to open FCC programs. Yet personal factors may also make FCC work challenging and precarious, especially when coupled with lack of economic or social support, financial challenges, or experiences with inequitable bureaucracies and systems. As Figure 4 shows, all the tipping points for these former educators related to home and family life: (1) housing issues; (2) personal illness; (3) family illness or death; and (4) family dynamics.

FIGURE 4. PERSONAL CHALLENGES AS TIPPING POINTS THAT LED TO CLOSURE
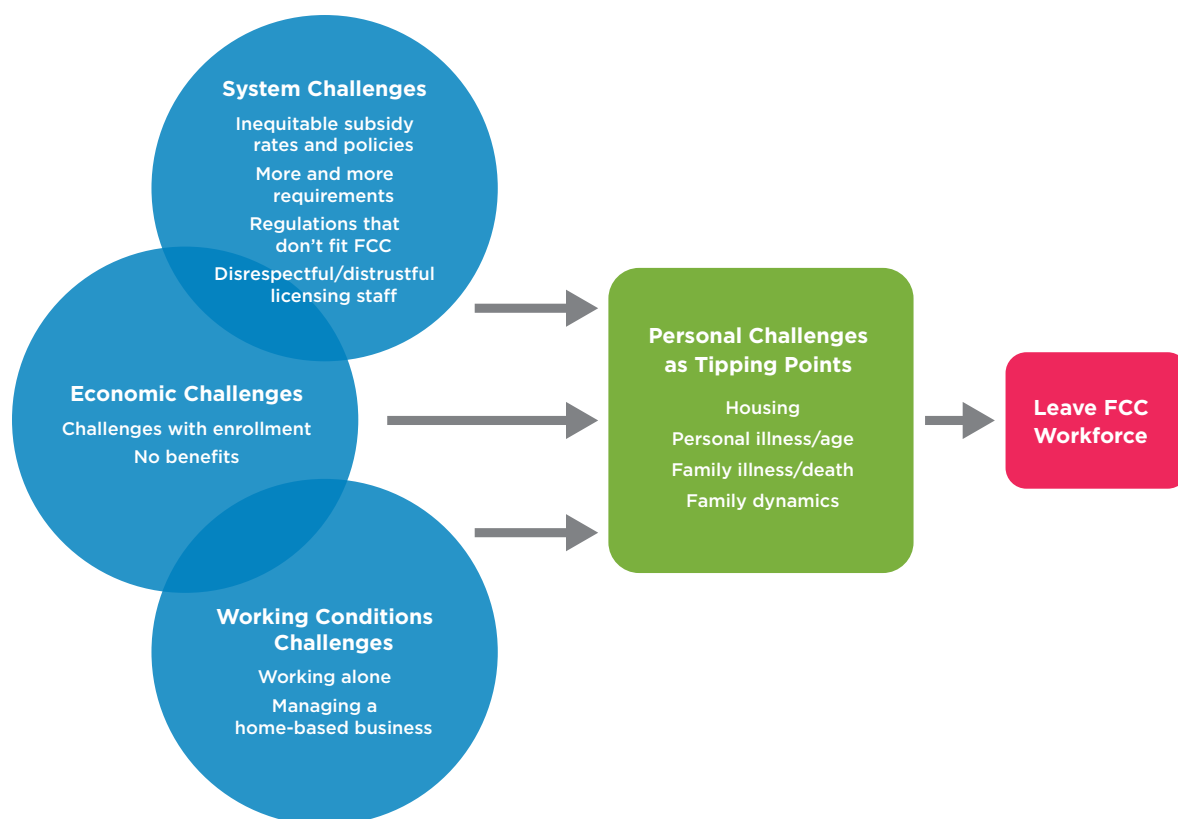
Housing issues

Four educators explained how housing issues presented logistical challenges that necessitated closing their businesses. Two educators – one in Massachusetts and one in California – described losing the rental housing that would have allowed them to maintain their own programs. Neither educator wanted to stop doing FCC. One educator continued in an FCC program as an assistant and the other took a job as an assistant in a center-based program. Another educator in Massachusetts could not afford the renovations needed to open her FCC program in her new home: she closed her own program and became an assistant in another FCC home.

A husband-and-wife team in California described a housing situation that was their tipping point. Their condominium's construction project created a barrier for families and children to access the building (and their program) as well as the loss of a safe outdoor play space for their child care program. They had no choice but to close their child care business and seek employment outside of ECE.

Personal illness and age

Three educators described their own experiences with illness and health issues as single challenges that led them to the decisions to close their FCC businesses. A 68-year-old educator in California described her long 18-year tenure that ended because of repeated heart attacks, which she felt were precipitated by difficult working conditions. She was adamant that she would have gone back to FCC if her health had permitted. After closing her FCC, she continued to care for her grandchildren for a few hours a week.

An educator from rural Massachusetts described her own illness as the tipping point that finally drove her out of 14 years of FCC work. She had closed her business in 2012 because of the difficult working conditions, specifically the "wear and tear" on her home and the lack of access to bank loans for home improvements. She loved the work and reopened in 2019, but she got sick, which led to a new set of challenges with the licensing and subsidy system. Complications with income eligibility rules around accessing health insurance on the public marketplace combined with the low pay from the subsidy system, plus the costly and confusing training requirements for assistant providers made her feel she had no choice but to close her business in the same year. She later took a job at a Head Start center.

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A 50-year-old educator decided to close because she was concerned that she would not have adequate health insurance when she grew older if she continued in FCC. She moved to employment as a teacher in a center-based child care program. She described a conversation she had with her husband before she closed her FCC business:

- "It's that when we turned 50 you start thinkin' about your life and because health insurance is through the roof. We sat down one day and we said, 'You know I might have to get a job because of health benefits.' Closing my day care is probably the hardest things I've ever had to do because I closed at full capacity. I had to tell parents that I couldn't care for them anymore which was so sad. I have to say it was because of health care."

Family illness or death

Three educators who left FCC due to family illness or death in the family talked about the challenges of navigating licensing and subsidy regulations while also caring for sick family members or grieving the loss of a family member.

A Wisconsin educator who had run an FCC program for 14 years described a protracted battle with her state's licensing department around her husband's required criminal background check. He had a history of drug addiction, had recently recovered, reconciled with her, and moved back home, but the state would not allow the FCC program to continue if he remained in the home. The additional grief she experienced after her mother passed away was the last straw. This loss intersected with her stress from fighting the state: "I did as much as I could, and I fought as hard as I could but remember my mom had passed and I didn't have very much." She went on to take a job as a paraprofessional assistant in a Head Start program.

For another educator, who had a 27-year long FCC career in Florida, the stress of caring for her elderly mother who was sick, combined with running her 24-hour child care business, was too much: "it's time for me to move on and take care of myself." After she closed, she opened her own consulting business teaching CPR classes to other FCC educators, which allowed more autonomy over her schedule and her home.

Family dynamics

Three educators explained how changes in their own family dynamics, including employment and household composition, contributed to their decision to close their FCC programs. Two educators in Wisconsin described changes in their family's employment and income circumstances that allowed them to close their licensed FCC programs. Both had been in the work for over 10 years. One educator's husband retired, and she needed more flexibility to go on vacations with him as well as more space for him to be home. She took a job as a teacher at a center-based program. The other educator's husband left his work as the assistant in her program for a higher-paying job, and the family no longer depended on the income from her licensed program. She wanted to keep caring for children, so she decided to care for fewer children as a license-exempt provider.

An educator from Massachusetts (see Yvonne's Story) described how her daughter leaving home for college was the event that made it hard for her to keep going: "The tipping point was –like I said, my daughter had graduated. I have one child. She graduated. Personally, I was just in a lot of personal pain."

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YVONNE'S STORY: PERSONAL CHALLENGES AS TIPPING POINTS

Yvonne, a 53-year-old Black woman from Florida, closed her FCC business in a rural area outside of a large metropolitan region after eight years. She had started her business in 2010 as a single mother with a 10-year-old daughter when she was laid off from her job at a bank. She loved children and wanted to help them learn and grow, so she applied for an FCC license for 10 children.

Yvonne had a steady enrollment, and she was making good money. Then her daughter, her pride and joy, went off to college. Around the same time, she also lost her close connections with the other educators in her local FCC association. She felt this loss keenly.

"In this particular profession, you do need to have support, a supportive base, and when you lose that, you can get isolated. That was always important to me for growth is networking with other educators."

In addition, Yvonne was diagnosed with diabetes and needed good health care, but the business did not generate enough income to pay for insurance. "No matter how much my profits

were, it couldn't equate to what a corporate insurance is. It's completely different."

The empty nest combined with the fading support from her association providers and her need for health insurance affected everything. "Even as much as I loved it, it just made me pull back. I was depleted. I just wanted to make some changes for myself." In 2018, she took a job in the corporate world, which paid benefits.

Yvonne's families still want her to reopen, but she was on the fence:

"If I wanted to ... it wouldn't take me long to rebuild because now I know what to do ... It's just that, mainly, just making sure I have the benefits, and mainly making sure I have the support doing that 'cause my daughter's older now. She's got a career."

"I don't know that I can ...The job is so consuming that I would have to really have somebody working for me, and the constraints of the state. When you're by yourself, it is super rough."

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SLOW BURNOUT

Eight former FCC educators (27%) described a slow burnout from multiple and intersecting challenges, as elaborated earlier in this chapter (as shown in Figure 5). All reported that working with ECE systems was a challenge, and seven of the eight reported at least two core challenges including economic or working conditions. None of these educators reported that personal factors contributed to their decisions. Six of the eight "retired" from FCC work but stayed in the ECE field, taking jobs as teachers and assistants in center-based programs.

All eight educators who reported burnout (100%) had offered nontraditional hours for families compared to only 69% (9) of those who reported a tipping point and only 38% (3) who reported another type of exit decision. Provision of nontraditional hours may have contributed to exhaustion and stress as this educator from Florida indicated: "I did it by myself … I guess needin' that break, I guess a good vacation 'cause I did it around the clock, 24 hours, I mean every day of the year."

Five of these educators described how challenges with systems, struggles with making enough income, and difficult working conditions intersected over time, leading to burnout and eventual closure of FCC. These educators told stories about economic stress related to the costs of required home renovations, difficult interactions with licensing staff, long hours and weekends spent catching up on administrative paperwork, and no paid time off (see Lydia's Story). As one educator from rural Wisconsin explained, "I had that burnout real bad."

FIGURE 5. INTERSECTING CHALLENGES THAT LED TO BURNOUT
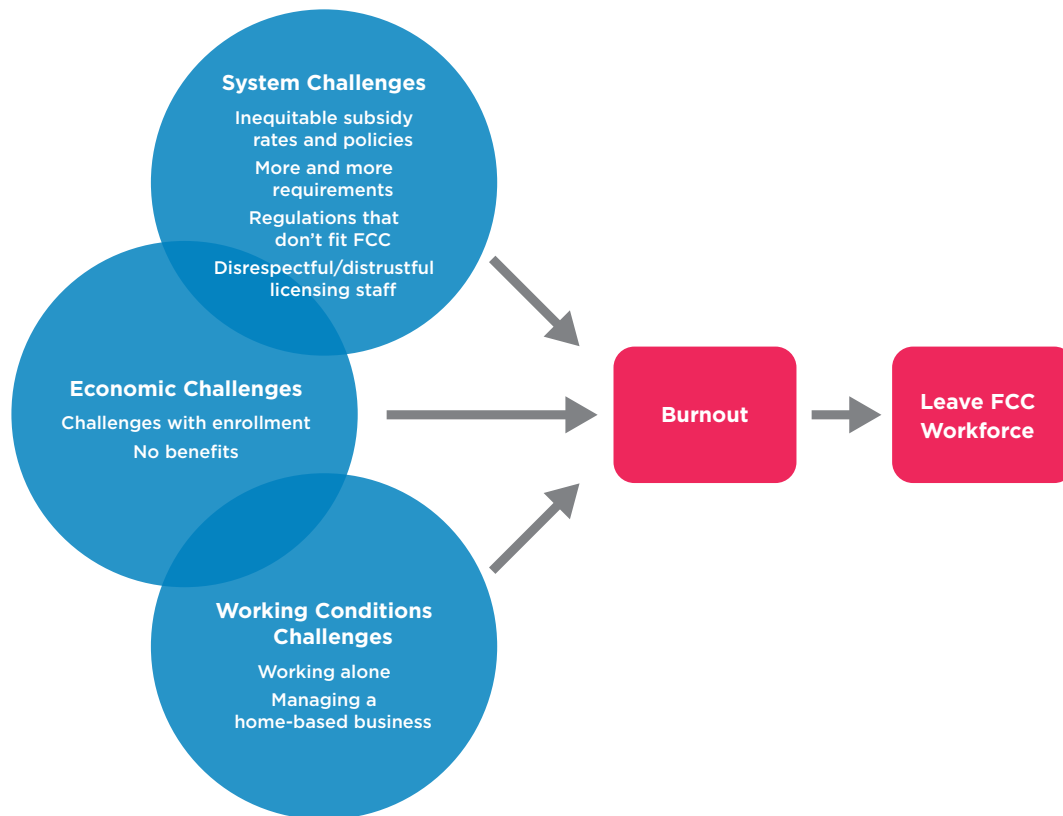
Three educators described the negative outcomes of intersecting challenges they experienced. Two talked about how their age and personal health intersected with the stresses of interacting with disrespectful licensing staff, long hours, and low incomes. As one educator put it, "I'm getting up in age, and it's just too much stress – and not enough money." Another educator explained, "all those little things started piling up and it was affecting my health." The third educator who had been licensed for eight years in Wisconsin described how the challenges of managing a child care business and a family home, combined with the frustrations of dealing with what she perceived as a punitive state licensing system, wore out her marriage: "It took a toll on my family and number one on my husband… it was burnout and stress on my family." She said that a more supportive husband would have kept her in the work and reported getting divorced after she left FCC.

LYDIA'S STORY: BURNOUT FROM INTERSECTING FACTORS

Lydia, a 68-year-old Latina educator from an urban area in Massachusetts, left FCC in 2016 after 12 years. She had been a teacher in the Dominican Republic, and when she came to the U.S., she opened her business because she loved teaching.

For Lydia the system became more and more focused over the years on compliance with regulations, demanding additional work and work hours, with less time to focus on what was good for children. Visits combined with the changing regulations became increasingly stressful.

"I felt a little stiffened when they came to visit, and that caused a lot of stress. Then lately they started implementing a lot of new things …They are very demanding with us. And there comes a time when you say, but what is this? I'm going to go crazy; I'm going to get stressed out."

She went on to explain: "There was no respite if you want to do it right. Because if you want to respond to the requirements then you have to turn your attention away from the child in order to comply … That's not my philosophy."

Lydia also felt that the agency visitors were only there to check for compliance rather to provide support. "For you to come to my home to ask me, 'Did you do this?' That's not support. 'You don't have this here.' That's not support. Support is to tell me, Lydia, 'If you need any help, call me, I'll be there.'" This lack of support

contributed to the stress of working alone and feeling discouraged about the work. "There was nobody … no one stood up for you … that sort of thing starts weighing on you, discouraging you."

Lydia also faced challenges with low subsidy payments. She came to realize that she would have to increase her enrollment from her current capacity of six children to make a living from her business, and that would compromise what she saw as the quality caregiving that came from smaller groups.

"I became increasingly disenchanted …To make good money, you need to have lots of children, and I don't want to have lots of children, I want lots of knowledge. For me, there were things that didn't balance out … I do need the money, but my main job is my satisfaction and achieving my goals with the children."

After Lydia closed her business, she was hired as a lead teacher at a local center-based child care program. Her comments about the benefits of her center teacher job underlie the contrasting challenges of FCC work:

"You have a set schedule. There's no stress there. You're there from 7 to 3 … and then you get to your house. You don't have to pick up anything, cleaning anything. You don't have the stress that whenever something is needed, they go straight to you."

