

Family Child Care Focus Groups



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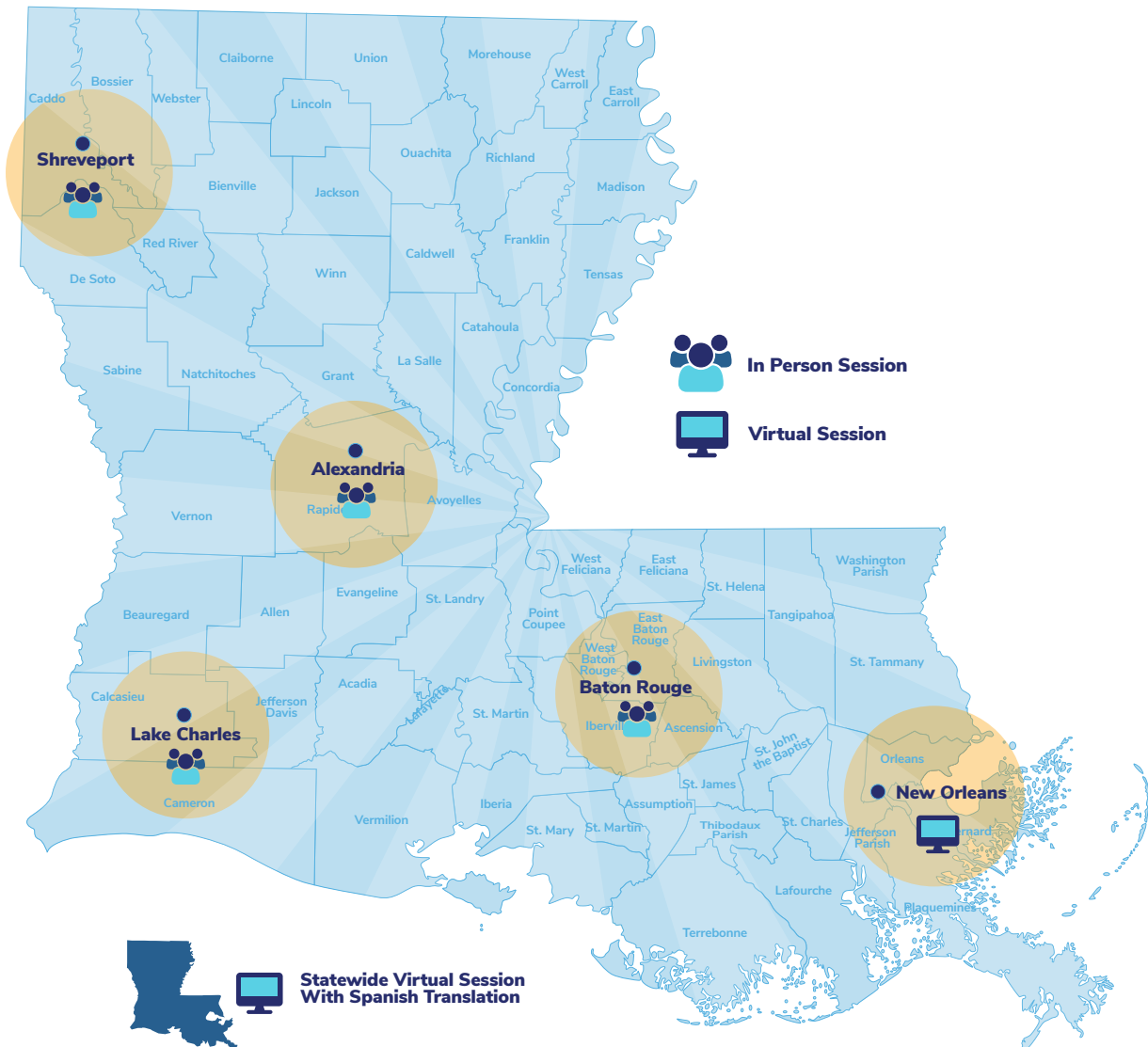
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OVERVIEW

Family Child Care Focus Groups (FCC Focus Groups) have been held across the state of Louisiana, including virtually for Providers and Parents during the months of February and March 2025.

Power Coalition was able to reach over 300 Providers and over 60 parents across the state spanning between the major cities and the river parishes of Louisiana that have a small business or do child care within their home. We reached providers that have been operating from 1-10 years providing care for children of ages 6 months- 4 years old. We have met and collected data to show the upsides and downsides of having family child care system and the relationships between the providers and the parents with their expressions of what they experienced as a family child care provider or parent and the truthing of what their day to day looks like on a smaller scale, as to what they would like to see changed for each child's advancement to primary school.



METHODOLOGY

The Focus Groups were held over the major cities around Louisiana starting in: Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lake Charles, New Orleans, River Parishes, with Virtual sessions.

