



# THE STATE OF FAMILY CHILD CARE IN NEW JERSEY

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**New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies**

*in partnership with*

**The Child Welfare League of America**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NJACCRRRA) extends its sincere appreciation to the family child care providers who took the time to share information about their work to support children in New Jersey, and to the network of child care resource and referral agencies and their staff whose commitment to this project helped make it a success. Special thanks are also due to the Child Welfare League of America and to the Schumann Fund for New Jersey for providing the funding to conduct the survey, analyze the responses, report on the findings, and develop an advocacy agenda. This important work would not have been possible without their support.

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This report is one of a series of issues briefs on family child care that is part of a multi year effort by the Child Welfare League of America to promote the development and expansion of family child care systems and networks. The effort has been led by CWLA's National Child Care and Development Advisory Committee currently co-chaired by Karen Selman and Phil Acord. Funding for this publication was provided by the Surdna Foundation with special thanks to Vanitha Venugopal, Program Officer for Community Revitalization for her ongoing support and encouragement.



## INTRODUCTION

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In the past two decades, state-sponsored pre-kindergarten initiatives have grown substantially. Currently, at least 38 states and the District of Columbia have one or more pre-kindergarten initiatives; up from only 10 state programs in 1980 (Schumacher, Ewen, Hart, & Lombardi, 2005). Most state pre-kindergarten programs are part-day, part-year, and targeted to a limited number of four-year-olds based on family income or other risk factors for school success. Six states—Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—have policies in place or a goal to move toward universal access to pre-kindergarten, and several other states are contemplating universal access as well.

New Jersey has made tremendous strides in developing a universal pre-kindergarten system through initiatives such as the Abbott Preschool Programs (New Jersey Department of Education, 2005a), the non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid program, and the Early Launch to Learning Initiative. Currently, more than 50% of New Jersey's 4-year-olds are in a pre-kindergarten program. One segment of the child care community, however, has been overlooked in the development of New Jersey's preschool system: family child care.

Recognizing that family child care providers are perhaps the most underrepresented segment of providers in the state's child care network, the New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies partnered with the Child Welfare League of America to examine the state of family child care in New Jersey. The study also looked at the diverse services provided by the state's child care resource and referral agencies to support and enhance the availability and quality of registered family child care services, as well as what other states are doing to involve family child care providers in their pre-kindergarten programs.

In January 2005, nearly 3,800 surveys were sent to the home addresses of registered family child care providers. A total of 1,040 completed surveys were returned, representing 27% of all registered providers in New Jersey. Individual county response rates varied from 15% to 80%, with an average county return rate of 30% (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1: Response to the Statewide Survey of Family Child Care Providers by County**

| County       | Number of Registered Providers as of 12/04 | Spanish Surveys Returned | Total Surveys Returned | Return Rate |
|--------------|--|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Atlantic     | 137  | 0                        | 33                     | 24%         |
| Bergen       | 245  | 9                        | 52                     | 21%         |
| Burlington   | 191  | 0                        | 50                     | 26%         |
| Camden       | 237  | 19                       | 92                     | 39%         |
| Cape May     | 15   | 0                        | 12                     | 80%         |
| Cumberland   | 262  | 0                        | 67                     | 26%         |
| Essex        | 499  | 1                        | 137                    | 27%         |
| Gloucester   | 92   | 0                        | 29                     | 32%         |
| Hudson       | 505  | 29                       | 125                    | 25%         |
| Hunterdon    | 54   | 0                        | 19                     | 35%         |
| Mercer       | 193  | 3                        | 44                     | 23%         |
| Middlesex    | 182  | 16                       | 54                     | 30%         |
| Monmouth     | 190  | 0                        | 61                     | 32%         |
| Morris       | 114  | 4                        | 38                     | 33%         |
| Ocean        | 131  | 3                        | 52                     | 40%         |
| Passaic      | 217  | 27                       | 48                     | 22%         |
| Salem        | 82   | 0                        | 12                     | 15%         |
| Somerset     | 86   | 0                        | 17                     | 20%         |
| Sussex       | 69   | 0                        | 26                     | 38%         |
| Union        | 206  | 13                       | 50                     | 24%         |
| Warren       | 76   | 0                        | 22                     | 29%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>3783</b>                                | <b>124</b>               | <b>1040</b>            | <b>30%*</b> |

\* Average county return rate



## FINDINGS

The results from the statewide survey of registered family child care providers describe a workforce that is experienced, prepared, and committed to professionalism in its role of caring for New Jersey's children.