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OTHER TYPES OF EXIT DECISIONS

Nine former FCC educators (30%) told stories of exit that described other decision points. Four cited personal factors that contributed to their inability to sustain an FCC business, or to their decision that FCC was not the right work for them. Three described growing out of FCC: two of them because their own children aged out of needing child care, and one because she had intended her FCC work to be a steppingstone to other ECE work. All three moved to other ECE-related jobs (Head Start teacher, early intervention specialist, and elementary school special education teacher). Two educators reported closing their FCC programs because the work was not a good fit. Both of these educators left the ECE field altogether.

Couldn't successfully launch an FCC business

Four educators, two from California and two from Florida, described enrollment issues that affected their ability to open or sustain an FCC program. All of them had obtained a license, but none remained in the work for more than a year. Two had worked previously in the banking industry, and the other two did ECE-related work prior to starting FCC: one in a center, and the other as a foster parent. The two who had worked in banking returned to the financial industry; the one who had worked in a center remained in ECE, as a foster parent; and the one who had started out as a foster parent was unemployed after leaving FCC.

These educators told different stories about their opening and closure of FCC. The two California educators (one who never enrolled any children and one who enrolled only two), blamed their lack of success on the failure of local subsidy agencies to refer families to their programs as well as their own lack of marketing skills. Yet as discussed earlier, these expectations of the subsidy agency's role may not have been aligned with state regulations about what subsidy agencies could and could not do around recommending families to child care programs. As Maria's story (see below) illustrates, subsidy agencies also did not offer FCC educators support around marketing strategies that could have helped them with recruitment and enrollment of families.

The two Florida educators had challenges with enrollment that intersected with personal circumstances and preferences. The educator who cared for children as a foster parent prior to opening her FCC business described her health problems as well as her struggles operating an FCC business without any family support, monetary savings, or support around how to market her program to prospective families. Both educators struggled with how to maintain full enrollment with children across ages. The educator who had worked in banking found that caring for infants was not something she enjoyed doing.

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MARIA'S STORY: COULDN'T SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH FCC

Maria, a Latina educator from an urban area in California, closed her licensed FCC business in 2016 at age 49 after only one year. She had opened it because she had worked in child care centers and always wanted to have a program of her own. Maria first encountered issues with the licensing process. At the first pre-inspection visit, she was told that she needed to purchase more cribs and beds so she could sleep eight children.

Then it took a year for her to receive the second visit. "I kept saying I'm ready, come see the house," she explained. "'No, because the lady who does that is on vacation and she will be back in two weeks.' I kept waiting and when she finally came and checked the house, she said I needed about 10 more things besides."

Maria paid a $300 down payment on a required liability insurance policy in anticipation of agency referrals, but she never received any. "They didn't send me any children ... When I told them, 'I need you to refer children to me, when are you going to send me the kids?' They said, 'Oh, no, we don't refer children, you have to find them,'" and they gave her a packet of fliers. Maria eventually enrolled two children into her program, but the lack of referrals from the agency was one of the reasons she closed her business.

"That's why I didn't continue with the day care. They first told me they had a lot of children, that I had to run and buy everything because they had a lot of children on waiting lists and then once I was approved, they told me they didn't have any and I had to find them myself."

From the outset, Maria felt that the agency staff were rude and disrespectful. These staff attitudes were another reason she closed her program.

"I had been wanting to work in child care for so long, but this is really awful how they treat you ... They would come and check your house and say, 'This doesn't go here, this over there, you should put this here, you should put that there.' As if I were being scolded in such a way, telling me how I had to do things, because they were wrong."

"That's why it didn't work out, because of them, the way they were with me. The way they lied to me, the way they made me feel like a mop in my own home. They would come and make me feel bad in my house when they came to the house. They spoke very badly."

When the two children she had succeeded in enrolling left the program, Maria was unable to find any other children on her own. She became a foster parent for children from birth to five.

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○ **Grew out of FCC**

Two of the three educators who grew out of FCC talked about their own children ageing out of FCC and wanting to transition to other work in order to spend more time with them. (See Ashley's Story). For an educator from Massachusetts who had been licensed for 11 years, the long hours of FCC eventually interfered with her participation in her own children's after school events as well as her need to care for her son who had dyslexia and needed her support:

- "It was 80 hours a week on spending to educate everybody else's child, and now my own child is suffering in school and I'm not gonna give my kids what they need? I couldn't go to anything my kids had. If my kids participated in sports, which they did, I couldn't go because I couldn't find a sub to cover me later in the afternoon, and I can't just close at 3:00 when I have families that need care till 5:00. That was where my decision was."

A Wisconsin educator's story highlights how personal career goals intersected with socio-economic contextual conditions. She had never intended to stay in FCC for more than a few years, because she saw the work as a steppingstone to becoming a teacher in the public schools. She used her time in FCC to obtain her degree. She decided to close her FCC program in May 2020 when COVID-19 hit. Her grandmother got sick, and her mother, who was her assistant, could no longer support the program. She went on to get a job teaching special education in her local public elementary school.

ASHLEY'S STORY: GROWING OUT OF FCC

Ashley, a 35-year-old white educator in rural Wisconsin, decided to close her FCC program in 2019 after six years. She had opened her FCC business because it offered her a way to run her own child care program and stay home with her young children. She became certified because she wanted to keep her program small so she could focus on quality caregiving. She took great pride in how she ran her FCC: she and her husband made "constant renovations" to their home space to accommodate children's needs. One of the reasons she closed was because her children aged out of care:

"The reasons that we started it so much in the first place no longer applied, in terms of our children. Because I had wanted a child care since I was 14. That reason applied, but the kid part, for us, no longer applied. I could work outside of the home without me paying all-day child care."

Another was low fees and lack of appreciation from parents. "It felt like I was working for free in a lot of ways," she explained. "I raised my prices, I think, twice in the six years. You get almost like a backlash from families. It's like I'm sure that you get a raise … I'm asking for a dollar a day increase. It wasn't like $30, you know?"

She noted that the general lack of appreciation from families was echoed in the broader societal lack of recognition and awareness of the role of early childhood, and FCC in particular:

"The entire society in general, with how underappreciated and underrecognized early childhood is another difficult factor. Because it doesn't seem to matter how much quality and time we pour into things, we're never gonna be paid for what we do."

Ashley did not want to leave FCC and said that she might have continued if she could have created a separate child care space in her home. As she noted about her process of closing, "We have spent the last year trying to make our home look like a home again and not like a day care. We finally feel like we have space that's ours."

After she closed her doors, Ashley was recruited by a local Head Start program to be a lead teacher. Reflecting on the decision, she shared: "I actually left and went to Head Start, so it's not like I left children or left education, but I went to Head Start where I could work outside of my home, and be paid for the hours I work, and then go home, and have a home."

SUPPORTS THAT WOULD HAVE KEPT EDUCATORS IN FAMILY CHILD CARE

We asked former FCC educators to describe one thing that could have kept them in FCC work. Two thirds (67%; 20) said that they might have stayed in the work if they had had more support, resources, and respect from ECE systems. Combined with systems being the most common challenge, this suggests that systems were a critical factor in why FCC educators exit. Despite individual and personal challenges or experiences, these educators imagined how licensing, subsidy, and QRIS policies and programs could have been more equitable, more supportive, and more aligned with their values. They emphasized that they might have continued in the work had the conditions for work been different.

Educators who shared stories about their own well-being and health reported that help from their state's licensing and subsidy system in accessing affordable health insurance would have helped them stay in FCC work. One educator noted that available state grant opportunities for FCC facilities improvement might have enabled her to continue when she needed assistance to renovate her new home after she moved.

Educators who experienced multiple challenges with ECE systems reported two opposing themes around support: fewer system demands and more positive engagement from system staff. Two educators in rural Wisconsin made the decision to close when their husbands got sick or retired, which followed many years of frustration with the state's licensing system. They both indicated that fewer regulations and visits to their FCC homes might have helped them stay open. They experienced the state licensing agency as intrusive and overbearing. As one of them explained:

- "My freedom of not having people come to my home when I'm trying to do my best with all these children being in my home. It's agitating. I don't know. When they knock on the door, they come and they expect to have everything back on the shelves ... I can't be doing this when you have another full-grown adult being in my face."

For other educators, including three from Wisconsin, ECE systems staff were not engaged enough in supporting them with their FCC programs. They explained that more support and positive interactions with ECE licensing, subsidy, and QRIS staff would have helped them keep their businesses open. Alignment of regulations and standards across these systems also would have reduced stress and confusion. These educators said that more help with paperwork, more support and training around requirements, easier processes, and requirements that recognized the unique features of FCC settings, and as one educator put it, "an intention to listen to us" would have helped them stay in the work:

- "I'm gonna be honest I'm human but I needed a hand holding at the time and the state didn't hold your hand. They still don't. They don't support. So if I would've had support I could've managed my business."

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SUMMARY

- A majority of former FCC educators stayed in the ECE field after closing their FCC businesses, taking jobs as teachers or teaching assistants in center-based preschools, Head Start, or public school programs. A few educators continued to care for fewer children as license-exempt providers. Exploratory analyses suggest that Black educators were more likely to leave ECE altogether compared to white educators.

- Former FCC educators who stayed in ECE reported starting FCC because they wanted to stay at home with their own children or loved working with children. Those who stayed in ECE also reported having more years of experience in FCC and participating in quality systems compared to FCC educators who left the ECE field altogether.

- ECE systems challenges (inequitable subsidy policies, burdensome requirements, and disrespectful licensing staff), economics of FCC (low compensation and lack of benefits) and difficult working conditions (long hours and management of home and child care) contributed to former educators' decisions to leave the FCC workforce.

- Core challenges of FCC contributed to tipping points for some, and a slow burnout for others.

- Personal and family illness, loss of housing, and family dynamics were the most common personal challenges described by former FCC educators. Those who experienced a tipping point or who left for other reasons also experienced personal challenges.

- Educators who experienced burnout attributed this to the core challenges of FCC work rather than personal challenges.

- Fewer educators grew out of FCC, couldn't successfully launch an FCC business, or found that FCC work was not something they enjoyed.

- A majority of former educators reported that strengths-based support from ECE systems staff and more equitable compensation and benefits would have helped them stay in FCC.

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CHAPTER 3: STAYING IN FAMILY CHILD CARE

Prior research on workforce dynamics in FCC settings has relied mostly on survey data with few studies that seek to fully unpack the ways educators make decisions and the nuances of how resources and supports may buffer challenges in the work (see Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021 for a review). Some research has examined the psychological rewards of doing FCC, including the satisfaction and happiness associated with teaching and nurturing young children, as factors that contribute to workforce tenure and attachment among FCC educators (Lee et al., 2019). Job control (e.g., autonomy) as well as lower job demands, job stress, and role burden are other aspects of FCC work that have been previously associated with greater job commitment and intent to remain in the field (Lee et al., 2019; Walker, 2002). Weaver (2002) found that access to a variety of resources and supports – including professional organizations, peer relationships, and family and community support – were the strongest predictors of professional commitment to FCC work.

This chapter draws on findings from both survey data and focus group data with current educators to uncover the factors that help them persevere in the work despite challenges. We first explore educators' intentions to continue doing FCC work and the rewards of the work that kept them going amid challenges. Finally, we consider the supports educators receive that keep them going, as well as those that help them navigate the more logistical aspects of the work. We only report statistically significant findings from our quantitative analyses.

CONSIDERATION OF EXIT

When we asked FCC educators in our sample about whether or not they had considered leaving the field in the last year, over a third (35%; 53) indicated consideration of exit. Current FCC educators who had considered leaving the field were more likely to be white (49%; 25, $p<0.01$) and were more likely to have more than five years of experience (80%; 40, $p<0.05$) compared to educators who had not considered leaving the field: 26% and 63% respectively (See Appendix B, Table B3). Since 23 of the 25 focus groups were conducted during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot be sure if educators' responses around intent to leave FCC work were influenced by the pandemic or other factors.

REWARDS OF FAMILY CHILD CARE WORK

Many current educators surfaced the same challenges that former FCC educators described: unresponsive and center-centric systems, challenges making a livable income, and difficult working conditions. Yet when asked about what keeps them going in the face of these challenges, our findings indicate that more often than not, FCC educators prevail.

Current educators described the rewards of doing FCC. FCC educators are more likely than other types of ECE settings to offer continuity of care for children during their early years (Blasberg et al., 2019). Children often have the experience of growing up in FCC. As a result, educators may develop lasting relationships with children and their families (Blasberg et al., 2019). Educators across our focus groups talked about the strength of these relationships as the foundation for their tenure in FCC work. In addition, some FCC educators cited their experiences of making a difference in the lives of children, families, and communities as a factor that keeps them in the work as well as the sense of control and agency inherent in running a home-based business.

Across our focus groups, a total of 117 of 149 current educators talked about at least one of the rewards of FCC work themes. These themes include: (1) working with children; (2) relationships with families; (3) FCC work is a "calling" to make a difference; and (4) work control and self-employment (Table 11). The following sections describe these rewards and how they vary across educator characteristics and experiences. In addition, we ran logistic regressions on the codes in this section to examine the individual and program characteristics that are related to reporting different rewards (See Appendix B, Tables B4 and B5).

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TABLE 11. REWARDS OF FCC WORK

	Current educators N=149		Focus groups N=25	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Working with children	58%	(86)	100%	(25)
Joy in work	46%	(68)	100%	(25)
Long-term relationships	11%	(17)	40%	(10)
Children keep you going	7%	(10)	32%	(8)
Help children living in low-income households	7%	(10)	28%	(7)
Relationships with families	19%	(28)	60%	(15)
FCC work is a "calling" to make a difference	19%	(29)	68%	(17)
Work control and self-employment	25%	(37)	64%	(16)
Entrepreneurship	16%	(24)	52%	(13)
Own young children at home	15%	(22)	40%	(10)

Note: 28 (19%) participants in the focus groups did not respond to the question about what keeps you going despite challenges.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

For many FCC educators, children are the reason they keep their program doors open despite all of the reasons to close. Across all 25 focus groups, close to six in ten (58%; 86) reported this reason. During initial analyses, race and ethnicity were significantly associated with reporting that working with children is a reason educators keep their programs open. In the logistic regression analysis race and ethnicity remained significant. White educators were more likely to cite that working with children kept them in FCC work (3.8 times greater odds) compared to educators of color who did not identify as Black (See Appendix B, Tables B4 and B5).

Joy in work

Close to half of educators (46%; 68) across focus groups emphasized the happiness they experienced when spending time with young children. Joy was a word used to describe experiences working with children: "I get joy knowing that the children are growing and learning." A white educator from rural Massachusetts made a direct link between her joy working with children and her own tenure in FCC work:

- "I don't know. It's just the kids, I guess, because there's been times when I'll say I'm done, I can't do this anymore. But something makes me stay and I know it's the kids."

A Black educator from Wisconsin explained that her strong connection with children countered the difficult working conditions and the difficulty navigating licensing that she was experiencing in her first years doing FCC:

- "Maybe I should just do, you know, [do] regular babysitting and not be licensed with all the rules and stuff like that. ... I love being around kids. You know, no matter how hard the day may be, when you go home at night, you know you miss those kids. Over the weekend, I miss the kids.

A new white educator, also from Wisconsin, talked about how her connection with children during the COVID-19 shut downs helped her stay motivated:

- "Being gone now for two weeks ... They've been messaging me and texting me videos and how much they miss me and -- I think just the connections with the kids and the love you know that you can give them and they can give you. Right now, that's the biggest thing for me. That's what's holding me here is a couple of the connections."

While love of children may be a common theme across ECE educators, the focus on attachment and love and caring for children "like they are your own" may be a distinct way that FCC educators across backgrounds and identities experienced their caregiving work

as the following statements from educators in California and Wisconsin noted:

- "I think that's why I've stayed in business so long is because there's a nurturing and caring -love both ways. You know, it's the children love me. I love them."

- "They are extended family. You're their extended family as well."

