

Measuring quality in family, friend, and neighbor child care: Conceptual and practical issues ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

- Full brief in pdf ^[2]

Description:

The contribution of family, friend, and neighbor caregivers to the overall supply of child care and the care and education of the United States' youngest children is substantial. Family, friend, and neighbor caregivers are home-based license-exempt caregivers with a familiar relationship to the family. They consist of nonparental relatives, friends, and neighbors. Often they are unpaid and usually care for one or two children at a time. Over 40 percent of all nonparental child care hours for infants and toddlers are spent in family, friend, and neighbor care, as are almost a third of all hours for preschoolers.

A desire to know more about quality in family, friend, and neighbor settings is emerging due to increased public awareness about the number of children served in this setting, rising public investments, and new national priorities for assuring all young children are ready for school. As a result, the field is beginning to wrestle with how to measure quality in a setting often more like the care provided by parents. Concerns about quality are directly aligned with assuring all children receive early learning and developmental experiences to optimize their success in school and life.

This brief explores some of the issues around measuring quality in family, friend, and neighbor care. The purpose is not to provide a comprehensive review of studies addressing quality in this setting, but rather to describe some of the challenges of this effort. It discusses reasons parents' choose this care and their associated definitions of quality, distinguishing characteristics of this care, and concerns with commonly used measures not designed for use in this setting. It also highlights some new advances in the field around definitions and measurement, the need to determine usefulness and relevance of new instruments, and some practical suggestions for testing cultural appropriateness and competency.

Region: United States ^[3]

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