### Provider and Program Descriptors

Providers were predominantly female (97%). Although 2% of respondents did not indicate gender, 1% of providers did identify themselves as men. Most of those responding were African Americans (41%). Other respondents were White/Caucasian (29%), Latino/Hispanic (24%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (2%), Native American (1%), or other ethnicity (2%).

Providers also seemed to embrace the diversity of culture among the children they care for. Although 93% of family child care providers speak English with the children in their care, 25% also speak Spanish with them. Three percent (3%) of providers speak languages as diverse as Hindi, Italian, Swahili, American Sign Language, and Polish with the children in their care.

The average family child care provider begins caring for children at 7:00 A.M. and does so until 5:45 P.M.; many, however, were open for business as early as 5:00 A.M. and cared for children until late in the evening. Over 8% reported that they had also provided care for children over a 24-hour period of time, especially in Southern New Jersey where many families are employed in the casino industry.

The type of care provided through New Jersey's family child care system is diverse and intensive. Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents provide full-time care, 66% provide part-time care, 60% provide before or after school care, 27% provide evening care, 20% provide weekend care, 21% provide overnight care, and 30% provide drop-in care. Provider flexibility is critical in a state where 56% of households with children under the age of 6 have all parents in the family working (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Most family child care providers offer and prepare meals for the children in their care. Sixty-nine percent (69%) provide breakfast, 73% provide lunch, and

38% provide dinner. Sixty percent (60%) provide drinks throughout the day, 66% provide a morning snack, and 83% provide an afternoon snack. The food and snacks offered represent an additional level of support for the families but are an additional expense for and demand upon family child care providers. Although most providers (40%) spend up to \$500 each year on these items, 25% spend up to \$1,000, and an additional 11% spend up to \$2,000. Fourteen percent (14%) spend over \$2,000, including 4% of providers who spend over \$5,000 each year.

The survey results also describe a planned system of care that seeks to actively balance a child's needs for both nurture and structure. More than 60% of providers responding spend up to 10 hours outside of the time they care for children each week preparing for the work day, and more than half write down a schedule of daily activities (yet less than half give the schedule to parents). Almost 90% of providers have a written agreement that parents must sign before placing their children in care, and 85% have written policies for participating families.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of providers described their family child care program as a cross between a school and a home. Close to one-half of those responding said that their television or DVD/VCR is usually off during the day. Sixty percent (60%) responded that children were physically active most or more than half of the day. More than half (57%) of providers take the children in their care on trips outside of the home. These trips include visits to the park, zoo, library, restaurants, museums, pet store, beach, and local firehouse.