In addition to emotional attachment to children, FCC educators also described how teaching children and seeing them develop was a rewarding part of the job that contributed to their tenure in the work. A Chinese educator from California explained: "That's why I guess that's why we stay here … we have experienced … this amazing growth span … we spent the best years of the children … That's why I'm still in this field." While this may be a common theme across ECE settings, FCC educators also emphasized their unique opportunity to watch children grow up in FCC. "Watching little people unfold" over several years is how one white educator in Wisconsin described the aspect of FCC that was most rewarding.

Long-term relationships

Related to joy in work are the long-term relationships that FCC educators developed with children, although only 11% (17) of educators across 10 focus groups reported this theme. A white educator from Wisconsin noted that she had children who often came back to visit as adults: "I have kids that are 25-years-old and will spend the whole day here just because this was their comfort zone." A Latina educator from California expressed pride in how former children in her care kept in touch with her even into adulthood. A Black educator from Florida told a story about meeting up with a former student in her FCC program and the deep connections she made over the years:

- "He came to me, 'do you remember me?' I didn't. He wanted to hug me and to thank me. … He told me I taught him things that he didn't get at home. Sometimes I wonder, do I even make an impact? Is it worth doing? Do anybody appreciate you? I cried. He hugged me. That boy hugged me so tight I felt like I lost my breath."

Children keep you going

Ten (7%) educators from eight focus groups described the ways that caring for young children made them "stay young" and gave them "strength to get up one more day." For these women, children were a source of emotional comfort. Some older educators talked about children's energy and love as helping them to keep going physically: "They keep us running."

For some educators, their relationships with children lead to a sense of synchrony that was mutually beneficial for educator and child, as the following suggests:

- "And I think they even sense when you're not feeling a certain way because it just comes. I love you. I want to give you a hug. And I'm like, what, what is going on? Like they can really, … So it's the children that keep you going at the end of the day."

For others, doing FCC was an opportunity for focused and fulfilling work. This educator described how the "absorbing" experience of engaging with children allowed her to put aside the challenges:

- "I believe that in my case, children are what make me get up in the morning day after day. … [W]hen I am working with my kids, I don't even remember that I have things to do at home, time flies. They absorb my attention to the point that I can't think about anything else."

Help children living in low-income households

Ten (7%) educators across focus groups of mostly white and Latina educators shared that they felt they were compensating for children from what they saw as inadequate home environments. Several of the educators who reported this theme were from Massachusetts and were affiliated with FCC systems that have contracts to deliver FCC to families in the state's subsidy system, in the child welfare system, those who are homeless, and teen parents. Their narratives suggested that some educators may have held families from lower income backgrounds in disregard. For example, one educator in exurban Massachusetts emphasized the ways her FCC home environment compensated for children's home experiences:

- "Many children go to your program and that's the only breakfast they see, that is the only food they eat, it's the only place where they might be able to play contently without being slapped or spanked and tossed aside … It's one of those places where children can move around without fear that someone will repress or attack them and for me, mainly what keeps me

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here are the children … Many of these kids lack a lot of love, we have children who get scared when you get close to hug them, because they have never been hugged or kissed by anyone."

FCC educators from rural areas in Wisconsin and Massachusetts described individual families as not being able to give children what they need. As an educator explained, "I think a lot of times because you feel like you take care of the kids better than their parents do … so I think a lot of times we do it just because we're all that those kids have."

RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

A smaller percentage of educators reported that relationships with families were the primary aspect of FCC that kept them in the work – close to one in five (19%: 28 across 15 focus groups). Educators who were more experienced were significantly more likely to talk about the importance of families in their work compared to less experienced educators (5.5% higher odds for each additional year regulated) (See Appendix B, Table B5.) These educators described their close, long-term relationships with the families of the children for whom they cared as a long-term benefit and part of what helped them keep going despite challenges:

- "After a while these families become family to you. And so that gives you that that feeling that you must go on."

- "You know, that's really what keeps a lot of us going is having that good bond with the families."

Educators across focus groups told stories about children and families who kept in touch with them for years after children had grown up. These stories were offered as evidence of the strength and enduring nature of FCC educator-family relationships. An experienced FCC educator from Massachusetts shared her experience with a mother of a child who had been in her program and who later died in his twenties from a drug overdose. She explained how her FCC program was "one of the first places his mom came" and that, despite the passing of time, "that connection that you build with these families is very important and it stays with them."

For some educators, these familial relationships in FCC extended to multiple generations of families. FCC educators across focus groups talked about the importance of continuity of care over decades and how the strength of relationships over time kept them in FCC work:

- "My love, and the relationships that I form with each of the families and the fact that they keep coming back, generation after generation."

- "I feel like a grandmother-provider, because I have cared for children who are the sons and daughters of children that I have cared for. I have seen them grow up, then they get pregnant, married or not, and since I provided good service to those children, and I left my print in the life of those same children, then once they grow up and are married, they bring me their own children to care for."

Some educators relied on families for support. In FCC, where educators may have access to fewer resources than in centers, families could become an important source of emotional support, information, and motivation. Experienced educators in a Massachusetts focus group talked about the ways parents were a general support when educators were going through stressful experiences with licensing or other FCC related challenges:

- "You know, the, the children and the parents and families in my program were a lot of sources of support for me and are what kept me going through it all, because on top of the personal, again I've shared, I've faced relicensing issues."

- "Having a good relationship with them helps a lot … good communication and when you're having a stressful day they can relate, you know."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, educators realized the strength of these partnerships and relationships with families. They described the mutual aid – bringing each other groceries and supplies – that was exchanged with parents and how this gave them hope to keep doing FCC work:

- "When you treat them very nicely or give a lot of love to their kids, they also will treat you like that … I think it's like that's what keeps me still going."

- "It was like, you know, a give and take type of thing. I did it for her, so she thought about me and I thought that was really beautiful."

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FCC AS A "CALLING" TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

One in five educators across 17 groups (19%; 29) emphasized FCC work as giving them a chance to "make a difference" in the world. This sense of efficacy was related to helping children develop into good citizens, helping families in their parenting and work roles, and supporting communities, as the following statements convey:

- "I would say the love of my community, because in the long run, the children that are in the community are going to be adults at some point and we want to raise and nurture those children to be good citizens in our community."

- "You are there out of your love of childhood education, it is what makes the difference in the future."

Black educators were more likely to report this theme compared to white educators (5.5 times greater odds) (see Appendix B, Table B5). Some of these educators emphasized that their FCC work was a way to make a difference in the lives of low-income families more broadly. The ways these educators talked about making a difference with families may have reflected their racialized experiences. A Black educator from Florida shared her view of how FCC supports families and the community:

- "Many families have seen themselves in difficulties. Sometimes we have to go the extra mile because they know us, they come, expose their situation to us, so, apart from teacher, we have to be a friend, counselor, psychologist, educator, all those things means getting out of the scope of education and turning into a suitable support source for the community."

Three educators of color, two of whom had worked in the child welfare system and one in the criminal justice system, described the ways FCC may have offered an opportunity to compensate for the failure of inequitable systems to meet the needs of Black children and families. One Black FCC educator in a Wisconsin focus group, who had been a foster parent prior to opening her FCC program in the same city, emphasized her motivations to serve the needs of children and families who had been ignored and neglected by the state and other public entities:

- "I've seen a lot of African American children go through a lot … mov[ing] around from home to home, not having that stability, not being at grade level in education. So, after being there for so long, thinking and feeling that I missed my calling … I wasn't happy, you know, so on top of seeing the kids just being so low, not all, but majority, so low in education, simple things like reading, things like that. You know what, it took me years to really get my head together on how I can pull it off … these babies out here need us. You know, I'm tired of, I've witnessed firsthand them slipping through the cracks of the system. And so, I said, you know what I missed my calling. I need to do that, you know. I need to reach every child that I can reach, even if it's just a handful. My heart, and the more I thought about it, the more I felt great about it.

A Black FCC educator from Florida told a similar story of how she used to work in a juvenile correctional facility prior to her FCC work and that she viewed her FCC program as a way to "catch" children before they got involved in the criminal justice system:

- "If we catch 'em down here, then they won't be over here. That's what put my heart into it. I just went in to give me the little ones, let me grow them, nurture them, and build them up to be these kids that don't have to be in this place."

Similarly, a Latina educator from California who used to be a social worker in the state's child welfare system talked about her focus on serving the community as informing her decision to work with her state's subsidy system: "It helps us serve the population … we went the subsidy route so that we can provide a service to the lower income families."

Some Black educators also described their attachment to FCC work as a way to repair what they had experienced as new mothers themselves. The educator who spoke about keeping children out of the child welfare system also spoke about FCC giving her a chance to give back or repair what she herself experienced as a mother of a young child:

- "So that's what keeps me going … I was a divorced parent before which made me, in turn a single parent and I needed to work. I needed people like me and how devastated I would feel if I didn't have that option or that support. It's the need. I put myself in parents' shoes."

A Black FCC educator similarly connected her work supporting families to her own experiences:

- "[I]f I didn't keep going then where would these parents really be … I know as me growing up, my mother didn't have like child care and stuff, so we had to, we were left home alone a lot and just today, just today's society, I just really think, I just want to be there for the parents and for the children."

Two educators in a Florida focus group of Black FCC leaders from an FCC association in Florida echoed a similar sentiment when they

explained their role in the broader community:

- "I've been exactly where these ladies have been so that's why I say always try to, you know what I'm saying, you gotta lift some parents up too. They be going through it too, especially right now. This is crazy with what is going on in the world."

WORK CONTROL AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

A quarter of educators (25%, 37) across 16 focus groups talked about the sense of control and agency they experienced operating their own home-based businesses. For these educators, self-employment and entrepreneurship and staying home with their own young children were how they described this sense of job control. In the literature on the ECE workforce, job control may include those aspects of work where educators feel they can make their own decisions, determine their own schedules, and experience a positive sense of agency and efficacy (Lee et al., 2019) in contrast to job demands. In our multivariate analyses, race and caring for one's own children were significantly associated with job control. White educators and educators who cared for their own children in their FCC were more likely to report this theme (4.9- and 3.0-times greater odds respectively) compared to Black educators and educators who did not care for their own children in FCC (See Appendix B, Table B5).

Entrepreneurship

Educators reported that they stayed in FCC despite challenges because FCC allowed them to be their own boss, control their environment and schedule, and earn a living from their own business. They compared FCC to other possible employment and discussed how the autonomy and sense of control over their job in FCC was a driver for their decision to stay in FCC work. This experience of empowerment in FCC work was expressed by experienced as well as new FCC educators and also by educators from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. A white educator from Wisconsin explained that being her own boss kept her in the work because "No one else telling me what I need to do, what time of day I need to do it, where I need to be." A Latina educator from California noted a similar feeling about FCC work: "I don't have to answer to anyone … It's a lot of work, but there are also a lot of advantages that I wouldn't be able to have in another job."

For some educators, running an FCC program was a way to establish themselves and provide for their families. A white educator from Wisconsin noted: "For me it's the income. I'm the breadwinner of my household." Those who relied on private fees (from parents who were not eligible for the state's child care subsidy program) noted that FCC was profitable and that the "money is good." Other educators who relied on income from their state's subsidy program found a certain security and predictability in receiving a steady income from the state. A Black educator from Florida who participated in her state's subsidy system explained this: "What keeps me going is every day knowing that I could wake up and have some income coming in."

Own young children at home

Younger educators with young children at home described how FCC work allowed them to be home during the day with their children and earn an income. As one educator put it, FCC allowed her "to be a mom and bring income to my family." The flexibility of working at home allowed mothers of school-age children to be present for after-school activities and other school-related events, as this white educator from Massachusetts explained:

- "I have my own schedule … So, my own kids when they leave for school I'm there. When they come home from school, I'm there. If they're home sick, I'm home. That's what mainly keeps me going."

Other educators talked about the emotional support they were able to offer their own children by being available and home. For some this meant being home for their teenagers, attending to their own children's mental health issues, or being available for after school activities. A Latina educator from California wanted to have more time with her grandchildren who were in her FCC program:

- "Something that keeps me in the field, something that doesn't let me give up are my girls, my daughters, one of the reasons why I open my child care is because I wanted to be a mom, I wanted to enjoy motherhood. I wanted to be there for them. I didn't want to miss anything."

For some educators, their own children keep them in over many years, even once their children reached school-age and beyond. Educators in a focus group from Wisconsin talked about how they thought about leaving as their children aged out of child care but over the years decided to stay in the work for convenience reasons such as not needing to find summer camps for older children and generally being available for their families.

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SUPPORTS THAT KEEP EDUCATORS IN THE WORK

In addition to the rewards inherent in FCC work, some educators in our focus groups cited the supports that specifically helped them stay in the field despite the challenges they faced. In this section we report on the supports that were described in response to the focus group prompt: "In the moments when you feel discouraged about your work, what keeps you going?" Educators emphasized two types of support that kept them going: (1) support from peers and (2) support from their own families (Table 12).

TABLE 12. SUPPORTS THAT BUFFER CHALLENGES & KEEP EDUCATORS IN FCC

	Current educators N=149		Focus groups N=25	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Peer support	14%	(21)	32%	(8)
Social and emotional support	11%	(16)	32%	(8)
Informational support	5%	(7)	12%	(3)
Support from own family	7%	(10)	32%	(8)
Logistical support	2%	(3)	12%	(3)
Emotional support	5%	(7)	24%	(6)

Note: 28 (19%) participants in the focus groups did not respond to the question about what keeps you going despite challenges.

PEER SUPPORT

Peer support was a source of strength and sustainability for 14% (21) of the educators across eight focus groups. These educators reported that peers helped them through the quotidian stresses of working with children and families as well as the challenges of navigating confusing and sometimes changing policies and regulations. Peer support was described as both informal networking or friendships and more formal peer support groups or state or local FCC associations. Regardless of the outlet, relationships with peers offered an opportunity for social and emotional support from someone who understood what they were going through, and informational support about operating an FCC business or understanding policies and regulations.

Social and emotional support from peers

FCC educators described the social and emotional support they received from other FCC educators. One experienced Wisconsin educator who'd been in the business for 27 years talked about the exchanges she had with other friends who operated FCC programs. The chance to "vent" helped her to alleviate the "frustrations of doing day care." A Florida educator who offered care for 19 years described how the encouragement she received from her FCC peers who understood the realities of FCC was often more helpful than advice she could obtain from her local child care agency. As she explained about agency staff, "some of them have never been in a child care setting."

For some educators in our sample, FCC associations offered the support and a chance to "destress" that helped them stay in the field: "The association, I'd have to say that's what kept me going." Formal FCC associations also offered opportunities for educators to get together and socialize with each other. Some associations offered conferences that allowed educators to take a break from the daily routine. A Massachusetts educator with 23 years of experience explained how association conferences and events gave her a chance to interact with other educators as co-workers in a profession that mostly involved working alone without other adults:

- "I think having the association is so important because this is a job that most of us are either working alone or just working with one person and you need to have people that are doing what you're doing. We're really coworkers, we're just not all in the same place...You just seem to have that camaraderie and be able to throw ideas. We all know what each other is going through."

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Overall, the camaraderie discussed across focus groups suggests that peer support helped sustain educators through the difficult challenges of doing FCC. An experienced educator from Massachusetts talked about the role that her FCC association played in keeping her in the work over 18 years:

- "I have to say my support system in the association helps me a lot, get through a lot of stuff. I think I want to quit at least once a month and they helped me. … They kind of helped me … look at things in a different way, or just let me complain and vent and then it feels better. For me it does."

Informational support from peers

Educators also described peers as important sources of information about FCC work and about changing policies and regulations. Family child care associations, through Facebook pages and websites, were a source of reliable information about new licensing or regulatory requirements. Newer educators, in particular, talked about having access to a community of more experienced educators who could provide current and accurate information about licensing and other requirements. These experts could also answer questions about developing contracts, policy handbooks, and enrollment. One new educator explained how her friend, also an FCC educator, came to her home and walked her through the pre-licensing inspection.

SUPPORT FROM OWN FAMILY

Support from family members was reported by fewer educators as something that helped them stay in the work. Ten educators (7%) across eight focus groups reported their own family members helped them keep their FCC businesses running.

