



**Administration for
Children & Families**

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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Dear Colleagues,

The Administration for Children and Families is committed to ensuring that vulnerable children have access to and receive high quality, comprehensive services. The Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Child Care (OCC) want communities to explore and engage in partnerships to coordinate service delivery across child care and Early Head Start (EHS) to improve early care and education for at-risk infants and toddlers and their families.

OHS and OCC came together to promote high quality family child care options, because family child care can be a great choice for families. Many parents would like for their infants and toddlers to be in a home setting. Family child care not only offers a home-based setting, but also can offer parents more flexibility to meet their work hours and sometimes the opportunity to have siblings cared for together.

Family child care providers can face barriers when they want to increase the quality and comprehensiveness of their services. For example, they often lack access to the same resources and professional development as providers in larger early care and education settings. An *Early Head Start for Family Child Care (EHS FCC)* was launched to find innovative ways to tackle these challenges by bringing together Early Head Start programs and family child care providers.

We are excited to share lessons learned from the EHS FCC demonstration project. Twenty-two teams in 17 States developed models of local and state partnerships. They supported the successful delivery of Early Head Start in family child care and established an infrastructure for quality among family child care providers serving low-income families with infants and toddlers.

We are happy to share the lessons from the EHS FCC project. We hope they will help more Early Head Start grantees implement the family child care option and help communities collaborate to expand quality family child care.

**STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SYSTEMS OF SEAMLESS SERVICES
TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE QUALITY**

- **Compare standards, benchmarks, and policies relevant to EHS grantees and family child care providers.** Sixteen teams examined differences in state licensing standards and the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), as well as differences in eligibility policies between Early Head Start and state child care subsidies to identify opportunities to align standards, benchmarks, and policies. Some teams were able to refine the child care and EHS eligibility periods so fewer families lost eligibility for services over the course of the year. Early Head Start grantees

interested in implementing the family child care option should work with ACF to ensure a clear understanding of the HSPPS and of flexibilities under CCDF policies – such as clarifying ratio and group size standards and eligibility policies – to find ways to meet standards without being cost prohibitive to family child care providers.

- **Work together to increase professional development opportunities.** Teams linked existing professional development systems so training and coursework contributed to higher levels of education rather than just standalone events. Teams coordinated professional development for family child care providers so training helped them maintain licensing and meet the qualifications under Early Head Start. Supporting family child care providers to meet higher standards is challenging because courses may be offered at inconvenient times. Coursework is often in English, though many family child care providers are learning English as a second language. One team designed and implemented an 8-week course based on the state early learning guidelines to increase English-speaking skills of family child care providers, building confidence for them to pursue more education.
- **Increase providers' access to existing professional development.** A team partnered with the state child care professional registry which includes information on the availability of scholarships for providers and has funds available to support providers pursuing accreditation. Teams planned training events during evenings and weekends, used technology, and provided substitutes to increase family child care provider participation. Early Head Start partners surveyed providers to learn about their strengths, their needs and their access to resources.

Strong collaborations between Early Head Start and family child care providers are based on developing and sharing resources and shared accountability for outcomes. ACF is committed to supporting states and local communities in accessing resources and systems needed to build meaningful collaborations and strengthen the early childhood systems.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that more low-income children are served in higher quality settings, resulting in improved outcomes for children and families across the country.

Sincerely,

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