- ➔ There was a pre-screening google form participants needed to fill out to sign up for the Focus Group with neutral, generalized questions to get background information as a Provider (such as: Name, email address, average amount of children, time of services offered, cost of tuition for each child, staff, degree, and location where they are based)
- ➔ Parents had similar prescreening questions (Name, email address, how many children are currently enrolled, their cost of tuition, location where their child attends child care)
- ➔ These Focus Groups started in the evening at 5:30pm/6pm lasting for an hour and a half (5:30-7:00pm), giving a neutral time of great attendance during the work week
- ➔ Participants were compensated with a \$25 gift card and a chance to win a raffle prize of an additional \$100 gift card.
- ➔ Pre-screening questions did not ask for race/ethnicity, but education and their rate of service and how many students that are currently enrolled. There was an option for Spanish translation for providers and parents to fill out within their specified language.



“If I had a magic wand, a perfect child care system home business would be one where I am well-compensated and have ample resources to provide exceptional care, with strong community support and streamlined regulations that prioritize child safety and development without being overly burdensome.”

Provider Focus Group Findings

KEY QUESTIONS

As mentioned above, participants were asked pre-screening questions when signing up for the focus group. Once the focus group there were questions that were specific to them as a provider and their specific business. There were many similar answers for these responses, but we followed up with questions that gave us more insight and detail to get a better understanding of what a specific issue was.

- ➔ How do you determine your rates and balance affordability with profitability?
- ➔ What challenges are you facing as a family child care provider? Has there been a challenge you haven't been able to handle?
- ➔ As a provider, what is one thing you would like to improve about your program/business?
- ➔ What transportation challenges exist for you and/or your families? How does that get in the way of your business or providing care?
- ➔ What do you feel are the biggest challenges or barriers when it comes to being able to compensate yourself and/or your staff?
- ➔ What resources are available to you as a provider?
- ➔ How do you find families and staff members to enroll?
- ➔ Do you feel well supported? Where is that support coming from the most? Are you connected to any other FCC providers in your area, or networks of support?
- ➔ What is your long term vision of this work? / If you could wave a magic wand, what would the family child care system/your home business look like?



“I grew up in a low-income family, and I know how hard it is to find good childcare. I want to make sure every child, no matter their background, has a strong start in life.”

KEY THEMES

There were many factors to consider when operating early childcare as a provider. There are operational costs, expenses to benefit the ratio of enrollment to the operating costs and balancing this month to month. There are also factors of educational resources that may be limited to the provider and care for each child such as, disabilities or taking time for potty-training. Providers shared that they previously worked in a big childcare center but saw too many kids getting lost in the system and they wanted to create a smaller, more personal environment where kids get the attention they need.

RESOURCES

- ➔ About 85% of the providers said that Support groups are offered to them as well as Professional Development and trainings.
- ➔ Creative Curriculum example:
 - ➔ The Curriculum Initiative stands out, reimbursing up to 80% of the cost (capped at \$4,000) for purchasing Tier 1 curricula like The Creative Curriculum or Frog Street.
 - ➔ This financial boost helps providers in parishes ex: St. Tammany or Orleans adopt high-quality, evidence-based programs that align with the state's Early Learning and Development Standards, easing the burden of upfront costs that might otherwise deter smaller operations, which has been really helpful for providers
- ➔ Many participants have also have other organizations resources such as Volunteers of America (VOA), EB Readiness and Tikes Tulane to work with consultants getting trainings and information to help with children's developmental growth for providers and staff as well as offerings for parents, mental Health such as separation anxiety, disruptive behaviors, and napping behaviors and how to gain each child's personal growth throughout the programs and hospitals.



“I’d love to be able to run my daycare without constantly worrying about finances. I just want to focus on the kids without stressing over bills.”

OUTREACH

Many providers frequently use: social media such as Instagram to promote their website, Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter), Indeed to get parents interested and gain business. Providers create signs and flyer print outs to share within the local libraries, stores, and shopping centers. They also use word of mouth by family and current employee referrals, local universities with early education programs. 80% of the providers said they also learn from other providers through training and meeting them through workshops that they attend, if the provider is enrolled in an accredited program.

In addition, many of the Spanish speaking community expressed that they use their local Churches' meetings and support groups to do outreach as well as their local community events and their local healthcare providers to recommend them.

EXPENSES CHALLENGES

All of the providers expressed how difficult it can be to run an early child care within their home as well as having a rental agreement for a space. Here are the factors that were brought into consideration when they are calculating their prices- which fluctuates by the time of year and/or by yearly basis. Determining rates by considering factors such as: operational costs, staff salaries, and market rates, while balancing affordability with profitability through strategies like tiered pricing. Some providers factor in 1-2 parent households when producing their prices and they try to work with parents that cannot afford it, and in turn there are providers that work with the **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** to help low-income families, but rates can be competitive due to state rates and other local provider rates. The financial expenses are the predominant challenges that providers face on a monthly/ yearly basis.