Logistical support

Spouses offered a range of supports, including subsidizing the FCC business with their earnings, that helped these educators stay in the field. Husbands' incomes enabled FCC businesses to keep going during fluctuating enrollment and the concurrent unstable income. A California educator who had been in business for 30 years said that she had considered leaving FCC – "I feel that many times I would have quit the business" – had it not been for her husband's "back up" support when her business fluctuated. Similarly, an educator from Florida explained that "without my family, I wouldn't be in this business that is now independent, being able to develop in this field, financially."

Spouses also shared in the care of children. Husbands served as informal or formal assistants in FCC offering instrumental help such as working with children, cleaning, doing groceries, or making lunch.

Emotional support

Educators who worked alone without an assistant also described the emotional supports offered by relatives during the ups and downs of FCC. A Wisconsin educator explained that she would not have been able to remain in FCC without the emotional support of her spouse:

- "My husband. … it's hard being with kids all days. Some of us 10, 11, 12 hours a day and adult contact is, you know, they walk in the door, that's adult conversation and I feel he doesn't judge me. You know, and just support no matter what."

A new educator from Massachusetts whose aunt and mother were also FCC educators talked about the social support she received from them:

- "I would just say fulfillment and family. You know, the sense of family that I get from my community and my aunts. I have another aunt who does day care, so I can call them up and be like, you know, this happened to me today … I have like a sisterhood with them."

OTHER SUPPORTS THAT HELP EDUCATORS

Although educators reported receiving help from their local CCR&R agencies or professional development agencies, none of the educators in our sample said that these supports keep them in the FCC workforce. Instead, close to a third of educators (31%; 46) discussed the ways agencies and agency staff helped them navigate specific system challenges as well as encouraged their professionalism and FCC work. Support from agencies included financial assistance, informational support, and hands-on help navigating system requirements.

Differences across state policy contexts resulted in differences in the perceptions of support that FCC educators reported. Educators in California and Massachusetts reported the strongest supports from agencies. Both states have publicly funded local agencies that are tailored specifically to facilitate FCC educators' participation and engagement in state subsidy and quality systems. California has local CCR&R agencies that manage the subsidy system as well as FCC home networks that are state-funded to support quality specifically in FCC programs. Similarly, Massachusetts has local FCC systems that support FCC educators in licensing, subsidy, and quality systems (see Table 3).

In contrast, FCC educators in Wisconsin and Florida reported fewer agency supports. Educators in Wisconsin emphasized individual specialists with whom they developed trusting relationships. In Wisconsin, local government agencies manage the subsidy system instead of contracting with CCR&R agencies or family child care networks. Similarly, educators in Florida reported few supports from the Early Learning Councils, the local agencies that manage subsidy and quality systems but are not specifically tailored for FCC programs.

Financial support

Financial support from agencies included grants for equipment and materials required by licensing and QRIS. An educator from California connected the monetary help she received from her CCR&R agency to her commitment and engagement in FCC work:

- "We have received money from them, very good money, up to $8,000 to buy whatever we want. Financially it has supported us ... Once they acknowledge your work and give you $8,000 so you can buy your toys during the year ... then you work with more love, more energy."

Educators from a focus group in Massachusetts talked about the ways their local FCC system[6] helped them with substitute care for their programs. Educators in Florida mentioned increased financial support from their local Early Learning Councils during the early months of the pandemic.

Informational support

FCC educators across states reported obtaining useful and relevant information from local agencies on a variety of topics such as immunization requirements and business practices as well as information about conferences and professional development resources. In Florida FCC educators reported receiving increased information during the early days of the pandemic from their local Early Learning Councils: "Since the coronavirus, I mean they're flooding us with all types of emails, are keeping us pretty much in the loop, with a lot of things that's going on."

Educators from California and Massachusetts emphasized the timely responses they experienced from their local support agencies, as the following comments suggest:

- "Whenever I have a question. I just call them and ... they will return my call and see what's my problem."

- "The thing that I like about having a system is, in a couple seconds, I can reach someone. We have their phone numbers. You can, they even most of them are comfortable with texting, so you can get a response within a couple seconds ... And a lot of times in day care, if you have a quick question or, you know, an issue ... it kind of is immediate. So yeah, I think they're extremely helpful."

Hands-on help navigating ECE system requirements

Educators in California, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts talked about support they received with ECE system requirements from individual staff members at local agencies. Educators whose primary language was Spanish described CCR&R staff helping them complete licensing applications as well as keep track of system requirements and dates, and what trainings to take. Educators in

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6   Family child care systems in Massachusetts are state-funded agencies that manage the child care subsidy system and offer professional development supports specifically for FCC educators.

Wisconsin talked about CACFP specialists as well as local agency QRIS specialists who helped them navigate often complicated and overwhelming regulations and standards. They emphasized that support from specialists was most helpful when it was genuine and encouraging. Talking about her CACFP specialist, one educator said: "She's not in it just for the work … she's in it to help you."

Hands-on help with specific challenges was also cited by educators in Massachusetts. These educators emphasized how FCC system staff helped them with challenges related to licensing and subsidy:

- "People who are struggling with this or that, they can, they can sort of get that support and I think that's, where the disconnect between like the state and us is sort of happening. So, like I said, I'm getting that now from my agency."

One educator explained how her system specialist helped her navigate technology requirements: "I've called her a lot of times, because I'm not a computer person, and when it comes to computers like I need help because I'm drowning." Other educators talked about getting help from their local FCC system with required paperwork. In Massachusetts, where educators are required to get relicensed, two educators described the help they received from their FCC systems around relicensing:

- "Well, I know for me, again, facing relicensing challenges over the last long time, super long time. The director of our system has actually gone to bat for me and, and tried to have conversation with licensing and the regional director, and followed up with emails, and kept in contact with me weekly to make sure that it's ongoing and that if there's anything that she can do to support me that she's there. Which, you know, I don't, I'm pretty confident I wouldn't get if I wasn't with the system."

- "I don't think [the agency coaches] are there to penalize anyone … If there's something that they noticed that you're not doing or that needs help, not only will they mention it to you, but they'll also tell you exactly how to rectify it and they give you plenty of time to do it. So, it's not the type of thing where you're up against the wall."

Union support

Educators in three focus groups in California and one in Massachusetts, two states where SEIU has organized FCC, cited union support. Some educators talked about the union help with licensing process and the required workshops that were offered for free. Still others found union membership helpful because they could join together with others to advocate for higher subsidy rates and benefits such as life and health insurance.

SUMMARY

- Two thirds of FCC educators across our focus groups reported not having considered exit from the work.

- Rewards of FCC work included aspects that are inherently part of FCC: working with children, relationships with families, and business ownership. Race and experience intersected with these rewards: White educators were more likely than Latina and other educators of color who were not Black to report working with children as a factor that keeps them in FCC work and more experienced educators reported relationships with families as keeping them in FCC.

- A subset of educators described their tenure in FCC work as a commitment to making a difference in the world and to "lifting up" low-income families and communities. These educators were more likely to be Black, and some spoke about their experiences of helping and supporting Black children and mothers in the face of systemic racism.

- Educators who reported that work control and business ownership kept them in the FCC workforce were more likely to be white and to care for their own children in their child care programs. A small number of educators felt that state subsidy systems offered a source of income stability.

- Peer support and support from family members were discussed across focus groups as potential buffers against the challenges of FCC work.

- None of the educators across our focus groups reported that support from agencies or agency staff were the reason they stay in the work, yet many described useful supports they received from agencies as well as unions.

- Agency supports from CCR&R and other agency staff helped educators with licensing and subsidy. Some educators also reported receiving useful and supportive help from their CACFP and QRIS specialists.

CHAPTER 4: GETTING STARTED IN LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE

Educators' motivations for entering home-based child care work have been relatively well-documented in the literature. Most recently, the 2019 NSECE data found that more than half of listed providers (most likely FCC educators) indicated that their reasons were career-related, with smaller proportions of educators reporting wanting to help children/parents (16%), to have convenient work arrangements (16%), or to earn money (Datta et al., 2021). These reasons for entering the field closely parallel both the reasons former educators entered FCC and the reasons educators persist in the work. Little research, however, has examined the reasons that FCC educators decide to become licensed. The lack of evidence on this issue is a crucial gap because findings have implications for FCC supply.

Regulation (i.e., licensing, certification, or registration) may offer opportunities and benefits for educators that might influence educators' decisions to enter and remain in the field. Conversely, regulation may create burdens for educators. As earlier chapters indicate, system-related challenges such as inequitable subsidy policies, center-centric regulations across systems that don't fit the realities of FCC, and disrespectful and distrustful licensing staff are a primary reason that many educators, including new educators, leave the field, particularly when combined with the stressful working conditions and economic difficulties that FCC educators experience.

This chapter primarily reports findings from surveys and focus groups with new FCC educators who had been operating their programs for less than five years at the time of our focus groups. This chapter also includes some findings from more experienced educators in the focus groups who reflected on their experiences getting licensed, including their choices to opt for registration or certification instead of licensing in states that offered these regulatory alternatives to care for fewer children, and on their perceptions of why new educators may or may not get licensed. While former FCC educators were not the focus of this analysis, we highlight a few quotes from their interviews that amplify the focus group findings, particularly those from the eight former educators in our sample who left after five or fewer years, four of whom left because they were unable to successfully launch their FCC businesses due to these kinds of start-up challenges. The following sections examine the primary reasons that educators decided to become licensed, followed by the challenges they faced in this process (Table 13).

TABLE 13. GETTING STARTED IN LICENSED FCC				
	Current educators N=149		Focus groups N=25	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Why educators decide to become licensed	17%	(25)	40%	(10)
Licensing means legitimacy	68%	(17)	90%	(9)
Licensing means higher and more stable income	44%	(11)	60%	(6)
Challenges with getting licensed	18%	(27)	52%	(13)
Unclear information about the licensing process	30%	(8)	54%	(7)
System delays that lengthen the process	37%	(10)	38%	(5)
High startup costs	44%	(12)	62%	(8)
Concerns about licensing inspections	30%	(8)	38%	(5)

REASONS FOR BECOMING LICENSED

A total of 25 educators in 10 of the 25 focus groups reported their reasons for becoming licensed. Two main themes emerged about reasons for becoming licensed: (1) legitimacy and (2) higher, more stable income. The four states represented in our study have different policies around regulations for FCC. In California, Wisconsin, and Florida, providers can choose to offer license-exempt child care for non-relative children under a certain threshold of number of children in care. In Massachusetts, however, providers must become licensed to offer child care to one or more non-relative children (see Table 2).

Licensing means legitimacy

Slightly more than two thirds of educators (68%; 17) reported that the primary reason they chose to become licensed was because they thought it brought greater legitimacy to their work, both in terms of how families viewed them and how they perceived themselves.

Both newer and experienced educators talked about getting licensed because they thought it helped with marketing their program by signaling the program's safety and quality to interested parents, who are "always gonna look into … if you're licensed, that you got fingerprinted." An experienced Florida educator, who had been licensed for 34 years, cited the advantage of regulation as inclusion on lists that were available for parents and helped them make child care decisions:

- "My state has a listing of all the – anybody that's licensed and registered in every county in the state, whether you want family child care or centers or whatever. This way, [parents] can look at licensing reports on there to see if there's violations. Like, 'Oh, whoa. That one's been over. This one's had too many violations and stuff. That's one I may not wanna look at.'"

Current educators also reported that being licensed also made it easier to explain rules to parents, who might raise questions about the reasons for specific practices. A new educator from California who had been licensed for a year-and a-half explained:

- "There are certain situations where … parents try to argue with you about something. Or say, 'Well, why can't I do this?' Kind of put it on licensing and say, 'Oh, this is a licensing requirement' … You have somebody to kind of put those things on instead of it being your role … I just kind of feel like sometimes you can use them to benefit you with conversations with families."

An experienced Wisconsin educator, licensed for 11 years, was more explicit about the advantage of being licensed in the face of potential issues with parents: "Licensing has your back in some of the respects, so that's a good thing."

Other educators focused on how being licensed brought a sense of self-efficacy to their work. For some, getting licensed was simply "the right thing to do" for their own programs. Several new educators from California indicated that licensing showed the state's stamp of approval on their work, demonstrating that they "were doing things correctly." As one educator who'd only been licensed for a year explained, "It shows your seriousness, and you know your business is legit." Two educators from Florida also talked about their decisions to become licensed instead of registered in similar terms, equating licensing with a higher degree of professionalism that "babysitting" did not offer:

- "I chose licensed because I wanted the quality. That was what quality looked like. That was the baseline. Not just registered, but I wanted the next level. I've always worked towards the next level, whatever that looks like."

For a handful of educators, the legitimacy conferred by following the rules offered protection from doing something illegal. Several attributed their decisions to become licensed to anxiety about being "caught." One Wisconsin educator who had been licensed for a year talked about her decision to transition from unregulated to licensed care as coming from this place of anxiety: "I didn't like the fact that I wasn't licensed and always worried about getting caught … It was on my conscience, and I couldn't do it so I got licensed … It's difficult, but I'm making it work."

Licensing means higher and more stable income

Another reason for becoming licensed reported by 11 (44%) educators was related to having "a steady income" and a more sustainable business. Licensing enabled educators to care for larger numbers of children, which offered the potential of higher income. Two educators in California talked about the advantage of being able to care for higher numbers of children or children from more than one family, limits imposed on license-exempt providers. Two other educators, one from California and one from Florida, simply cited the benefit of higher and more stable pay: "My reason was basically financial, finding a stable business, to have a secure future."

State licensing systems are often considered a gateway to accessing public funding from subsidy and quality systems (Adams & Dwyer, 2021). Six educators described how their decisions to become licensed were tied to the perception that licensure would enable them to participate in other policy systems such as subsidy, CACFP, QRIS, and Early Head Start, all of which offer payments

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(e.g., higher reimbursement rates and/or grants and other financial incentives depending on state policies) to educators. A new educator from Wisconsin who had been licensed for less than a year specifically cited the monetary incentives she could receive from her state's linked QRIS and subsidy system if she got licensed: "If Young Star's going to give me any incentive for keeping my home safe and keeping these kids, right, then why not shoot for the stars and I start to be licensed." A new educator from Florida cited the state's policy of providing higher subsidy reimbursement rates to licensed compared to registered educators:

- "One of the reasons I decided to get the license was because – I had the [subsidy] contract. I had one girl with [subsidy], but if I had the license, they would pay me a little more."

CHALLENGES WITH GETTING LICENSED

FCC educators in our focus groups talked about a variety of challenges they faced during the initial process of becoming licensed. A total of 27 current educators in 13 focus groups shared challenges they faced becoming licensed or, in a few cases, about deciding to become certified or registered instead. A few former educators also reflected on their early experiences, particularly when they left FCC after a very short time in business. Four challenges emerged: (1) unclear information about the licensing process; (2) system delays that lengthen the licensing process; (3) high start-up costs; and (4) concerns about licensing inspections.

Unclear information about the licensing process

Unclear information about the process was a multifaceted issue that new educators across all four states faced. One former educator from Florida who left licensing after a year because she was never able to successfully launch her business shared her challenges:

- "[The licensing process] was a headache. It took years for me, really, to get into it enough to know everything that I had to do … You think you've gotten everything done, and there's other stuff and other programs and other people through the state that you need to talk to about all kinds of different stuff. I mean, I couldn't even tell you right now if I had to sit down and tell somebody how to go from point A to point B … It's a lot. [Laughter] It was really a lot more than I thought it would be."

Eight current educators who were all new to the field also cited this issue. They talked about needing to "wing it" through the "overwhelming" process because of a lack of clear information or training. For some educators whose primary language was Spanish, these challenges were exacerbated by systems materials that were in English only. For example, a new Latina educator from Florida who had been licensed for two years talked about how hard it was to learn what needed to be done, particularly when navigating language that she did not always understand as a bilingual Spanish speaker. She lamented that on top of a lack of training about navigating the licensing process, her first inspection was not sensitive to the fact that she was new to the work:

- "I was never given any initial training. I was immersed in starting my own business, but I never had a time when I was trained by the people from DCF, because they are the ones that regulate everything that has to do with childcare. I didn't have that initial training to do my job and then the inspections. Once I applied for the license, the first thing that happened was the inspection. I hardly had any children because obviously when you start you hardly have any. The first inspection was carried out as if I had been in the child care sector a lot longer."

