



Highlights of [GAO-04-786](#), a report to the Honorable Sander M. Levin, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government requires states that receive funds from the Child Care and Development Fund to establish basic health and safety requirements. The federal government also requires states receiving federal funds for child care to have procedures in place to ensure that providers being paid with grant dollars comply with the applicable safety and health requirements. Because of the significant federal role in paying for child care services and congressional concerns about the way in which states ensure the safety and health of children in child care settings, we were asked to follow up on our prior report, *Child Care: State Efforts to Enforce Safety and Health Requirements* ([GAO/HEHS-00-28](#), Jan. 24, 2000).

This report (1) identifies changes in states' licensing and enforcement activities for various types of licensed and nonlicensed providers since 1999, (2) describes the ways child care licensing agencies organize inspection staff and use technology, and (3) provides examples of promising practices in state child care licensing and enforcement activities.

To obtain data, we surveyed state licensing officials in 2004 about their 2003 activities, interviewed experts and made site visits to four states—Delaware, Florida, North Carolina and Oklahoma.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-786](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-786).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Marnie S. Shaul (202) 512-7015 [shaulm@gao.gov](mailto:shaulm@gao.gov).

## CHILD CARE

# State Efforts to Enforce Safety and Health Requirements

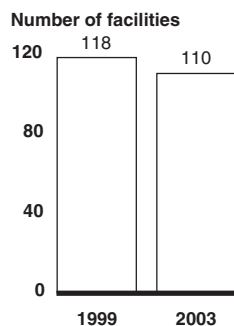
## What GAO Found

State efforts in the licensing and oversight of child care facilities are generally about the same as they were in 1999, except that the median caseload of the number of facilities per inspector dropped from 118 in 2003, as shown in the figure below. We found that in 2003, 38 states exempted all family child care providers from being regulated, compared with 39 states in 1999. Most states conducted compliance inspections at least once a year, meeting or exceeding the recommended level for all types of providers.

Many states organized inspection staff by geography and used technology in many parts of the inspection process. Forty-three states reported assigning staff to geographic locations throughout the state. States also assigned staff based on specific job task and type of child care facility the staff would inspect. Many states used multiple criteria to assign staff. Forty-five states reported using technology to assist them with many aspects of licensing and enforcement functions, such as maintaining statistics on families and providers.

States have adopted a number of promising practices to assist their child care licensing and enforcement activities. These practices include the use of technology to streamline licensing and enforcement processes and manage parent and provider information, rating systems to aid parents in selecting the appropriate child care for their child and to offer providers incentives to improve and maintain the quality of their care, and working with other organizations to train providers and parents.

**Median Caseload, Number of Facilities per Inspector, 1999 and 2003**



Source: GAO analysis of 1999 and 2004 surveys.