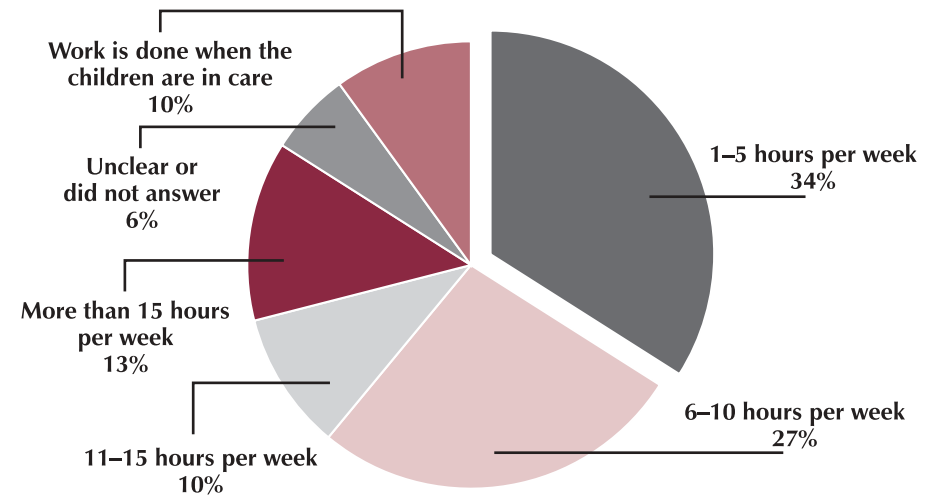
The commitment to care for children extends beyond the hours of operation for family child care homes (see Figure 2.) Sixty-one percent (61%) of providers spend up to 10 hours each week supporting their business through food preparation, bookkeeping, shopping, and cleaning outside of the time children are with them. An additional 10% spend up to 15 hours each week doing so.

### Provider Background

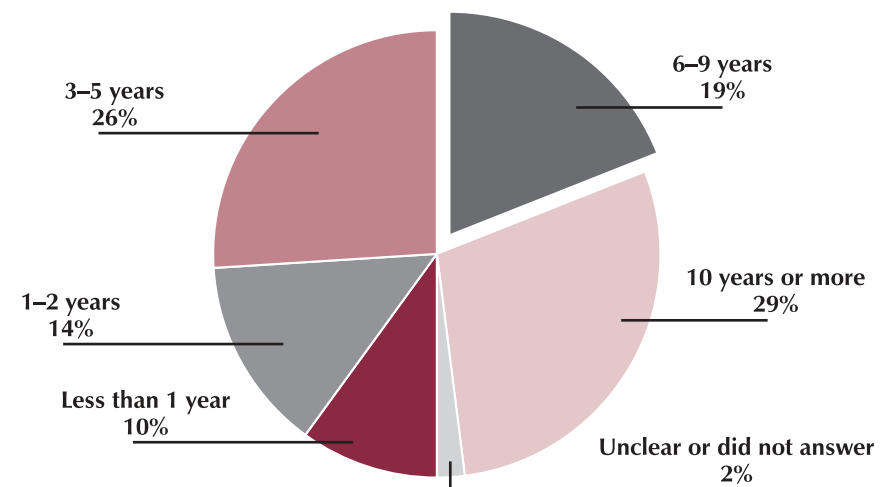
The registered family child care providers surveyed bring decades of life experience to their work. More than 58% of providers were between the ages of 31 and 50, and 27% were between the ages of 50 and 64. Twenty-nine percent (29%) have provided paid care in their home for more than 10 years, 19% for six to nine years, and 26% for three to five years (see Figure 3).

Providers had varied backgrounds preparing them for their work with children. Most (84%) report they learned to take care of children through their own experience as a parent, although 62% report that they also learned from different classes and workshops. Twenty-nine percent (29%) had completed a formal education program related to their child care work as preparation for their profession (see Figure 4). Eleven per-

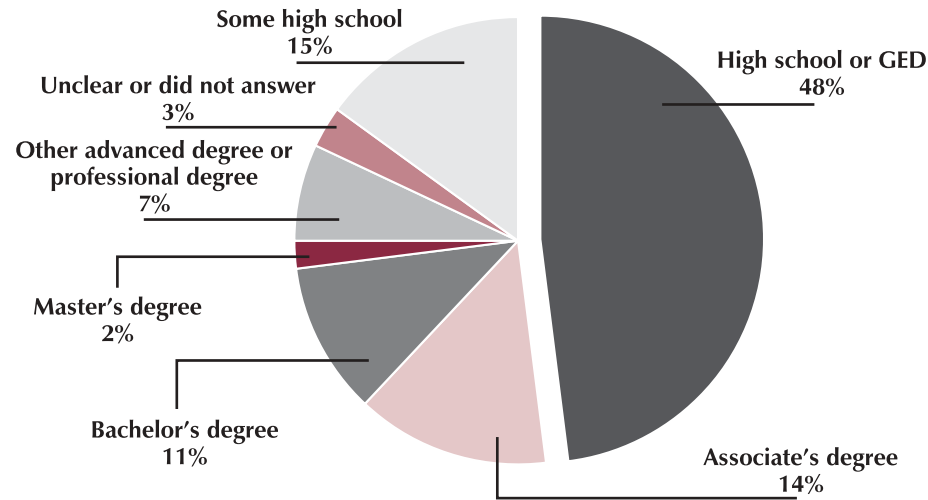
**FIGURE 2: How Many Hours Per Week Does the Average New Jersey Family Child Care Provider Spend Working on Their Child Care Business Outside of the Time They Are with Children?**