Another educator from California who had been licensed for a year reiterated this sentiment: "There is a lot of things that we may not be doing totally right, but it's not the fact that we don't want to do it right, is because we haven't had the guidance on how to do it right."

The issue of unclear information was sometimes exacerbated by poor communication with licensing staff. An educator from California, summed up her experience:

- "They just dropped the ball and they're not very helpful. You have to keep escalating to where you actually find the right answers, the right help, how the right paperwork needs to be turned in."

Another educator from Massachusetts who had been licensed for a year shared that she felt vulnerable and uncomfortable for even asking clarifying questions about the process.

System delays that lengthen the licensing process

Ten educators also experienced considerable delays in obtaining their licenses. Some waited for almost a year for the completion of the process. This was especially challenging for those educators living in less urban, more geographically isolated areas. A new educator in a suburban region of Los Angeles County reported having to travel far to complete required health and safety training

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because the classes were offered too infrequently. A former Massachusetts educator shared that already lengthy background check delays were further complicated by living far from the nearest fingerprinting center, where appointments were only offered once a month. The time it took to get background check results was an issue across the board; one educator reported waiting eight months to be cleared for her license.

Delays were also sometimes exacerbated by errors, mistakes, and miscommunications from staff. A new educator from California who'd only been licensed for a year explained:

- "It was time consuming ... somebody made an error, now I have to wait double the time, like when they have to get the fingerprints done, I had to wait because they made a mistake ... It's just a lot of mistakes here and there are things that they don't inform you that takes a long time. So, it was just time consuming the time that it took just to open."

The complicated and frequently delayed licensing process may have influenced some educators' decisions to care for fewer children and become registered in Florida, certified in Wisconsin or license-exempt in California. An educator who was newly certified in Wisconsin but had been licensed in another state for 16 years reflected about her frustration dealing with a disrespectful pre-licensing visitor whom she perceived to be more of a "middleman" than a helpful support:

- "I think things should be streamlined. You know, it's they make it very difficult. That's why a lot of people aren't getting into it. You can become certified a lot easier than you can licensed."

High startup costs

The high startup costs of getting licensed emerged as another challenge for 12 educators across all four states. This issue was also echoed by former educators. These costs included: (1) investment in home renovations to comply with regulations; (2) required training and education; and (3) background checks and fingerprint records for household members.

Home renovations

Costly home renovations required to meet licensing regulations were reported across states. A former Wisconsin educator explained the challenge she faced when she initially went through licensing:

- "I made a lot of changes, spent a lot of money to change my house. It was quite expensive to look like a day care on the inside and the outside."

Ten current educators expanded on the challenge of costly updates to their homes. One educator from California estimated that it "take[s] like 10 grand at least to get the furniture, get your house ready, get gates." A new educator from Florida who had been registered for a year also cited the costs related to updating the home space to meet requirements:

- "When you start out, you have to invest a lot of money because it's a family day care. It has to have a setup with a playground, their beds, the space [for], learning, there is a lot to invest in, hundreds of dollars."

High start-up costs, particularly for home renovations, were a factor in some educators' decisions to remain certified in Wisconsin and registered in Florida. Three educators – two in Wisconsin and one in Florida – talked about caring for fewer children to avoid these start-up costs. The Wisconsin educators, one who had been certified for two years and the other for eight, described the financial calculus in the decision not to meet licensing requirements just to care for one more child:

- "The biggest barrier for me was the fence ... We don't know if we plan on staying here forever. So, to put a fence then would be hard, expensive. And then a lot of the kids that I have now, so I have three, and two of them plus my own are under the age of two, so I wouldn't be able to really gain any more kids being licensed, so I just stuck with being certified."

The new Florida educator who had been registered for two years explained a similar cost challenge with home renovations:

- "When DCF came out they told me I needed a gate and every time I had someone to come out and survey for the gate, my gate run $8,000 or better because of the size of my home. So, it's just, it's not to me, was not worth the right now, and most of my parents are private pay, but just left it at that for now."

Required training and education

In addition to home renovations, high startup costs also included required trainings that may have discouraged new educators from entering FCC work. Four educators talked about this challenge. The additional training required by licensing was another cost-related factor for a Wisconsin educator's choice to remain certified: "There was additional training that I had to do up front that I didn't need

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with certifying."

An experienced Florida educator with 26 years of FCC experience described the training and education-related barriers to getting licensed. She explained how the long hours required by the state may have added an additional cost besides the training fee because educators had to close their businesses during training hours and pay for gas or transportation to get to trainings:

- "The demands they make when you are trying to open a family child care center, you have to fill out a lot of forms, you have to invest quite a lot of money … You have to take a class, you have to pay. After the class, you have to take the exam and it isn't free. None of it is free. At the beginning, if you move here to Florida, even if you have the CDA, even if you have a degree, even if you have a Bachelor's, you have to have the requirements of forty – forty hours, right? For the training of the practices to work with children of five years. That's more money. I think that they are just taking money, money, money. It's a business, for me, sorry, it's a business. Money, money, money. When one really needs help with materials, they disappear like ghosts."

Background checks and fingerprint records for household members.

Background checks not only extended the licensing process; they were also expensive. Since the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization, FCC educators and all adult members of their household age 18 and older must obtain background checks in most states, including the states in our study (NCECQA, 2020b). In addition, many states including California, Florida, and Massachusetts required a fingerprinting record for household members in addition to background checks (See Table 2). Four educators in our sample were frustrated by the uncovered costs of background checks for household members. For example, some noted that this was burdensome when fingerprinting conducted by other agencies such as previous work in schools or centers could not be carried over into the FCC setting. One educator from Massachusetts joked:

- "My husband's in the military, and he had to be fingerprinted as well, which was pretty funny for us at the time. His security clearance is a little bit higher than that."

For large families with older children who were members of the household, fingerprinting was a particular expense. For example, another new educator from Massachusetts talked about the expense of getting her family of six fingerprinted in order for her to get licensed.

Concerns about licensing inspections

A total of eight educators expressed their initial concerns about home inspections as a challenge in the regulatory process. Like many of the former educators who experienced stressful interactions with licensing staff, several of these educators talked about the anxiety and fear they felt in anticipation of licensing inspections. Educators talked about hearing "horror stories," which made them apprehensive but eventually overcoming this stressor and going through the licensing process. For some educators, the fear about licensing inspections influenced their decisions to choose certification or registration. One certified educator in Wisconsin who had experienced overzealous licensing visits while she was a center director explained her decision:

- "I did hear a lot of negative things about being licensed and how it works, like in your home and stuff like that … that's the reason why I didn't shoot for licensed from the beginning because I was afraid. So, I figured I'll just take the first step and just start at the certified."

An experienced Wisconsin educator connected the stress of visits, particularly those that were unannounced, to both FCC business closures and the recruitment of new educators into the field: "I think that's why a lot of people's gotten out of it … and I think this is what intimidated the younger providers, and after all we got to keep them because educators my age, we're gonna not [be] taking care of the children."

Some educators' concerns about inspections were more about not wanting the intrusion of having someone inspect their homes than about anxiety or fear. An educator from Florida who had been registered for 10 years and had just applied to become licensed also talked about this as the main reason it took her so long to take the next step:

- "When I started with family day care, I was never interested in the license … I wasn't interested because I didn't want anyone to come to my house. My house is my house, and I wanted my certification because in the certification, the only difference is that you renew it annually and an inspector doesn't come to inspect your house."

SUMMARY

- The most common reasons for becoming licensed were that it provided legitimacy as well as higher and more stable income.

- Many of the challenges educators faced during the initial licensing process paralleled the challenges that led some new educators to close their businesses after a short time.

- The most common challenges included unclear information, system delays, high startup costs, and inspection concerns.

- Some educators in Wisconsin and Florida chose to become regulated at different levels (certification and registration, respectively), in order to avoid these licensing difficulties.

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CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

DISCUSSION

The conceptual model that guided this study hypothesized three core factors that may contribute to the decreasing supply of regulated FCC in the U.S.: (1) ECE system processes and requirements; (2) working conditions; and (3) business sustainability. In addition, the model hypothesized that these core factors intersect with individual circumstances and experiences of FCC educators, available and accessible supports, and broader societal events such as the COVID-19 pandemic as well as socio-economic factors such as systemic racism and economic inequity (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021).

Findings in this report both confirm and elaborate prior research on the workforce dynamics of the FCC sector. Findings from the current study about why former FCC educators left the work confirm the three core challenges of FCC work. Personal challenges were also identified as common intersecting factors that drive some people out of FCC work. Our study contributes new descriptive data on how the family-like aspects of FCC settings that are appealing to many families and sustaining to many educators are the same aspects that create challenges for some educators. The personal lives of family members and the tenuousness of housing for renters create additional layers of challenges for FCC educators. For some FCC educators, their own families may need to subsidize the FCC program through their own earnings, free labor as assistant providers, or through benefits and other in-kind supports. At the same time, our findings from current educators suggest that the benefits of home-based work are what may keep some educators in FCC because it allows them to stay home with their own young children and provide an income for their household.

In addition, findings from our study highlight the pervasive racial and linguistic inequities that Black, Latinx, and Asian American FCC educators experience across state policy contexts. Throughout interviews and focus groups we heard stories that emphasized the racial inequities faced by Black and Latina educators who described their experiences with licensing staff as one of fear and discrimination – likening licensing staff to prison wardens and the police. We heard stories from Latina and Chinese educators who described the barriers they experienced with ECE systems that did not have materials available in their language. Educators from rural areas also faced inequities in access to background checks and required professional development and training. It is likely that these challenges faced by educators in the field may also be factors that hinder new educators from entering FCC work. We also heard Black educators who stay in FCC in order to raise up their communities and support children and mothers in the face of systemic racism.

The following sections discuss our findings for each of our three research questions: (1) Why did educators leave regulated FCC? (2) Why do they stay in regulated FCC? and (3) Why do educators enter regulated FCC work?

WHY DID EDUCATORS LEAVE REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE?

Our findings suggest that many FCC educators leave the work due to intersecting challenges. A majority of the 30 former FCC educators in our sample reported at least one of the three groups of challenges (ECE systems, economics, and working conditions) that have been widely reported in prior research on FCC educators' experiences (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021). Although this was an exploratory study, our findings contribute new understanding about how these challenges intersect with each other and with personal circumstances to contribute to educators' exit from the FCC workforce.

This study is the first to show that ECE systems challenges are a reason many FCC educators may leave the work. All eight educators categorized as "burning out" from FCC work cited systems challenges. These challenges were often connected to policies including inequitable subsidy policies that did not support the full cost of operating an FCC program (Adams & Dwyer, 2021; Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021). State-specific policies were often behind challenges faced by FCC educators. For example, licensing staff and QRIS specialists who were not specifically trained to work with FCC programs may have emphasized center-centric interpretations of regulations and quality standards. State licensing systems that did not have oversight and reliability training for licensing staff may have been related to the inconsistencies in regulations that some FCC educators reported. Licensing systems that required family background checks and fingerprinting documentation contributed to challenges around costs and compliance for FCC educators.

In addition, some challenges described by FCC educators were not policy-specific but instead cut across all policy contexts. Systemic

and interpersonal racism in addition to a general disregard for FCC programs was alluded to by FCC educators in their descriptions of disrespectful licensing staff. Recent analyses suggest that educators of color face economic inequities when engaging with ECE systems such as licensing and QRIS (Meek et al., 2021). Educators in our study cited examples of financial and professional obligations including costly home renovations and materials, costly background checks for all household members, and requirements for college degrees, all of which were not compensated. Moreover, our exploratory analyses of former FCC educators indicated that Black educators were more likely than white educators to leave the ECE field altogether. This finding may add evidence to the observation that inequities are pushing educators of color, specifically Black educators, out of the ECE field into other work.

The difficult economics of operating an FCC business were also cited by close to two thirds of the former educators in our sample, aligned with prior research. Specifically, low enrollment and lack of benefits were cited as challenges to business sustainability (Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021). A fifth of former educators in our sample left FCC for jobs in Head Start programs and cited the higher compensation and benefits offered by these programs as part of this decision. Competition from publicly-funded preschool and other no-cost child care programs was also mentioned by some former FCC educators as a challenge contributing to their exit, confirming some recent research on crowd-out of community child care programs by universal preschool initiatives (Bassok et al., 2014; 2016; Brown, 2018).

Just over half of former educators cited stress associated with working conditions as a factor in their decision to leave FCC work. Because FCC work is so integrated within the family setting – both the home environment and the people who live and work in the home – challenges in the family directly impact the viability of FCC work. Notably, many FCC educators told stories of personal and family illness and hardship that increased the stress of long hours doing FCC work and, in some cases, created tipping points where educators felt they could no longer stay open.

Our finding that two thirds of former FCC educators in our sample stayed in ECE after closing their FCC businesses suggests that intersecting and overlapping factors related to FCC work – working alone and small capacity in addition to systematically low compensation – may have contributed to their decision to leave FCC. Former FCC educators reported staying in the ECE field and taking jobs as teachers and assistants in center-based preschools, Head Start programs, and public school classrooms where they could earn a higher income with benefits. A few continued home-based child care as license-exempt providers. Their continued attachment to the field suggests a deep connection to caring for and educating children irrespective of the setting.

Many educators reported their deep regrets at having to close and described missing their work in FCC. Stories from former FCC educators about their challenges with licensing and QRIS as well as their inability to make a living wage caring for children within the subsidy system suggest that ECE systems are not designed to work for FCC settings. Nearly all former educators in our sample said that more supports, particularly around navigating systems such as licensing, subsidy, and QRIS, and higher compensation and benefits would have helped them keep their FCC businesses open. Many noted that supports and more equitable, responsive systems could have buffered personal and individual challenges. For some FCC educators who stay in the work for decades without retirement benefits or savings for their families, FCC work may be pushing them and their families further into poverty without offering them opportunities for financial stability.

WHY DO EDUCATORS STAY IN FAMILY CHILD CARE?

Our findings uncovered rewards of FCC work that may buffer the challenges of operating an FCC program and keep FCC educators in the work. Rewards included: (1) working with children; (2) relationships with families; (3) FCC as a "calling" to make a difference; and (4) work control and self-employment. Some of these themes have been examined in prior studies of FCC exit and attachment. Work control, for example, was examined as a correlate of exit in a 1996 study of FCC educators (Todd & Deery-Schmidt, 1996) and love for children was described as an aspect of the psychological rewards that may keep FCC educators in the work (Lee et al., 2019). The current study contributes to this earlier research by elaborating on these constructs that may contribute to exit or tenure among FCC educators.

FCC educators in this study emphasized the joy that comes from working with children. The concept of joy in relationship to work satisfaction has been examined in the health care literature as an underexamined yet key ingredient that keeps people engaged in their work (Perlo et al., 2017). Related to the concept of joy is the sense of deep engagement that some FCC educators described when they work with children. Educators' descriptions of how working with children allowed them to fully focus – "they absorb my attention to the point that I can't think about anything else" – may suggest that this kind of deep engagement with children contributes to a sense of well-being. Rodriguez and colleagues (2020) describe what they call the "five awarenesses of teaching" as a way of understanding teacher well-being. Included in their framework is teacher awareness of synchrony and a "flow" state when working with children that we heard described in our focus groups (Rodriguez et al., 2020). This deep, rewarding engagement with children may counter the logistical and custodial challenges of child care work.

FCC educators also described the enduring relationships they develop with families of children in their programs, the multi-generational relationships that form, and the mutual supports that occur with families as an aspect that keeps them in the work. Related to working with families was the theme of viewing FCC work as a calling to make a difference in the broader community. Other rewards included making a difference with families and operating a business. Some educators stayed in FCC because it allowed them to stay home with their children throughout the elementary and secondary school years. Our interviews with former educators suggest that some may "grow out" of FCC work when their children enter school but our focus groups with current educators suggests that some may settle into FCC work as a convenient way to support their families and earn an income.

