

The Early Head Start Family Child Care Option: Maybe It's a Good Fit for Your Community

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Laura Annunziata: Hi, I'm Laura Annunziata from the Early Head Start National Resource Center, here to share a bit of information with you about Family Child Care in Early Head Start. Did you know that the Office of Head Start designated family child care as an official program option in 2008?

Providing Early Head Start services in a family child care setting is a terrific fit for many communities. Maybe you've thought about whether this would be a good option for families in your EHS community, but weren't sure exactly how it worked or where to get more information. Well, let's take a quick look at what we know about some of the benefits of family child care -- sometimes called FCC -- in an Early Head Start setting and how you can access more information on the option if you think it's a good match for your community.

Currently, a little over 4,000 of the children enrolled in Early or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start receive services in a family child care setting. Already, 93 Early and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs in 10 regions offer the FCC option. You can find Early Head Start Family Child Care programs in apartments, townhomes, and single-family homes in rural, urban, and suburban areas; and the option can be used to provide EHS services to families and children in settings that are more geographically isolated that would not typically be able to be served in a center environment.

You'll find that FCC sites often look different than child care centers, and are set up to serve children from infancy through school age with materials for all stages of development. And because FCC programs can often offer smaller group sizes, the option can be ideal for some children and families.

Also, family child care settings sometimes provide opportunities for children to have one consistent caregiver from birth through school age, which many parents and families have expressed that they appreciate. Children are often in the care of family child care providers from their own communities or with similar cultural backgrounds, or those who speak their own home languages. And frequently, siblings can be in care with the same provider. And this all happens naturally because families often live in same the neighborhoods of the family child care providers themselves. Because the programs are operated out of home settings, families can frequently access care during flexible hours -- sometimes even including evenings and weekends -- meeting the needs of families with a variety of schedules.

There are also many potential benefits for family child care providers who partner with Early and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. Partnership can bring more opportunities for professional development and additional support in providing high-quality early childhood care and education, while also allowing providers access to a new source of income. And communities benefit from partnerships between Early and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and family child care as well.

These partnerships can allow children and families to be served in areas with fewer income-eligible EHS families and children, who would therefore typically have a more difficult time gaining the high quality care, education, and comprehensive services that come with Early and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. Generally, it's been demonstrated that collaboration leads to higher quality care for more at risk children and families when and where families need it.

Interested? If you are, I'm sure you have lots of questions. You can access more information about the family child care option in Early Head Start online. Visit the EHS NRC page on the ECLKC, where you can find a link to the EHS NRC FCC page. It will let you explore in more depth whether this might be a good local option for your community. You can look us up on the EHS NRC Web page or on the ECLKC, Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, for more resources that can assist your work.

Thanks for joining us today. This is Laura Annunziata from the Early Head Start National Resource Center wishing you all the best in your work.