**FIGURE 3: How Long Has the Average New Jersey Family Child Care Provider Been Providing Paid Care from Home?**



**FIGURE 4: What is the Average Education Level of New Jersey Family Child Care Providers?**



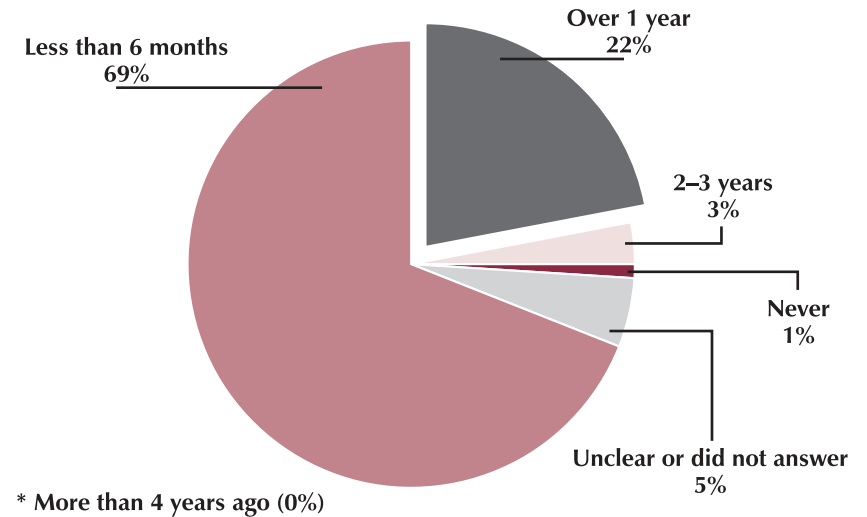
cent (11%) of family child care providers hold a bachelor's degree, 2% hold a master's degree, 14% hold an associate's degree, and 48% hold a GED or high school diploma. Seven percent (7%) of providers have other professional degrees or certificates. These include child development associate and early childhood education certificates; nurse's aide, RN/LPN, special education, home health aid, and medical assistant certifications; real estate and nail technician licenses; and business school degrees.

Most family child care providers surveyed approach their responsibilities with an interest in learning and career development. Close to 70% of providers viewed their work as a career. Contrary to widespread assumptions, only 9.5% described their role as a temporary job while their own children are young. Slightly fewer than 70% had attended a training related to their work in the last six months, with 64% participating in meetings, conferences, or trainings related to the child care profession more than twice each year (see Figure 5).

Most family child care providers see themselves continuing their career well into the future. Almost 50% believe they will be a family child care provider 10 years from now, and 74% believe they will be a provider five years from now.