Although our focus group protocol did not specifically probe for how race and culture may shape motivations for engaging with families and we did not have a large enough sample to examine within group experiences, Black educators in our sample most commonly reported the theme of commitment to community, describing how FCC allows them to help and support other Black families, especially in the face of systemic racism and inequity. Prior research on FCC educators also found that Black educators were more likely to report doing FCC to help mothers in their communities compared to white educators who were more likely to report doing FCC to stay home with their own children (Armenia, 2009). This critical self-agency may be a part of what sustains FCC educators of color in the work.

Research on home-schooling in Black communities may offer a parallel for deepening an understanding of what FCC work means for Black educators. Studies of homeschooling find that some Black families turn to this option as a way of reclaiming education from inequitable educational institutions (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013). Black parents who choose to homeschool their children describe the home space as offering a place of healing and caring for Black children who may have experienced interpersonal and systemic racism in public school spaces. It's possible that FCC work for some Black educators offers a similar opportunity to support and help children and families heal from the pressures of racism. National data indicate that 47% of children who are expelled from public preschools are Black and some research suggests that these children may transition into home-based child care programs (Zinsser et al., 2019). Research on expulsion in listed HBCC settings finds that Black providers are less likely to expel children compared to white or Latinx providers (Hooper et al., 2019). Together, these data suggest the important role that FCC settings may play in supporting well-being and development among Black children, which may be a reason for some educators to stay in this work.

FCC educators also described the sense of self-efficacy they experience as small business entrepreneurs. Being their own boss and having control over their own schedules may counter the role burden that comes from the widely-reported experience of taking on multiple roles in FCC work (Hooper et al., 2019). Educators across racial and ethnic backgrounds talked about the rewards of being a small business owner. However, we found white educators were more likely to cite job control, including being home with their own young children, as a reward of FCC work compared to Black educators, confirming earlier research (Armenia, 2009). It's possible that white educators with more privilege (including perhaps economic privilege, which we did not adequately capture in this study), are more able to experience the work-related rewards of FCC and to navigate economic challenges, while educators from marginalized groups may experience more negative impacts.

The differences by race in how educators viewed work control may point to the racial inequities and disparities that some educators of color face. They may live in households with lower incomes, lacking access to a spouse's income or to resources beyond their FCC businesses that would allow them to enjoy the work control afforded by FCC work despite the low income that FCC generates. Educators of color may also experience more biased and dehumanizing interactions with licensing staff and other systems staff that further exacerbate the already difficult working conditions of FCC.

Current educators in our focus groups described the financial and informational help they received from agencies. None of them, however, indicated that support from ECE agencies was what kept them attached to FCC work. Instead, educators discussed how peer support and support from one's own family buffered the difficult working conditions of FCC, challenges with ECE systems, and less often the economic challenges. Peer support, in particular, emerged as a common strategy that helped some educators navigate and make sense of confusing system requirements. Some new FCC educators in our study described how they could not have made it through the licensing process without the help and guidance of more experienced FCC peers. The stories from former educators who "never launched" their FCC programs because of challenges with system requirements suggests the importance of peer support as a strategy for helping new FCC programs thrive. These findings suggest that peer support – information and resources from other FCC educators who have shared experience doing FCC work – may offer something different than traditional professional development and ECE resources. Findings from the current study, which included many educators who belonged to FCC associations, expanded earlier research which showed that peer support offered by associations helped educators combat difficult working conditions and access system-related grants and training (Bromer et al., 2009). Combined with emotional and financial support from family members, these supports may help FCC educators overcome the hurdles involved in running a successful FCC program.

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WHY DO EDUCATORS ENTER REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE?

Understanding what draws people into regulated FCC work in the context of a declining FCC workforce is critical to informing strategies to build and support the field. To a great extent, the new, experienced, and former educators' perspectives on the benefits of being regulated align with what regulatory policies seek to achieve. Educators in our study saw regulation as conferring legitimacy that their environments and practices were safe and healthy, and that requirements such as background checks added another layer of safety for children. Their perceptions that the state oversight of these aspects of their programs would influence parents' decisions to enroll their children corresponds to some research about quality. Two literature reviews on the features that parents value, for example, found that health and safety was one of the most common characteristics, along with caregiver characteristics such as warmth and sensitivity (Forry et al., 2013; Manfra et al., 2013). Some educators associated regulation with professionalism, perceiving that the required training for regulation sets them apart from other educators. Some research suggests that this factor, too, is important to parents (Harrist et al., 2007; Raikes et al., 2012).

Increased income (from the potential to care for larger numbers of children and, depending on state policies, the potential to participate in the state's subsidy system) emerged as another theme for becoming regulated. For educators who cared for children whose parents paid private fees, regulation may have allowed educators to charge more. This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that child care programs which adhere to higher standards (e.g., regulations) can justify higher fees than programs that are not regulated because their programs offer higher quality (Hotz & Xiao, 2011). Regulation was also seen as a pathway to accessing other potential sources of income such as subsidy reimbursement and grants from quality systems.

These findings about the perceived benefits of regulation are counter-balanced, however, by educators' reports of the challenges of becoming regulated. Many of these challenges were similar to challenges with ECE systems reported by former FCC educators, particularly those who left after less than a year because they couldn't sustain their FCC businesses. Unclear information and lack of access to required training emerged as barriers for educators who sought to complete this process. Delays in obtaining approvals for pre-inspections and background checks, as well as errors and miscommunication, hampered educators' efforts to obtain their licenses in a timely manner. Costs associated with home renovation, training, and background checks were challenging, and sometimes influenced educators' decisions to opt for lower levels of regulation.

LIMITATIONS

Findings from this exploratory study should be considered preliminary and in need of further research. Because this was one of the first mixed-methods studies to describe the experiences and perceptions of FCC educators regarding workforce dynamics and retention, we took an exploratory approach which had some limitations. Most of our data collection took place during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (March through July 2020). All but two of our focus groups took place in March 2020 or later. Although we asked specifically about educators' experiences with the pandemic and also asked them to reflect on their FCC work prior to March 2020, it is likely that their discussions and narratives were filtered through their immediate experiences navigating a rapidly changing pandemic reality. Moreover, although all but one of the former educators who participated in our interviews left FCC work prior to the pandemic, their retrospective narratives may have been shaped by their current perspectives and experiences.

Our small, non-representative sample included former and current educators from only four states and conveniently sampled regions within them. Our findings may not be generalizable to every state or local policy context. These sampling issues were partially affected by challenges with recruitment during the pandemic. In addition, the use of virtual platforms for conducting focus groups limited the participation of some educators. For example, we experienced recruitment challenges with full participation among Black educators and rural educators in Wisconsin and Latina educators in Massachusetts.

To our knowledge, this study was the first of its kind to conduct in-depth interviews with former educators about the reasons they left. Yet, our small sample limited the types of analyses and conclusions we could develop to some degree. The range of dates when these educators left the field (from 2007 to 2020) also made it challenging to align policy levers with educators' stories of challenge and exit given the many policy changes across the four states during these years.

Our larger focus group sample allowed us to explore many themes across state policy contexts as well as across experienced and newer educators, and educators from different racial, linguistic, and geographic communities. However, there are likely experiences that we were unable to capture, for example from those educators who may have faced the greatest challenges during the pandemic and were unable to participate in the study.

We intentionally included a majority of educators of color (66%) in our focus groups because we wanted to understand their experiences given their underrepresentation in prior research. However, our research questions did not include an explicit focus on how race, ethnicity, and language intersect with workforce dynamics in FCC. We applied an equity frame to the analyses presented in

this report but our interview, focus group, and survey protocols were not designed to examine issues around racial equity. Because of this, we did not gather sufficient data on educator characteristics and experiences that may have helped us understand the ways that systemic injustice and inequities influence the individual experiences of FCC educators, particularly those of color. For example, more precise data on educator income and access to wealth and privilege could have deepened our understanding of the challenges with the working conditions and low incomes inherent in FCC work faced by Black educators' and educators' whose first language was not English. For some educators of color, FCC may have been a strategy for supporting the household by employing spouses and older children as assistants and keeping earnings within the family. Yet by the time many of these FCC educators reach retirement age they may realize that FCC work actually required giving up earning power and instead left them with few to no savings, pensions, or economic stability.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM AND POLICY

The findings from this study have implications for future policy and program directions to redress changes in the supply of regulated FCC. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which was enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2021, includes $39 billion in new child care funds, the largest infusion in U.S. history. In addition to $24 billion for time-limited child care stabilization grants and $15 billion for one-time supplemental CCDF funding, it allocates a $3.5 billion permanent annual increase in mandatory and matching funding for CCDF (Meek et al., 2021). These new funds and the possibility of additional resources through the American Families Plan provide an opportunity for states to make significant policy changes that can have long-term effects on the ECE workforce, including regulated FCC.

The ECE system, economic, and working condition challenges reported by current and former FCC educators can inform policy changes that have the potential to attract and engage new FCC educators as well as to retain educators in the field. Many of the recommendations proposed here, specifically those that relate to income and benefits as well as ECE system reforms, reflect other research and recommendations that has underscored long-standing inequities encountered by home-based child care providers, particularly FCC educators (Adams & Dwyer 2021; Adams & Hernandez-Lepe, 2021; Bromer, Melvin, et al., 2021; Early Childhood Initiative, 2021; Maxwell & Starr, 2019; Meek et al., 2021; NCECQA, 2020a; Porter & Bromer, 2020; Vogtman, 2017).

The following policy recommendations emerged from this study's findings and are informed by recent policy briefs focused on the use of expanded ARPA funds (Adams & Dwyer, 2021; Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2021; Ewen et al., 2021; Meek et al., 2021):

Recommendations to address economic challenges that FCC educators face:
Federal government agencies

- Increase current funding levels for CCDF and support states in how they determine and set subsidy reimbursement rates that are equitable for FCC educators.

- Encourage states to use ARPA funds to increase compensation and cash assistance for FCC educators, with a focus on those disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of the pandemic and the economic recession.

- Expand the availability of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships for FCC educators, particularly those from marginalized groups (including Black, Latinx, immigrant, Indigenous, Asian American, as well as those living in rural communities).

- Meaningfully integrate FCC educators into plans for affordable child care expansion (e.g., the American Families Plan), including access to higher wages and benefits.

States and tribes

- » Rethink how subsidy reimbursement policies (including rates) are set in order to ensure that FCC educators receive an equitable income that covers the full cost of providing high-quality child care.

- » Consider ways to reduce the gap in payment rates between centers and FCC and to redress payment equity issues for FCC educators of color from historically marginalized communities.

- » Provide benefits for health care, retirement, and paid time off for FCC educators who participate in public payment systems such as subsidy and public pre-kindergarten.

- » Offer cash support such as unemployment, paid leave, and disaster relief funding to help educators during times of fiscal crisis.

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States, tribes, counties and local agencies that work with FCC educators

- » Expand FCC educators' access to grants or scholarships for training and higher education.

- » Prioritize access to funding and resources, particularly for FCC educators from historically marginalized communities.

- » Include FCC in child care search platforms and making information about FCC programs more publicly available.

- » Offer training and coaching in business and financial management and marketing tailored to operating an FCC program.

- » Help FCC educators access public benefits (e.g., health insurance) and design their program policies to promote their own health and well-being (e.g., articulating time off around sick days, vacations, and holidays).

States, tribes, and local municipalities

- » Meaningfully incorporate FCC educators into public pre-kindergarten initiatives that provide opportunities for stable income and enrollment as well as training and supports.

Recommendations to address challenges related to unresponsive licensing systems, subsidy policies, and QRISs that create barriers for new and experienced FCC educators:

States, tribes, and counties

- » Revise or develop licensing and QRIS requirements and standards that honor the strengths of FCC rather than imposing center-centric standards. This includes recognizing the ways that FCC educators of color in particular support families as well as children and the important life-long roles they play in meeting the needs of their communities.

- » Incorporate equity and cultural and linguistic responsiveness standards and measures into monitoring, accountability, and quality systems.

- » Translate system forms, documentation, and trainings, into languages that educators speak.

- » Coordinate and align ECE systems regulations and standards to reduce inconsistencies across ECE systems regulations and standards.

- » Consider using federal funds such as CCDF funding to support navigators who help FCC educators understand cross-system requirements, access resources, and complete applications.

- » Ensure that licensing staff and monitors undergo anti-bias training in order to address the ways systemic racism and implicit bias influence the implementation of policies.

- » Implement oversight procedures such as inter-rater reliability training for licensing staff and monitors that improves the consistency of monitoring visits. Procedures should also ensure that monitoring and inspection visits are timely and minimize delays in processing applications and approvals.

Recommendations to address challenges that exacerbate difficult working conditions that FCC educators experience:

States, tribes, and counties

- » Simplify administrative workload across licensing, subsidy, and QRIS that result in additional working hours for FCC educators. Specifically, states, tribes, and counties should consider developing shorter applications, documentation available in multiple formats, and elimination of redundancies across licensing, subsidy, and QRIS standards and regulations.

States, tribes, counties, and local agencies that work with FCC educators

- » Provide required licensing, subsidy, and QRIS training at times and in locations that FCC educators can attend.

- » Develop apprenticeship programs that make higher education more accessible for current educators.

- » Offer substitute pools and other administrative supports through shared services and back office supports for FCC programs.

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Recommendations to support FCC educators through the intersecting challenges they face:

States, tribes, and counties

» Consider increased funding for FCC networks and FCC associations that offer peer support (including one-on-one mentoring with experienced FCC educators) and help navigating ECE systems (including licensing, subsidy, and QRIS).

» Efforts to support FCC educators should prioritize educators in historically marginalized communities.

States, tribes, counties, and local agencies that work with FCC educators

» Design support programs and systems that are targeted and tailored to engage FCC educators specifically. Programs should consider differentiation of staff roles that work with FCC from those that work with center-based programs.

Recommendations to recruit and support new educators into the regulated FCC workforce:

States, tribes, and counties

» Ensure that all steps of the licensing process are clear and conducted in a timely and responsive manner, including providing all information and training in a variety of languages.

» Provide start-up grants for new educators to cover licensing and insurance fees, home renovations, materials and equipment, and background checks.

» Offer alternative pathways and pipelines to regulation that allow FCC educators to move from a lower regulation tier to licensing while still meeting basic health and safety requirements.

» Consider offering opportunities to attract potential educators to the field including FCC-tailored internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training programs that increase access to higher education and emphasize the potential benefits and rewards of FCC work.

Local agencies that work with FCC educators

» Enhance supports for new FCC educators such as mock licensing visits, licensing help warm lines, program policies development, and business practices.

» Ensure licensing supports are timely and responsive to educators' needs.

» Provide marketing materials, tools, and trainings for prospective FCC educators and those who are starting out.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was the first of its kind to examine in-depth the factors behind educators' decisions to enter, stay, and leave the FCC workforce. Much has been written on the potential reasons for the stark decline in the U.S. of regulated FCC, but no studies to date have examined this trend from the perspectives of FCC educators. Exploratory in nature, this study indicates several directions for future research on FCC workforce dynamics.

First, findings from our small sample of 30 former FCC educators showing that educators stayed in the ECE field and the relationship between prior work, motivations for entering FCC, and reasons for exit, all suggest further research is needed to understand the career pathways of FCC educators. New longitudinal data on the predictors of retention and exit are needed since the most recent correlational study that examined this issue was conducted in 1996 (Todd & Deary-Schmidt, 1996). Future research could focus specifically on the role of ECE systems challenges in predicting retention and exit.

In addition, research is needed to better understand how prior experience, training, and knowledge related to business and management may influence the successful operation of FCC. In general, we lack research on those educators who choose to remain in FCC work, including mid-career educators, and the external factors such as benefits, respect, and support that may help them to persevere despite the challenges. Other aspects of FCC work also warrant future research attention including how caring for children with disabilities and offering nontraditional hour care may intersect with workforce dynamics.