“We rely on government funding, but it’s never enough. Sometimes we have to freeze hiring or limit staff hours to stay within budget.”

Base Costs

- 1. Check Local Rates** – See what other providers in your area charge (ask around or check online listings).
- 2. Calculate the Costs** – Add up rent, food, supplies, insurance, and labor. Make sure your rates cover expenses and allow for profit.
- 3. Consider the Family Budgets** – Set prices that parents in your area can afford while still making the business sustainable (may vary depending on how many children are enrolled, offering sibling discounts, and factoring in whether each child comes everyday)
- 4. Offer Flexible Options** – Have full-time, part-time, weekend and drop-in rates to attract different families.
- 5. Adjust as Needed** – Review the prices yearly to keep up with costs and demand.

There are many challenges to being a family childcare provider, many of them are operating out of their own home, or an operating space so this means that they also have to identify whether their home is in compliance with meeting state licensing (factoring the cost of a license)& regulations for the service of early child care by: completing all required paperwork, background checks, and inspections can be time-consuming and complicated, also keeping and know safety exits.

Adapting your home to meet safety, space, and zoning regulations. Also expressing the image that society has based upon them as early childcare business owners and the work that they do may hinder their ability to sustain and excel. Many providers have expressed that parents may ask for a discount on their payments, cash money, vehicles or other resources such as disability, health they may not have to give to them.



“I set rates based on operational costs, rent, staff salaries, supplies while staying competitive with other centers in the area. I also offer sibling discounts and work with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to help low-income families.”

OTHER CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDERS

- ➔ **Low Parent Payment Rates** as many families struggle to afford child care, so providers often keep rates low to stay competitive, making it hard to pay themselves or staff well.
- ➔ **High Operating Costs:** Expenses like food, supplies, insurance, and utilities add up, leaving little room for a salary after covering costs.
- ➔ **Limited Access to Funding**
- ➔ Grants and subsidies exist, but they can be hard to qualify for or may not fully cover costs.
- ➔ **Costs for repairs** of the home, or creating quality space for their home-based program
- ➔ **Perception and Professionalization:**
 - ➔ Child care is often seen as “babysitting,” not skilled work, which depresses pay expectations. Despite training requirements (e.g., Louisiana’s 12-hour annual certification), it’s not valued like teaching, where median salaries hit \$60,000+.
 - ➔ This cultural bias discourages investment—parents and policymakers resist higher costs if they don’t see the expertise. Yet studies (e.g., Heckman Equation) show quality early care yields \$7-\$13 in societal benefits per dollar spent, a case providers struggle to make stick. This low status keeps wages low, trapping providers in a cycle of underappreciation.
- ➔ **Lack of Public Investment**
- ➔ **No Available Transportation Services** - The cost of acquiring a state based transportation vehicle is expensive and the budget cannot cover it or sustain it, so they deal with parents that cannot bring their children, late- drop off and pick up times- which brings them the keep children after hours (may require a fee, if applicable).



“A lot of families rely on public transportation, which isn’t always reliable here. If parents are late dropping off or picking up, it affects my staff’s hours and scheduling.”

- ➔ **Parents not understanding their child's specific needs** - providers expressed that there are children with disabilities and/or developmental delays such as: non-verbal communication, signs of autism spectrum since working with them by 6 months, and parents may be in denial or may not have the resources to get the child further help- Providers may not have the resources to distribute to those parents.
- ➔ **Providers give frequent parent-provider check-ins** about the children they are servicing and complete them every 3-6 months, providing growth and possible delays. There were few providers sending home behavior charts for the children based on their performances each day.

IMPROVEMENTS

There are ways for improvements for financial stability and business sustainability such as: employees to have healthcare, paid time off, and retirement benefits, the rules and regulations would be clear and consistent, as of now they feel like they change all the time, and small providers get left behind, the licensing process needs to become easier and more supportive instead of feeling like a punishment. Providers love what they do, but they feel they are being punished more than they are praised. **They would also like to see every child get access to affordable, high-quality care, regardless of income and include programs such as STEM, outdoor play, emotional development, and creativity and better learning materials.**

Parent Focus Group Findings

PARENT QUESTIONS

- ➔ What made you decide to choose Family Child Care over another form of child care? Such as...
 - ➔ Affordability
 - ➔ Geography
 - ➔ Personal connections
 - ➔ Availability
- ➔ What was your experience like when trying to find child care?
- ➔ What would you like to see improved about the care they receive?
- ➔ How does your family child care provider meet your families' needs?
- ➔ What do you think the children are learning while at child care each day? Does the provider communicate the curriculum with you? Does your child talk about it?
- ➔ If you had an opportunity to access a center-based child care program, would you take it?
- ➔ What is your level of involvement or engagement with your child's family child care provider? Do you have any opportunities to engage?
- ➔ "Engagement" examples: holiday parties, reading or art activities, parent night, child progress check-ins, etc
- ➔ What skills do you feel are most important for your child to have going into kindergarten?