The survey found that most family child care providers are interested in continuing their professional development and expanding their child care capacities. Sixty-five percent (65%) of family child care providers responding to the survey stated that they would like to provide pre-school program services in their home if a state plan

**FIGURE 5: How Long Ago Did the Average New Jersey Family Child Care Provider Attend a Work-Related Training?\***



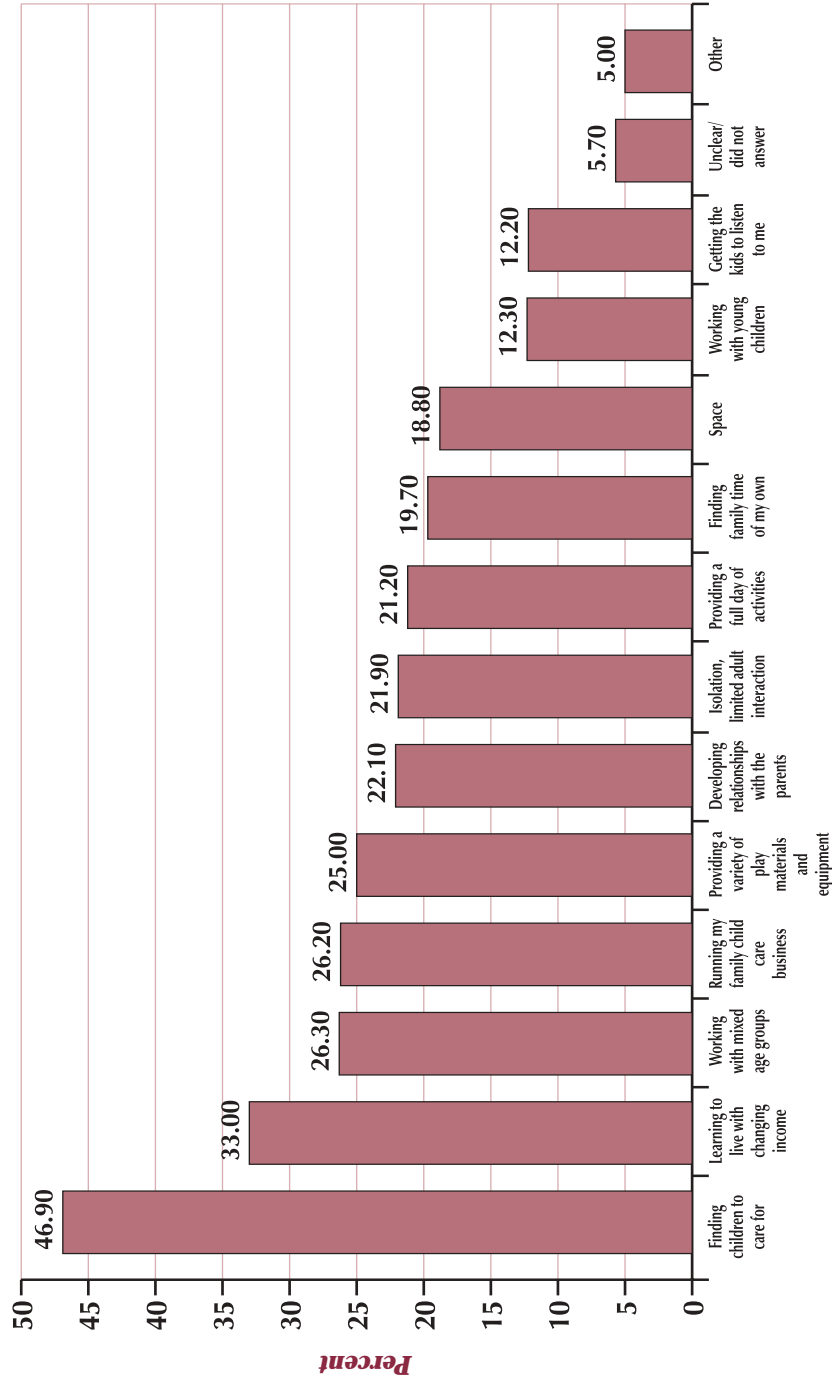
included them. Eleven percent (11%) already hold a bachelor's degree and 2% have a master's degree. Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents stated that they hope to work toward credentialing, earning their child development associate, or receiving other accreditation in the upcoming year.

### Challenges Facing Family Child Care Providers

Low wages are a pervasive issue in the child care field, and family child care homes are no exception. Aside from health concerns, family child care providers cite monetary issues as one of the primary reasons for changing their line of work. Most providers (41%) report pretax annual wages of less than \$15,000. Only 10% of providers report earning over \$31,000 each year.