Second, future research is needed on how FCC educators from marginalized groups (including Black, Latinx, immigrant, Indigenous, and Asian American) experience the pressures of systemic inequities and racism that may both push them into and out of the FCC workforce. We also need to understand how predictors of retention and exit vary within these groups of educators. Our study

oversampled educators of color and examined differences by race within our sample, but future studies should consider within-group examination of the forces that influence FCC work and that drive educators to persevere or depart from the work.

Third, our study highlights the role of family and personal dynamics in FCC work. Yet more research is needed to understand how family economics may contribute to FCC tenure and exit. For example, future research could examine the role in FCC tenure of having a spouse, living in a higher-income household, having access to generational and community wealth, or having a family member as an assistant. Our study only suggests the potential of these variables as playing a role in FCC workforce dynamics but future research could more intentionally examine these aspects of FCC contexts.

Finally, as local and state governments seek to stabilize the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding the types of supports that are most likely to keep FCC educators in the work will be critical. Our study identified peer support as a potentially important buffer against the challenges of FCC work, yet few studies have examined intentional peer support initiatives and the ways that peer support operates across different cultural and regional contexts.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. We set up this interview because we want to hear about your experiences doing family child care, **meaning taking care of and teaching other people's children in your home.**
Before we get started, I understand that you used to be a licensed family child care provider/educator – with a family child care license. [CONFIRM]
> *NOTE: If participant answers this question with dates (e.g., when she started, when she stopped), be sure not to ask her again. Throughout, there's no need to re-ask questions if they've already been answered, and it's okay to jump around a little bit if needed.*

MOTIVATIONS FOR DOING FCC (15 minutes)

Let's talk about how you got into this FCC work.

1. When did you start taking care of and teaching other people's children in your own home?

2. What were your reasons for starting your FCC business?
   PROBE AS NEEDED: Can you tell me more about that?

3. When did you first become *licensed* to do family child care?
   IF NOT OFFERED: What was important to you about being licensed?

4. What are the top three things that made your family child care program great?

5. *IF APPLICABLE:* How much do you think those things would line up with what the state expects of family child care?

DECISION TO LEAVE, CHALLENGES, AND SUPPORTS (20 minutes)

DECISION TO LEAVE

6. Now let's talk about some of the reasons you decided to stop doing licensed family child care. When did you stop being licensed to do FCC? OR when did you close your business?
7. Can you tell me the story of why you left? [Try to elicit a full and rich story here]

   POSSIBLE PROBES:
   - General: And then what happened? Can you tell me more about that?
   - What was hard/frustrating about that?
   - What, if anything, did you do about that? What happened next?
   - How did that affect your decision to leave the field?
   - Who did you talk to when you were thinking about leaving?

SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS

<<FACILITATOR SHOULD LOOP THIS SECTION A FEW TIMES TO DISCUSS PARTICULARLY SALIENT CHALLENGES THE PROVIDER MENTIONS IN THEIR STORY, E.G., FIRST ABOUT COST OF CARING AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES/SUPPORT, THEN ABOUT FRUSTRATIONS WITH THE SYSTEM, THEN ABOUT WORK/LIFE BALANCE.>>

8. You said that _____ was really hard. Can you tell me more about that?/Can you give me an example?
   OR, IF NOT COVERED SUFFICIENTLY: Can you tell me about the number one most challenging thing about doing family child care?

9. You also mentioned that _____ was a challenge. What was hard about that?
   OR: What else was particularly challenging about doing family child care?

   Repeat above question until a few challenges have been discussed.

   <<END LOOP>>

10. *IF NOT ALREADY DISCUSSED:* Who did you go to for help and support with these kinds of challenges?
    POSSIBLE PROBES:
    - What kind of help/support did they give you?
    - What was most helpful about that help/support?
    - What was least helpful about that help/support?

11. What is the number one thing that would have helped you stay licensed and why?

12. In addition to the reasons you've talked about, are there other reasons you think providers are leaving family child care?

CURRENT WORK (5 minutes)

13. Can you tell me a little bit about what you are doing now that you are no longer doing licensed family child care?

IF MENTIONS WORKING AS AN ASSISTANT IN A FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAM OR AS A TEACHER IN A CHILD CARE SETTING

14. Why did you decide to stay in the field?
    POSSIBLE PROBES;
    - What do you see as the advantages of doing this work rather than operating your own family child care program?
    - What are the downsides of working in a program that is not your own?

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IF MENTIONS DOING REGISTERED/CERTIFIED/EXEMPT/FAMILY CARE:

15. How often do you still take care of other peoples' children?
    POSSIBLE PROBES:

    - Who do you usually take care of? PROBE: your grandkids, sister's kids, friends' kids, neighbors' kids, people who find me in the neighborhood, kids I cared for before
    - How many kids do you typically care for at any one time?
    - Are you caring for these kids in your home?
    - Are the parents paying you?

IF DOESN'T MENTION DOING REGISTERED/CERTIFIED/EXEMPT/FAMILY CARE:

16. We know that sometimes people continue to take care of children even when they are no longer licensed. Is this something that you do? [Remember that only the researchers will know your responses and your name will not be shared.]
    POSSIBLE PROBES:

    - Who do you usually take care of? PROBE: your grandkids, sister's kids, friends' kids, neighbors' kids, people who find me in the neighborhood, kids I cared for before
    - How many kids do you typically care for at any one time?
    - Are you caring for these kids in your home?
    - Are the parents paying you?

WRAP UP (5 minutes)

17. What do you miss most about being licensed to provide family child care?

18. If you could tell the mayor or governor one thing they could do to support family child care providers and recruit more into the field, what would it be?

19. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?

Ending the interview

Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful responses. Your responses will be combined with responses from other providers and will be compiled in a report that we hope will be shared with program and policy administrators to help inform strategies to support family child care and the families who use it.

Do you have any questions for me?

I'm going to stop recording now and then I have a couple of other things to go over with you.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTIONS (<5 minutes)

We're here today because we want to hear about your experiences taking care of and teaching children in your home.

Some people call folks who care for children in their homes and are regulated "family child care providers," or "FCC," and others call them "family child care educators." What term do you prefer?

Now let's introduce ourselves. Please tell us your first name, where you live, and how long you've been caring for children in your home. I'm [FIRST NAME], I live in _____, and I've been working in FCC for _____years. Who wants to go next?

Thank you. You all are an experienced bunch - we have about ___ years of experience at this table!

COVID-19 Check-In (5 minutes)

1. We want to start by checking in to see how you are all doing during this crisis? Are you still open? Caring for children of essential workers? How is it going?

FCC QUALITY EXERCISE (10 minutes)

2. **Now we're going to do a brainstorming activity together and give you a chance to talk about your FCC programs. I'm going to put up a whiteboard on the screen. While I'm doing that, I want you to think about the top three things that make your family child care program great.** Take a couple minutes to think about this, write each one down if that helps to keep track. Try to be specific in your descriptions.
    SAMPLE PROBES individually/with the group to get them thinking include:
    o   *What are your program's strengths?*
    o   *What are you most proud of about your program?*

    Okay. Let's go around and share. I will write down what each of you shares. Call each participant one at a time to share 3 things.
    Don't probe too much here, but you may need to ask for a sentence for clarification. As they share, group the comments in similar categories; see examples on the list in the focus group training guide. As you go, quickly try to get some consensus on a short heading, e.g., "should we call this category ___?", and write it on the whiteboard
    Thanks for sharing all of these wonderful things about your programs. We ended up with these categories: [quickly list categories].
3. Do we all agree that [most common topic] is the most important thing about a great FCC program? Did we miss anything in this list of things that make FCC programs great?

4. Great! Now, how much do you think this list lines up with what your state thinks makes a great family child care program?

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IF FOCUS GROUP INCLUDES NEW PROVIDERS:
MOTIVATIONS FOR DOING FCC, LICENSING PROCESS, AND OTHER SYSTEMS (30-40 minutes)

Let's talk about your experiences opening a family child care business.

5. What were some of your reasons for starting to do family child care?

   PROBE To try to get a few different perspectives rather than consensus.
   - When you decided to open your family child care, where did you go to get information about the process?

6. What are some reasons you decided to become *licensed [or certified/registered]* to do family child care?
   - What are some of the benefits of licensing [or certification/registration]?
   - *IF TROUBLE ANSWERING – ASK:* Some people get licensed [or certified/registered] because it shows they have met health and safety standards. How do you feel about that?
   - *IN WI/FL, IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK*: Why did you become licensed instead of certified? Registered instead of licensed?

7. What was the one hardest thing about going through the licensing [or certification/registration] process and why?
   - *GENERAL PROBES:* What was difficult about that? Can you give me a specific example?

8. Who did you go to for help and support during the licensing [or certification/registration] process?
   - What kind of support did they give you?
   - What additional support did you need?

IF NO SUBSIDY OR QRIS PARTICIPANTS, SKIP TO NEXT SECTION

9. *IF GROUP INCLUDES SUBSIDY PARTICIPANTS:* What are some of the reasons you decided to participate in the XX NAME THE PROGRAM **subsidy program?**
   - *GENERAL PROBES:* What was difficult about that? Can you give me a specific example?
   SAMPLE PROBES:
   - What kind of help and support did you get with the subsidy system?

10. *IF GROUP INCLUDES QRIS PARTICIPANTS, AND QRIS IS VOLUNTARY:* What are some reasons you decided to participate in the XX NAME THE PROGRAM QRIS program?
    OR, What has your experience been like with moving up to the next level in QRIS?
    - *GENERAL PROBES:* What was difficult about that? Can you give me a specific example?
    SAMPLE PROBES:
    - What kind of help and support did you get with the QRIS program?

11. *IF ENGAGED IN MULTIPLE SYSTEMS:* Can you tell us about any challenges you have faced around **participating in multiple programs and meeting requirements** across these programs?
    SAMPLE PROBES:
    - What trainings/paperwork are similar or different across programs?
    - What information about requirements from different programs is the same or different?
    - How do you adapt to changes and different information from these programs?

COVID-19 AND FCC (10 minutes)

12. Given the current crisis, what's happening right now with your FCC business? How do you think the crisis will affect your business as you look to the future?

13. What supports do you need right now?

DECLINE FACTORS AND CHALLENGES (30-40 minutes)

We know there is a big decline in FCC nationally; one out of every two providers have closed their business in the last ten years.

14. What are some reasons you think providers might decide to leave the field? You can just call them out.
    DON'T probe too much here, and try to keep provider responses short. Jot down their responses (and names) in the Factors Table to help you keep track.

15. Thank you! Let's talk more about some of your experiences with these challenges.
    PROBE Using the following categories as appropriate based on their responses. After you've gone through most of what was offered, you can use additional probes below as needed.

[NAME]/someone said that [SPECIFIC EXAMPLE] was really hard.
    Can you tell me more about that? *OR*
    Can you tell me about how [OVERALL FACTOR] is challenging? *OR*
    Can you give me an example?

REPEAT a few times to address some of their most salient responses.

<u>IF NOT MENTIONED, and **time permitting**, probe about some challenges not discussed, such as:</u>

- What are some challenges about the work of **taking care of and teaching children**?
- What are some things about **your neighborhood** that make it challenging to provide care?
- What are some challenges with **working with parents and families**?
- What are some challenges about **running a family child care business in your own home?**
- **Has the number of children in your program changed** in the last year or so? Why do you think that might be?
- *IF GROUP INCLUDES LARGE FCC (e.g., small and large, has assistant or no assistant)*: Probe to get a sense of how these challenges might be easier or more difficult for programs of different sizes (for example, about managing multiple roles with an assistant, about working alone vs with others, etc.).
- How has the **licensing system/program** been a challenge for you?
  Sample Probes:
      What's the hardest thing about maintaining your license?
      How have recent changes to licensing requirements made this easier or more difficult?
- *IF GROUP INCLUDES SUBSIDY PARTICIPANTS:* What is difficult about participating in the xx INSERT NAME OF **subsidy program?**
  Sample Probes:
      How have recent changes to subsidy requirements made this easier or more difficult?

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- *IF GROUP INCLUDES QRIS PARTICIPANTS:* What is difficult about participating in the xx INSERT NAME OF **QRIS program**?
  Sample Probes:
  How have recent changes to QRIS requirements made this easier or more difficult?
  What's difficult about trying to move up to the next level?
- *IF ENGAGED IN MULTIPLE SYSTEMS:* Can you tell us about any challenges you have around **participating in multiple programs and meeting requirements** across these programs?
  Sample Probes:
  What trainings/paperwork are similar?
  What information about requirements from different programs is the same or different?

RETENTION AND SUPPORTS (20-30 minutes)

Clearly there are lots of ways that family child care can be a hard job.

16. In the moments you feel discouraged about this work, what keeps you going? What is it about the work that keeps you in the field while others are leaving?

Reference challenges mentioned earlier – ask how they get support for specific challenges they face
GENERAL SAMPLE PROBES (Ask once or twice):
- What are some other things that keep you going?
- What other kinds of help or support help you stay in the field?
- Where do you go for help or support?

SPECIFIC PROBES (Ask as many as needed, <u>time permitting</u>):
- We talked about how [**programs/systems**] can be challenging, but what kind of supports do they offer that help you continue operating your business?
- What about **working with children** motivates you to stay open?
- What about **working with families** motivates you to stay open?
- What about **your own family, friends, or community** that keeps you in this work?
- When requirements change for [**programs/systems**], how do you adapt?
- Are there any other **organizations, like networks or associations,** that help keep you in the field?

FINAL REFLECTIONS (10 minutes)

Great, we're almost done. We just have one more question.

17. If you could tell the governor [or mayor] one thing they could do to support family child care providers and recruit more into the field, what would it be?

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

Thank you! We really appreciate this conversation and your time.