“I love the fact of not having to worry about the welfare of my child.”

KEY THEME

All the parents I have spoken to state wide do love the benefits of having their child/children in a family child care facility, the parents have been utilizing family child care services for at least 1 year. The parents expressed their experience with working with child care providers and their need for it. It is convenient for them, so many of them expressed that the facility is closer to their home and not having to worry about the welfare of their child. They can be more flexible that fits their schedule as well as it gives their child the opportunity to get one-on-one attention for the ability to learn and the ability to learn social skills and potty training help as they are preparing for primary school. They have learned about their child's provider primarily through recommendations for their family members that have used or currently are using the services which gain much trust between them. Providers have expressed that parents may give them small gifts as a thank you, or a verbal expression of thanks.

COSTS

Parents chose a provider that has a much lower cost than a provider that has a bigger facility. They are getting quality based improvements in their child at a fraction of the cost. Parents pay the rates of \$100- \$400 max for each child, the average median rate that parents pay is \$250 a week per child. Many of them have multiple children for each provider. About 25 parents said that they did not apply and/or were not aware of any assistance/subsidy programs to help them pay for early childcare. All parents have expressed the expensiveness for child care although it is cheaper they cannot always afford it also the cost of transportation and the bills within their home. Due to work, parents do not get exponential time to spend with their child as they would like.



“I chose my Family Child care program because it is a better learning environment and it eases my mind to know that my children will get more attention.”

COMMUNICATION

Most parents have said that their child's provider has been in much communication with them about their child. There have been progress reports every month or every 6 month period, providing feedback, focusing on the child's advancing abilities to communicate, numeracy, colors, sequencing and learning the alphabet and behaviors. They have also shared that their provider shows them ways to further work with their child at home to help with their advancement. There are also parents that have said they do not get frequent updates from their child's provider, but it does not cause for concern, because they ask their child what they did, and learn daily. They express their child, sing songs, and count numbers in sequence and simple quantities, and are more social and express what they learn daily, and drawing abilities, so they are not too worried about the lack of communication with the providers. Parents have also said that the early child care facility/home provides opportunities for parents and their children to participate in events together at the facility such as a class party, pizza day, holiday parties and community festivals. The children may also participate in dance performances as well.

TRANSPORTATION

Many parents do not have a working vehicle to get their children to school on time, so transportation for parents are the biggest challenge besides the weekly costs, they are relying on public transportation or ride-shares such as: Buses (which they may have to ride multiple times to and from the provider's home/facility), Ubers and Lyft car services. Although they may have to catch a bus, they expressed that the provider's home may not be close to a bus stop, so they are walking 1-2 miles from there at most when catching public transportation such as a bus. Expressing that the streets (New Orleans area) are really bumpy and unbalanced, so they need to be careful when walking.

Parents expressed that they would like for the cost to go down for family child care, but they understand that it is a business and this is the position they are in, however given the states'



“I do not own a vehicle, Uber all the way!”

“My provider is closer to my neighborhood and is bi-lingual, to help my child in English and in Spanish.”

overall cost of a daily living they wish it would be more affordable. They would like for their child care service to have a transportation service to make it easier for their children to arrive on time and can stay at the facility for a full day, so they are not missing any viable lessons. More than half the parents would love to participate in parent workshops to better help their children while they are home with them and more healthy meal programs.

CONCLUSION

Concluding the Focus Groups, with each evening session hosted being an hour and a half each, I have found that although these providers have many disadvantages through their scope of work in early education, there is an unfounding precedent of admiration for their service to young children and families. Providers play an important role in early childhood mental, social, and cognitive development and can have parents and their child ready for their child to enroll in grade school in such time as they are growing. Parents desire to have a partnership with the providers to seek the best care for their child and in turn have the cost of the service work within their families' budget. The parents have respect and trust that their child receives the care they deserve in a smaller learning environment and the cause for concern of their child's wellbeing plays a major part. The parents and provider focus groups sessions included information regarding partnered organizations that can provide Resources, such as: Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC) and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) and Power Coalition. Both several parents and providers have expressed their interest in participating in more focus groups coming ahead in the future.



“Not enough time to be with my child because of work.”

My child recognizes numbers, counting, and understanding basic shapes and simple patterns.”