For most working professionals, having a stable income is a reasonable expectation; for family child care providers, however, it is a major concern. One-third of all providers are the sole person in their household earning income, and 18% hold a second job. Forty percent (40%) of providers report that they have lost income due to nonpayment over the last six months, and 14% have lost income three or more times during the same period. When asked what their biggest challenge was upon the start of their business, family child care providers experienced the most difficulty finding children to care for and adjusting to life with a fluctuating income (see Figure 6). They also describe the same two issues as their current greatest worry.

**FIGURE 6: What Is the Biggest Adjustment New Jersey Family Child Care Providers Faced at the Start of Their Business?**



Most family child care providers lack even the most basic of benefits. Almost one-third of all providers do not have health insurance. Fifty-seven percent (57%) are without liability insurance or any special riders added to their homeowner’s policy that might protect them. Although almost all providers care for children full-time, 66% are not paid when they take time off for a holiday or vacation.

Reported rates for care varied by home and by county, but statewide averages for a full-time week of child care were \$143 for an infant and \$135 for a toddler. Fluctuations around child care fees were common within and among New Jersey’s counties. The lowest rates for full-time care were reported in Cumberland County, where some providers charged \$60 per week. The most common weekly rate for full-time care in Cumberland was \$100 per week. The highest reported rates for full-time care were in Morris County, where providers charged as much as \$400 per week. The most common weekly rate in Morris County, however, was half that amount (\$200 per week).

Forty-eight percent (48%) of local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) staff members asked about the major issues for family child care providers indicated that there was an overall lack of respect for the providers’ work and for their policies—mainly from parents. CCR&R staff reported that providers often have to deal with difficult attitudes, late pick-ups, late payments, and nonpayment. Family child care providers reported these same challenges, indicating that 28% of families are late picking up their children at least once each week, 26% are late a few times each week, and 26% are late several times each week. Only 64% of providers, however, charge extra fees for late pick-ups or early drop-offs.



## LOCAL CCR&Rs: SUPPORTING NEW JERSEY'S REGISTERED FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

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Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies are the “home base” of support for family child care providers in New Jersey. Staff at CCR&Rs across the state provide training, technical assistance, and ongoing support to more than 3,700 registered providers each year.\*

Recognizing the demanding and sometimes isolating work required of family child care providers, family child care staff at local CCR&Rs provide a variety of support services for registered family child care providers. This support may include answering phone calls to problem solve with providers about their daily work challenges or helping them guide the children in their care through difficult developmental milestones by offering tips on issues such as discipline, toilet training, and working with mixed age groups. CCR&R staff also compile monthly and quarterly mailings that keep family child care providers updated on issues related to their work and provide details on upcoming workshops and conferences. These trainings, also planned and coordinated by CCR&R staff, provide valuable opportunities for providers to network with their peers while strengthening their knowledge and skills.

Local CCR&Rs are also responsible for family child care registration. Each CCR&R receives approximately 20 calls a week from persons who are interested in becoming a family child care provider. The CCR&Rs oversee the registration process, provide training and home inspections, and provide free referrals to registered family child care homes. In addition, CCR&Rs ensure that family child care providers are aware of the latest regulations around their work with children and help them interpret how those rules can be best implemented in their homes. This support can help providers expand their capacity as a business, build their market base, and expand their income potential. Information on subsidy programs and professional development opportunities are also provided through CCR&Rs.

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\* Contact information for New Jersey's CCR&Rs by county can be found in the appendix.



## IS THERE A ROLE FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE IN NEW JERSEY'S EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM?

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The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) (Schumacher et al., 2005) found that the vast majority of states with pre-kindergarten initiatives are delivering pre-kindergarten services in a mixed delivery model that includes both schools and community-based settings. Many of the states that allow a mixed delivery system, however, have relatively small percentages of children in non-school-based settings. A 2004 study conducted by the National Institute of Early Education Research (Barnett, Hustedt, Robin, & Schulman, 2004) estimated that 71% of children in a state pre-kindergarten program were served in a public school, 15% in child care centers, 7% in Head Start, less than 1% in family child care homes, and less than 1% in faith-based settings, with the remaining children served in other settings.

