

Voices of child care providers ^[1]

An exploratory study on the impact of policy changes

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Abstract

In debates about child care and early education, the voices of providers are often missing. In this article, we report findings from a study exploring child care provider perspectives on how regulation and policy changes impact their ability to provide care. Data were collected from interviews and focus groups with home-based providers and center-based administrators (N = 55) in rural, urban and suburban New York counties. Four overarching themes emerged: undervaluation of child care providers, challenges faced by providers and the parents of the children they serve, regulatory disconnect, and discretionary implementation of laws and regulations. These findings suggest that without input from providers in the creation of legislation and regulations, policies may have unforeseen, inefficient, or even harmful results, such as an inability to match providers with open slots to families whose children are eligible for and in need of care. Based on these findings, we recommend developing mechanisms to enable and encourage participation of providers in the policymaking process, assisting providers in complying with regulations and providing quality care, and standardizing regulation enforcement and oversight to better align with the needs of families and the day-to-day realities of providing quality care.

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