

HSPPS: FCC Options

(Upbeat music)

Maggie Quinn: Today, we're gonna be talking about the Family Child Care Program option. We're gonna be pulling in pieces from across the new standards, from the structure of the program option, and then Sarah is going to tell us a little bit more about the design and delivery of educational services and staff qualifications.

Sarah Merrill: I'm glad you mentioned the cross-referencing. We're really going to be highlighting three subsections: Subsection B which is program structure; Subpart C which is the education and child development services; and subpart I which is HR management. But really, we expect children in all program options to receive the comprehensive services. So, if you're providing this model, you have to know the whole girth of standard. And I think before we go on, for the education piece what might be new is that we speak to them as teachers and teaching experiences so when you see that term think family child care provider as well as center-based.

Maggie: Section 1302.23 tells us that programs may either have a legally binding agreement or contract with family child care providers or they may directly employ the family child care providers. Programs must also ensure that family child care homes are available that can accommodate children with and families with disabilities. So programs need to ensure that children can be served in the family child care program option not necessarily that all family child care homes are fully accessible to children with disabilities.

Sarah: And this subpart also outlines the ratios and group sizes for family child care homes and the requirements haven't changed. Some of the language has been edited a little bit for more clarity, but there won't be any surprises to those programs already providing this program option.

Maggie: That's great. So, one question we hear a lot is how programs can maintain ratios when family child care providers need to use the bathroom.

Sarah: Or phone calls or whatever else. So the standards address this. They are clear that you must maintain appropriate group sizes and ratios during all program hours. And that means all program settings. But for family child care settings, we've added the language that programs must ensure providers have systems to ensure safety of any child not within view for any period.

Maggie: So, does that imply that children are ever unsupervised?

Sarah: Never unsupervised. The language is really intended to allow some flexibility and really honor the realities of providing services for young kids, mixed age groups for example. Some children might be napping, while others are engaged in playful learning experiences.

So programs need to work with the providers and figure out how they can ensure all this happens and children are safe and still supervised while they're having their schedules be flexible.

Maggie: Right.

Sarah: Right. And I think also it's important while they're trying to unpack this is, one thing to remember is that the family child care providers have to be, at least, enrolled in a credential program or in a degree program. If it's the credential program, they have to attain that credential within 18 months of providing services. But that'll make sure they have a knowledge of how to deliver those services, and I think part of that conversation along with ongoing training and professional development opportunities within the program of how to manage answering the phone or all the nuances while the children are needing to nap and use the bathroom and all of that. Let alone the adult too right?

Maggie: Yeah, and that's actually a great connection back to subpart B because we know that programs are required to make substitute staff and assistant providers available with the necessary training and experience to ensure that quality services are not interrupted. So, that would allow them to attend these trainings or work on their credential.

Sarah: That makes sense.

Maggie: Yup. So also the new standards require family child care programs to operate sufficient hours of, sufficient hours to meet the child care needs of families which is old language, but also not less than 1380 hours per year.

Sarah: So, do you think programs are going to have a hard time meeting this new hours.

Maggie: We really don't. We've looked at our program data and nearly all of our family child care programs are operating for many more hours than this minimum requirement and those that are below are really, really close.

Sarah: That makes sense. So are the family child care slots part of the 50 or 100 percent requirement for higher service duration.

Maggie: They are not. They're completely different program options and they're not counted as part of the Head Start center based service duration requirements.

Sarah: I think we could say that many times. They're two separate...

Maggie: Yes.

Sarah: ...group care type settings, but two different program options. And I think what's not new, but also just good to remind programs, is that providers and settings need to be licensed by state and tribal and local entities who make regulations and requirements around this type of program option.

And when they vary from the program performance standards, you're required to follow the more stringent and that's about health and safety measures, teacher, family child care provider staff qualifications and any other nuances, ratios and groups sizes as well.

Maggie: Okay. So, lastly, the new standards maintain the requirement for programs to offer, to have a Child Development Specialist. So what does the Child Development Specialist do?

Sarah: Well, they're critical. They provide a lot of support for the providers who work in their home and it can be kind of isolating, you know, unless you have another provider there with you. And is making sure that the children who are enrolled receive the high quality services. So, they conduct regular, announced, and also some unannounced visits at least every two weeks to each provider. They help with communication between the program, the providers, and the enrolled families.

They also suggest areas for technical assistance. So really to make sure that the quality services and the comprehensive services are delivered in a meaningful way to the children and families who are enrolled. Child Development Specialists also have staff qualifications that they need to meet.

Maggie: Okay.

Sarah: So they need to have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree. They could also have an advanced degree. And this is in Child Development, Early Childhood Education, or a related field. Maggie: And, so do they need to meet that right away when the standards come out?

Sarah: They have a delayed compliance. So it's giving programs a chance to make sure that their staff who they already have hired have time to meet this requirement. And again, it links back to providing training and professional development, not only for the Child Development Specialist, but they need to be able to provide those supports to the providers with whom they work with.

So, I think that's an important nuance. And they can also provide the program with a lot of valuable information about the providers with whom they work. What are their strengths? What are the areas that they might need additional supports in making sure that they deliver the curriculum with fidelity, that it's really rich learning environments, rich language, so that the children are growing and learning as we expect them to do.

Maggie: So, they're a really important part of delivering the full range of services for children in family child care option?

Sarah: Absolutely, absolutely.

Maggie: Great. Well, I think that basically wraps up our overview of the Family Child Care Option.

Sarah: Thanks for joining us.

(Upbeat music)