In the CLASP report, *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten*, 12 states (Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) named family child care providers as eligible to provide pre-kindergarten services (Schumacher et al., 2005). Even in these state, however, family child care providers may not be eligible directly, but rather as subcontractors, and are generally not widely participating in pre-kindergarten programs. In these states, family child care providers' participation in pre-kindergarten initiatives ranged from offering a classroom for the pre-kindergarten program to providing wrap-around or other support services for families. Missouri requires home providers to be group family home providers. In New York, group (or large) family child care providers use their size to provide a pre-kindergarten setting similar to that of a center. Local communities in other states, such as Delaware, Ohio, and Washington, use family child care providers as partners in subcontracting relationships, where the providers may participate in a variety of ways—offering direct provision of the pre-

kindergarten services; providing full-day, full-year opportunities; and making support services available to participating children and families.

New Jersey has been a national leader in providing preschool for its children, with more than 50% of the state's 4-year-olds enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program. Through three New Jersey initiatives, pre-kindergarten services are offered in public school settings or community-based child care centers.

- In 31 of the state's poorest school districts (called *Abbott districts* after the New Jersey Supreme Court's 1998 decision in *Abbot V. Burke* to support those communities with greatest educational challenges), full-time year-round preschool programs are available for all three-and four-year-olds.
- Preschool programs are also available to children in 102 additional low-income districts through the Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA). These programs typically serve 4-year-olds for a half-day.
- In 2004, New Jersey's Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) was created (New Jersey Department of Education, 2005b). The program supports attendance for low-income children but requires that preschool programs be offered on a districtwide basis.

The state's long-term goal is to offer voluntary preschool to all four-year-olds in New Jersey by 2010. At this time, family child care homes are not used to provide pre-kindergarten services in New Jersey.



## CONCLUSION

These survey highlights are evidence that the family child care provider network is an expansive and resourceful system of care in New Jersey. Despite the challenges of low wages, long hours, and lack of benefits, family child care providers remain committed to their work with children. Their devotion and strengths are a critical part of the system of care supporting New Jersey's families.

The study findings also highlight areas for further attention if New Jersey's family child care system in New Jersey is to grow. The past few years have seen a steady decline in the number of registered family child care providers in New Jersey. Most alarmingly, the number of registered providers decreased 24% between 2001 and 2004, dropping from 4,689 to 3,784 in past three years.

A significant number of New Jersey families select family child care to meet their child care needs. Families across the state rely on the availability of high quality, flexible, and diverse child care options. Children, and their healthy development, depend on it. Because the care offered by family child care homes is flexible (the average family child care provider begins caring for children at 7:00 A.M. and does so until 5:45 P.M.), and sometimes more affordable than a child care center, family child care is often the best choice for working families.

As the survey illustrates, most family child care providers are interested in continuing their professional development and expanding their child care capacities. Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents stated that they hope to work toward credentialing, earning their child development associate, or receiving other accreditation in the upcoming year. Eleven percent (11%) already hold a bachelor's degree and 2% have a master's degree, qualifying them to provide pre-kindergarten services.

State pre-kindergarten policy choices have the potential to support the growth and strengthen the quality and program standards of family child care providers. This can be accomplished by:

- Including family child care in the definition of early care and education options made available by the state;

- Investing in the family child care provider workforce by providing targeted resources to help registered providers meet pre-kindergarten teacher education standards—and receive wages comparable to similarly educated school teachers;
- Expanding resources and technical assistance to improve the content of early education services in family child care programs;
- Establishing a quality rating system to inform consumers and recognize and reward the quality of care provided in family child care homes; and
- Collecting data and evaluating program quality and impact across settings to encourage ongoing program improvement.