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APPENDIX B: TABLES

TABLE B1. FORMER EDUCATOR DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS BY CURRENT JOB TYPE					
	Current Job				
	Stayed in ECE **N=20**		**Left ECE** **N=10**		**Fisher's Exact** **p-value**
	%	(N)	%	(N)	
Gender[1]					
Female	100%	(19)	90%	(9)	0.345
Male	0%	(0)	1%	(10)	
Educator age[2,3] (Mean (SD))	47.21	(11.79)	50.56	(9.49)	
Associates degree or higher[1]	68%	(13)	40%	(4)	0.236
Race/Ethnicity[1]					
Black/African American	16%	(3)	70%	(7)	0.011
White	47%	(9)	10%	(1)	0.098
Other POC	37%	(7)	20%	(2)	0.431
Had another paid job	30%	(6)	50%	(5)	0.425
Prior work in ECE	40%	(8)	70%	(7)	0.245
Regulation type					
Licensed	90%	(18)	100%	(10)	0.540
Registered/certified	10%	(2)	0%	(0)	
Years regulated					
5 or fewer	15%	(3)	50%	(5)	0.078
More than 5 years	85%	(17)	50%	(5)	
Mean (SD)	11.50	(6.70)	7.80	(9.10)	
Number of children in care (Mean (SD)	7.63	(3.43)	8.45	(8.45)	
Ages of children in care[1]					
Infants	95%	(19)	56%	(5)	0.022
Toddlers[4]	100%	(20)	100%	(9)	
Preschool	90%	(18)	78%	(7)	0.568
School age	55%	(11)	56%	(5)	1.000
Assistant					
Relative assistant	35%	(7)	70%	(7)	0.218
Non-relative assistant	30%	(6)	20%	(2)	
No assistant	35%	(7)	10%	(1)	
Offers care during non-traditional hours[1]	70%	(14)	67%	(6)	1.000
Cares for own child in child care	75%	(15)	20%	(2)	0.007
Cares for a child with a disability	70%	(14)	50%	(5)	0.425
Participation in systems					
Subsidy	85%	(17)	80%	(8)	1.000
Quality System	60%	(12)	20%	(2)	0.058
CACFP	100%	(20)	70%	(7)	0.030
Participates in an association	60%	(12)	60%	(6)	1.000

[1]N=29, 1 missing response; [2]Educator age at time of leaving regulated FCC; [3]N=28, 2 missing responses; [4]Fisher's exact was not calculated, all educators in our sample cared for toddlers

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TABLE B2. FORMER EDUCATOR DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS BY DECISION POINT TO LEAVE

	Decision Point					Fisher's Exact p-value
	Tipping Point N=13		Burnout N=8		Other N=9	
	%	(N)	%	(N)		
Gender[1]						
Female	92%	(11)	100%	(8)	100%	(9)	1.000
Male	8%	(1)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	
Educator age[2,3] (Mean (SD))	50.50	(11.02)	51.25	(10.50)	42.00	(10.25)	
Associates degree or higher[1]	50%	(6)	63%	(5)	67%	(6)	0.718
Race/Ethnicity[1]						
Black/African American	25%	(3)	38%	(3)	44%	(4)	0.624
White	42%	(5)	25%	(2)	33%	(3)	0.884
Other POC	33%	(4)	38%	(3)	22%	(2)	0.780
Had another paid job	38%	(5)	38%	(3)	33%	(3)	1.000
Prior work in ECE	46%	(6)	50%	(4)	56%	(5)	1.000
Regulation type						
Licensed	100%	(13)	88%	(7)	89%	(8)	0.313
Registered/certified	0%	(0)	13%	(1)	11%	(1)	
Years regulated						
5 or fewer	8%	(1)	0%	(0)	78%	(7)	0.000
More than 5 years	92%	(12)	100%	(8)	22%	(2)	
Mean (SD)	13.00	(7.88)	13.75	(5.37)	3.22	(3.56)	
Number of children in care (Mean (SD)	7.35	(2.94)	12.25	(7.59)	4.83	(3.92)	
Ages of children in care[1]						
Infants	85%	(11)	88%	(7)	75%	(6)	0.846
Toddlers[4]	100%	(13)	100%	(8)	100%	(8)	
Preschool	92%	(12)	100%	(8)	63%	(5)	0.135
School age	54%	(7)	75%	(6)	38%	(3)	0.329
Assistant						
Relative assistant	54%	(7)	25%	(2)	56%	(5)	0.203
Non-relative assistant	15%	(2)	63%	(5)	11%	(1)	
No assistant	31%	(4)	13%	(1)	33%	(3)	
Offers care during non-traditional hours[1]	69%	(9)	100%	(8)	38%	(3)	0.019
Cares for own child in child care	54%	(7)	63%	(5)	56%	(5)	1.000
Cares for a child with a disability	85%	(11)	75%	(6)	22%	(2)	0.010
Participation in systems						
Subsidy	92%	(12)	88%	(7)	67%	(6)	0.396
Quality System	46%	(6)	50%	(4)	44%	(4)	1.000
CACFP	92%	(12)	88%	(7)	89%	(8)	1.000
Participates in an association	69%	(9)	38%	(3)	67%	(6)	0.324

[1]N=29, 1 missing response; [2]Educator age at time of leaving regulated FCC; [3]N=28, 2 missing responses; [4]Fisher's exact was not calculated, all educators in our sample cared for toddlers

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TABLE B3. CURRENT EDUCATOR AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS BY WHETHER THEY CONSIDERED LEAVING IN THE PAST YEAR

	Considered leaving in past year					
	Yes N=52		No N=96			
	%	(N)	%	(N)	X2	t
Gender						
Female	100%	(52)	98%	(94)	1.10	
Male	0%	(0)	2%	(2)		
Educator age[1] *(Mean (SD))*	50.82	(11.63)	49.23	(10.22)		0.85
Associates degree or higher	63%	(33)	53%	(51)	1.47	
Race/Ethnicity[2]						
Black/African American	22%	(11)	28%	(27)	0.81	
White	49%	(25)	26%	(25)	7.60**	
Other POC	29%	(15)	45%	(43)	3.48	
Have another paid job	17%	(9)	14%	(13)	0.38	
Prior work in ECE2	21%	(11)	37%	(35)	4.01*	
Intent to stay[3]						
<2yrs	23%	(12)	1%	(1)	26.51***	
2-5yrs	26%	(14)	15%	(14)		
As long as able	50%	(26)	84%	(80)		
Regulation type[3]						
Licensed	94%	(49)	91%	(86)	0.62	
Registered/certified	6%	(3)	9%	(9)		
Years regulated[2]						
5 or fewer	20%	(10)	37%	(35)	4.62*	
More than 5 years	80%	(41)	63%	(60)		
Mean (SD)	16.67	(10.38)	10.85	(0.93)		3.51***
Number of children in care[3] *(Mean (SD))*	7.92	(3.43)	8.06	(4.19)		0.21
Ages of children in care[3]						
Infants	67%	(35)	59%	(56)	1.00	
Toddlers	85%	(44)	91%	(86)	1.15	
Preschool	88%	(46)	77%	(73)	2.94	
School age	69%	(36)	53%	(50)	3.81	
Assistant[3]						
Relative assistant	29%	(15)	35%	(34)	2.92	
Non-relative assistant	14%	(7)	22%	(21)		
No assistant	57%	(29)	43%	(41)		
Offers care during non-traditional hours[3]	45%	(23)	47%	(45)	0.04	
Cares for own child in child care	33%	(17)	34%	(33)	0.04	
Cares for a child with a disability	37%	(19)	23%	(22)	3.12	
Participation in systems						
Subsidy	62%	(32)	59%	(57)	0.07	
Quality System	54%	(28)	43%	(41)	1.68	
CACFP	79%	(41)	81%	(78)	0.12	
Participates in an association	50%	(26)	27%	(26)	7.77**	

*<0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001; [1]N=144, 4 missing responses; [2]N=146, 2 missing responses; [3]N=147, 1 missing response

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**TABLE B4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR COVARIATES INCLUDED IN
LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS ABOUT WHAT KEEPS CURRENT EDUCATORS IN THE FIELD**

	Working with children		Relationships with families		Calling		Work Control	
Race/Ethnicity[1]								
White	74%	(37)	24%	(12)	10%	(5)	40%	(20)
Black	58%	(22)	18%	(7)	37%	(14)	11%	(4)
Other POC	43%	(25)	14%	(8)	17%	(10)	22%	(13)
Latinx or Hispanic origin	43%	(21)	14%	(7)	18%	(9)	22%	(11)
Asian or Pacific Islander	44%	(4)	11%	(1)	11%	(1)	22%	(2)
Own children in care								
Yes	48%	(25)	18%	(9)	14%	(7)	36%	(18)
No	63%	(62)	19%	(19)	22%	(22)	19%	(19)
Years regulated FCC *(Mean (SD))*	13.87	(10.2)	16.70	(10.3)	14.28	(9.10)	14.17	(10.0)

[1]*N=146, 2 missing responses*

TABLE B5. LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS, WHAT KEEPS CURRENT EDUCATORS IN THE FIELD

	Model 1: Working with children		Model 2: Relationships with families		Model 3: Calling		Model 4: Work Control	
	Odds Ratio	(SE)	Odds Ratio	(SE)	Odds Ratio	(SE)	Odds Ratio	(SE)
Black	0.452	(0.215)	0.876	(0.488)	5.507	(3.274)**	0.203	(0.125)**
Other POC	0.265	(0.116)**	0.594	(0.324)	2.208	(1.335)	0.443	(0.204)
Own children	0.549	(0.221)	1.606	(0.839)	0.679	(0.359)	3.013	(1.397)*
Years regulated FCC	1.003	(0.020)	1.055	(0.026)*	1.019	(0.024)	1.030	(0.024)

*<.05, **<.01, ***<.001

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ENDNOTES: SPANISH LANGUAGE QUOTATIONS

CHAPTER 2 QUOTATIONS

i. Hay mucha injusticia.

ii. todas esas cositas se iban juntando, a mí me estaba afectando la salud.

iii. Yo me sentía un poco rígida cuando me vienen a visitarme, mucha rigidez. Entonces eso me provocaba mucha tensión, muy tensa. Y después comenzaron a poner últimamente una serie de cosas nuevas. Ellos eran muy exigentes con nosotros. Y llega un momento en que tú dices ¿porque con todo esto? Me voy a poner loca me voy a angustiar.

iv. últimamente no hay tregua si tú quieres hacerlo bien. Porque si tú quieres responder a los requerimientos entonces ya tú tienes un poco que quitarle la atención al niño para cumplir … eso no es mi filosofía.

v. ¿Porque el que tu vengas a mi casa a preguntarme, hiciste tal cosa? Eso no es apoyo. ¿A, pero tú no tienes esto aquí? Eso no es apoyo. Apoyo es decirle, "Lydia si necesitas alguna ayuda, yo vengo."

vi. No, había nadie … nadie intercede por ti … pero esas cosas te van desanimando.

vii. No, esas cosas me fueron un poco desencantando. Además de que si para tu hacer un buen dinero tú tienes que tener un montón de nenes y yo no quiero un montón de nenes. Yo quiero un montón de sabiduría. Me hace falta el dinero, pero mi trabajo principal es mi satisfacción y lograr mis objetivos con los niños.

viii. Tienen un horario fijo. No tienen angustia. Entras de 7 a 3, lo que sea. Y ya a tu casa. Esta he tu vienes a tu casa no tienes que andar recogiendo, limpiando no tienes la angustia que cada vez que algo se necesite van directo a ti.

ix. Yo ya estoy lista para que vengan a ver la casa.

x. "No porque la señora que está encargada está de vacaciones y regresa en dos semanas." Y allí yo estoy esperando que me llagara y ya vino y chequeo la casa que hacía faltan como unas diez cosas más.

xi. No me dieron niños. Cuando yo les dije "necesito que me refieran niños o ¿cuándo me los van a mandar?" Me dijeron, "Oh no nosotros no referimos niños, ustedes tienen que buscarlos."

xii. Por eso yo no seguí lo de la guardería, porque no se pudo. Ellos me vieron la cara, primero dijeron que ellos tienen muchos niños que yo fuera a comprar de todo, porque tienen muchos niños en lista de espera y después cuando ya me aprobaron me dijeron que yo tenía que buscarlos.

xiii. Yo tenía tiempos queriendo cuidar niños, pero esto como que es muy feo el, la manera como lo atienden a uno las personas de [agency], venía y me chequeaban toda la casa y me decían" Esto no va aquí, esto va acá, esto lo debe de poner aquí, esto lo debe poner allá". Se oía, como si me estuvieran reganando, como de una manera como que me estaban diciendo lo que tenía que hacer, que no estaba bien.

xiv. No, y eso fue también por eso fue que no funciono, por ellas, por ellas como fueron conmigo. Como me mintieron y me hicieron sentir como un trapeador en mi propia casa. Me venían y me hacían sentir mal en mi casa, cuando ellas venían a la casa. Me hablaban bien feo.

xv. la intensión para escucharnos a nosotros.

CHAPTER 3 QUOTATIONS

xvi.   Uno siente que ya son de uno.

xvii.   motor para levantarme el otro día.

xviii.   Para mí los niños son los que hacen que me levante cada día. Para mi creo que eso más cuando yo trabajo con todos mis niños ni siquiera puedo pensar que tengo algo que hacer en mi casa, se me va tan rápido el tiempo, me consumen tanto que no puedo hacer nada, hasta que ya se van.

xix.   Muchos niños vienen a tu programa, y quizás ven esa es el único desayuno que ven, esa es la única comida que muchos niños comen. Es el único sitio donde quizás puedan jugar tranquilos y sin que les den una bofetada, un nalgaso y lo tiren para el lado ... Es uno de esos sitios donde los niños pueden moverse, sin el miedo de quien lo va a reprimir de quien lo va a agredir. Y para mi principalmente lo que mantiene aquí son los niños... Muchos de esos niños están faltos de mucho cariño. Nosotros tenemos niños que muchos se asustan cuando tú los vas a abrazar porque nunca han recibido un abrazo, nunca han recibido un beso de nadie.

xx.   Hasta me siento como una "provider" abuelita, porque he cuidado niños hijos de los niños que he cuidado. Los he visto crecer, después salen embarazadas, se casan o de la manera. Y como les di un buen servicio a esos niños, dejé huella en la vida de esos mismos niños. Esos mismos niños cuando ya se casan ahora que están grandes, este, me traen sus niños a cuidar.

xxi.   Porque uno esta es por amor a la educación infantil. Es la diferencia en el mañana.

xxii.   Muchas familias se han encontrado en dificultades. Nosotros a veces nos toca dar la milla extra. Porque ellos se sienten en esa familiaridad con nosotras y vienen y nos exponen su situación. Entonces a veces nosotros tenemos que hacer aparte de maestra, amiga, consejera, psicóloga, educadora, todas esas cosas. También de muchos recursos para esas familias, lo que realmente salirse de área de educación y convertirse en una ayuda idónea para la comunidad.

xxiii.   No tengo que darle cuenta a nadie. Entonces son muchas ventajas, es mucho trabajo, pero también son muchas ventajas que no las podría tener en otro trabajo.

xxiv.   sin mi familia yo no hubiera estado en ese negocio de ser digamos ahora independiente, como tener, poderme desarrollar en este ambiente económicamente.

xxv.   Hemos recibido dinero de parte de ellos, muy buen dinero, hasta 8 mil dólares, para poder comprar lo que nosotros queríamos ... Económicamente nos ha aportado ... Porque ya que te reconozcan el trabajo y te den 8 mil dólares para que tu compres en el año tus juguetes ... Allí si, trabajas con más amor, con más energía.

CHAPTER 4 QUOTATIONS

xxvi.   ingreso fijo.

xxvii.   Pero mi razón fue básicamente económica para buscar un negocio estable, puede tener un futuro seguro, pues.

xxviii.   Básicamente una de las razones por la que decide hacer la licencia era porque yo estaba con [subsidy], el contrato. Tenía solo una niña con el [subsidy], pero básicamente si tenía la licencia ellos me pagaban un poquito más.

xxix.   Nunca por lo menos a mí se me dio una primera preparación, o sea, yo estaba inmersa en dedicarme a crear mi propio negocio. Pero nunca tuve un tiempo que se me preparara por parte de las personas de DCF, porque obviamente son ellos los que regulan todo lo que tiene que ver con el cuidado infantil. No tuve esa primera preparación para luego pues hacer mi trabajo y después hacer las inspecciones tuve que hacerlo todo por el estudio previo que había tenido. Y una vez que solicité la licencia de primera lo que se hiso fue la inspección. O sea, prácticamente y sin niños porque cuando uno comienza pues obviamente si acaso un niño. En mi caso prácticamente no tenía cliente. Y aun así pues se me hiso esa primera inspección como si yo tuviera mucho más tiempo en el ámbito del cuidado infantil en el hogar.

xxx.   Cuando uno empieza uno tiene que invertir muchísimo. Porque pues es un 'family day care', uno tiene que tener obviamente tenerle un set up de un 'playground', sus camitas, el sitio para ver televiso, obviamente 'learning'. Hay mucho que invertir, no se invierten cien o cientos dólares.

xxxi.   La exigencia que le dan también a cuando uno anda tratando de digamos de poner su 'family child care center', hay que llenar un montón de papeleos hay que invertir bastante dinero … Tienes que tomar una clase, tienes que pagar. Después de la clase tienes que tomar el examen y no es gratis. Nada de eso es gratis tiene que tomar toda la ahh por ejemplo si al principio si se mueven aquí a Florida, aunque tengan el CDA, aunque el asociado, aunque tengan el Bachelor's, tienen que tener el requerimiento de las ahh 40- ¿cuántas son? ¿40 horas verdad? El entrenamiento de la practicas de la para trabajar con niños de 5, eso es otro dinero o sea es yo pienso que solo sacan dinero, dinero, dinero. Es un negocio, para mi perdón es un negocio, dinero, dinero, dinero. Cuando uno ya necesita ayuda de verdad aquí materiales allí se desaparecen como fantasma.

xxxii.   Cuando comencé con el trabajo de 'family day care', nunca me intereso la licencia … Y yo decía yo no me intereso porque no quiero que nadie venga a mi casa y mi casa es mi casa. Y yo quería mi certificación porque en la certificación la única diferencia es que tú la renuevas anual y ninguna va a inspeccionarte tu casa.