

NEVADA HOME-BASED CHILD CARE STUDY



RESEARCH BRIEF - FEBRUARY 2025

Home-based child care (HBCC) providers care for approximately 6.4 million children ages 0-5 nationally, and an estimated 5 million of these providers are known as *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers*.¹ Relative and community providers have been a cornerstone for parents as the most relied-upon and enduring form of child care throughout history. Disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the significance of the home-based sector, where many families transitioned amid widespread closures of child care centers. Subsequent recognition of HBCC providers and their impact on millions of children has grown, and Federal initiatives like the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Preschool Development Grants Birth-Five now emphasize the importance of honoring family choice and comprehensive early care options inclusive of home-based child care.

The State of Nevada in turn has been actively focused on understanding and supporting home-based care, aiming to better serve children, families, and providers. An estimated 134,000 children 5 years old and younger are regularly enrolled in some form of child care in Nevada;² and the availability, affordability, and quality of child care options, including HBCC, are concerns that impact families, businesses, and communities. Child care difficulties can affect family finances, workforce participation, and parental well-being, all of which have important implications on the early learning and development of children.³

Addressing these issues and understanding the dynamics of home-based child care is essential not only for improving the vitality of Nevada's families but also for supporting the broader state economy. **Nevada currently loses an estimated \$1 billion annually due to child care challenges,**⁴ **emphasizing the need for data and solutions across the landscape.** While more is known about center-based child care, there remains a notable gap in research specifically exploring HBCC.

STUDY OVERVIEW

This study offers critical context for Nevada’s early care and education system by gathering insights from parents and HBCC providers on their experiences, available supports, and areas for improvement needed to enhance outcomes for children, families, and caregivers.

The study sought to answer these primary research questions:

- What are the characteristics of HBCC settings across Nevada?
- What are the decision-points, needs, and wants of parents and guardians who choose HBCC?
- How do these decision points, needs, and wants compare to parents who choose center-based care?
- What are the characteristics of care, challenges, and desired supports of HBCC providers?
- What themes arise among caregiver and family relationships?
- What are the experiences of families and providers with existing child care resources?

Individual survey pathways were created to segment and analyze four key groups:

1) Parents and guardians using HBCC for children 5 years old and younger;

2) Parents and guardians using center-based child care for children 5 years old and younger;

3) Family child care home operators and workers, including both licensed care homes and lawfully non-licensed providers acting as a business; and,

4) Family members, friends, or neighbor caregivers (also known as kith and kin providers) who provide regular care for children 5 years old or younger in Nevada.

| Primary Population | Respondent Type | Sample Size |
|--|---|-------------|
| Parents with children 5 years old or younger in child care (n = 1,343) | Parents with Home-Based Care | 932 |
| | Parents with Center-Based Care | 411 |
| Home-Based Child Care Providers (n = 183) | Family, Friend, Neighbor or Nanny Caregiver | 90 |
| | Family Child Care Home Provider | 93 |

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below aim to address identified gaps and enhance the effectiveness of child care options for Nevada families based on the study findings.

- 1. Expand access to learning materials, child development resources, and training opportunities for all home-based child care providers.** Family, Friend, and Neighbor and Kith and Kin Providers, in particular, were found to have fewer materials, such as toys, books, and child-sized furniture, compared to Family Child Care Homes. Providers reported interest in training topics on child development, teaching language and literacy, and positive discipline, all of which stand to benefit the more than 100,000 estimated children in these care settings across Nevada. Forty percent of children regularly cared for by a Family Provider are spending more than 40 hours per week in care, and children receiving regular care from a Friend or Neighbor Provider or attending a Family Child Care Home were most often reported by parents to be in care between 31 and 40 hours per week. **Given the extended hours children spend in these care settings, it is essential that HBCC providers are equipped with supports and training focused on child development and learning to effectively align resources across the full spectrum of child care - from center-based to home-based options - and promote positive developmental outcomes for children in diverse environments.**
- 2. Recognize parents and guardians as key drivers of the child care market.** Parents and guardians are the primary nexus point for early childhood decisions, whether it be to seek formal child care solutions, leverage family, friends, or neighbors for care, or leave the workforce to care for children themselves. When asked about their “perfect” child care arrangements, only 29% selected they were already in their ideal arrangement - indicating a potential 70% of parents might be seeking a different care option. All parents in this sample had current arrangements, however, many chose “help to find care” as a resource of interest. As families report turning to social media for child care connections, assistance programs should meet parents and guardians where they already engage online while respecting their setting choices as valid.
- 3. Involve business and employers in early childhood and child care solutions.** Employers have privileged access to learn from their employees and, themselves, have a special interest in stabilizing their workforce. Industry and company-specific research on child care needs can generate tailored, win-win solutions for employees and businesses. Engaging with services such as the Employer Support Program, including access to HBCC in resource offerings, and prioritizing flexibility for parents and guardians during early childhood years offer a starting place for this work.

- 4. Conduct regional supply and demand mapping for child care.** When asked which factors were most important when making child care decisions, finding child care “located close to my home or work or school” was the most reported decision-making factor across the overall parent sample.

23%
of parents relocated
or moved to another
town, state, or country
for child care

Community-level needs for child care can vary by population size, industry presence, socio-economic development, cultural dynamics, and more. Regional mapping of parental care preferences with available child care options, overlaid by major employment industries present, would present an actionable picture of which providers and care types are in demand and where to efficiently deploy resources across the state. Sufficient sampling of racial and ethnic groups is distinctly important in such local assessments.

- 5. Develop HBCC provider networks to increase strategic engagement.** A key challenge during this study was connecting with un-networked HBCC providers, though providers that responded expressed interest in building connections with other caregivers. Shared services, substitute pools, and peer engagement with others caring for children were favorably selected by HBCC providers across this study. Supporting HBCC networks can allow for these interests to actualize for providers, providing a platform for collaboration and mutual support. Such networks would facilitate access to training, resources, data collection, and overall quality improvements. Many providers expressed interest in pursuing additional registration or licensure, and these networks could support that process and build new capacity in communities with few options.

Thirty percent of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Pathway respondents who were not licensed or registered reported interest in becoming licensed as a small home-based child care.

Fifty-five percent of Family Child Care Home Pathway respondents operating as a lawfully-exempt business reported they were interested in becoming licensed as a child care home.

- 6. Evaluate families who fall in the eligibility gap for assistance.** Parents and guardians who earn above the eligibility threshold for child care assistance but still face financial difficulty in affording care should be considered in future eligibility assessments. With the expiration of Federal emergency funding that broadened support, a group of families who may have previously qualified now earn above the State threshold. The State income threshold for new child care assistance at 41% of State Median Income creates an eligibility gap compared to Federal income limits at 85% of State Median Income. Understanding the impact on these families will be pivotal to creating effective policies that ensure all families have access to affordable, high quality options across diverse child care settings.

REFERENCES

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ABOUT THE FULL REPORT

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**Requests for the full report and study inquiries can be directed to
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