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## APPENDIX

### New Jersey CCR&Rs by County

#### **Atlantic County**

Atlantic County Women's Center  
PO Box 311  
Northfield, NJ 08225  
609/646-1180  
www.acwc.org

#### **Bergen County**

Bergen County Office for Children  
One Bergen County Plaza-2nd Floor  
Hackensack, NJ 07601  
201/336-7150  
www.co.bergen.nj.us/  
bcdhs/divisions/children.htm

#### **Burlington County**

Burlington County CAP  
718 South Route 130  
Burlington, NJ 08016  
609/261-6834  
www.bccap.org

#### **Camden County**

Camden County Division for Children  
PO Box 88, Lakewood Road  
Blackwood, NJ 08012-0088  
856/374-6376  
www.camdencounty.com/  
health/healthserv/children.html

#### **Cape May County**

EIRC-Southern Regional Child Care Resource  
Center, Social Services Building  
4005 Route 9 South  
Rio Grande, NJ 08242  
609/886-5164  
www.eirc.org

#### **Cumberland County**

Tri-County Community Action Partnership  
110 Cohansey Street  
Bridgeton, NJ 08302  
856/451-6330  
www.tricountycaa.org

#### **Essex County**

Programs for Parents, Inc.  
33 Washington Street  
Newark, NJ 07102  
973/297-1114

#### **Gloucester County**

EIRC-Southern Regional Child Care  
Resource Center  
606 Delsea Drive  
Sewell, NJ 08080  
856/582-8282  
www.eirc.org

#### **Hudson County**

Urban League of Hudson County  
253 Martin Luther King Boulevard  
Jersey City, NJ 07307  
201/451-8888  
www.urbanleaguehudsonnj.org/  
childrenservices.htm

#### **Hunterdon County**

NORWESCAP Child & Family  
Resource Services  
63 Main Street, Suite 206  
Flemington, NJ 08822  
908/782-8183  
www.norwescap.org

#### **Mercer County**

Child Care Connection  
1001 Spruce Street, Suite 201  
Trenton, NJ 08638  
609/989-7770  
www.childcareconnection-nj.org

#### **Middlesex County**

Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen  
103 Center Street  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
732/324-4357  
www.childcareinfo.info

#### **Monmouth County**

Child Care Resources  
3301C State Route 66  
PO Box 1234  
Neptune, NJ 07754-1234  
732/918-9901  
www.ccmj.org

#### **Morris County**

Child & Family Resources  
111 Howard Boulevard, Suite 201  
Mt. Arlington, NJ 07856  
973/398-1730  
www.childandfamily-nj.org

#### **Ocean County**

The Children's Home Society of New Jersey  
1433 Hooper Avenue, Suite 340  
Toms River, NJ 08753  
732/557-9633  
www.chsofnj.org

#### **Passaic County**

North Jersey Community Coordinated  
Child Care Agency, Inc.  
North Jersey 4C's  
101 Oliver Street  
Paterson, NJ 07501  
973/684-1904  
www.nj4c.com

#### **Salem County**

Tri-County Community Action Partnership  
14 New Market Street  
Salem, NJ 08079  
856/935-0944  
www.tricountycaa.org

#### **Somerset County**

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen  
94 Grove Street  
Somerville, NJ 08876  
908/927-0869  
www.childcareinfo.info

#### **Sussex County**

NORWESCAP Child & Family  
Resource Services  
186 Halsey Road, Suite 1  
Newton, NJ 07860  
973/383-3461  
www.norwescap.org

#### **Union County**

Community Coordinated Child Care  
of Union County  
225 Long Avenue  
Hillside, NJ 07205  
973/923-1433 x122  
www.cccunion.org

#### **Warren County**

NORWESCAP Child & Family  
Resource Services  
350 Marshall Street  
Phillipsburg, NJ 08865  
908/454-1078  
www.norwescap.org



**HEADQUARTERS**

440 First Street, NW, Third Floor ▪ Washington, DC 20001-2085  
202/638-2952 ▪ Fax 202/638-4004 ▪ [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)



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