CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF

Child Care Employment

June 2013

Access to Quality: Early Learning for California Preschoolers in Subsidized License-Exempt Settings

Prepared for the California Department of Education and the California State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care by The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment University of California, Berkeley

June, 2013

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Special thanks to:
The parents, providers and staff who gave generously of their time to participate in the Access to Quality discussion groups.

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Introduction

Children from economically disadvantaged households often enter kindergarten lacking the social, cognitive, and language skills necessary for school success (Zill & Resnick, 2006). High-quality preschool is considered an important mechanism for improving children's school readiness. Research has consistently demonstrated that organized and academically stimulating preschool is associated with a number of developmental benefits for young children, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (NICHD ECCRN, 2005; Pungello, Kainz, Burchinal, Wasik, Sparling, Ramey, et al., 2010). As a result of this research, many states have designed or expanded public preschool programs and have invested funds, when available, in improving the quality of preschool services (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2011).

Economically disadvantaged children in California, who are often deemed to be at-risk, are less likely to participate in a high-quality preschool program than are their more advantaged peers (Karoly, 2009). As a result, they typically begin formal schooling with fewer skills, and remain behind as they progress beyond kindergarten, a phenomenon often called the "achievement gap." High-risk children in California using subsidized child care services participate in a wide range of programs, administered by the California Departments of Education (CDE) and Social Services (CDSS), that are designed to enable low-income families to access affordable child care so that parents can seek or retain employment. Of these, only State Preschool and programs contracted with CDE are required to provide an educational component (Child Care Law Center, 2010), and they are held to higher quality standards that those set forth by state licensing. Most, but not all, preschoolers receiving subsidies participate in these programs; many more preschool-age children are eligible, however, but are denied subsidies because of limited resources. And there is ongoing concern about poor to mediocre quality in many of the child care settings used by children of low-income families, including other subsidized licensed and license-exempt care, as well as non-subsidized services.

In 2009, 47 percent of California's income-eligible four-year-olds, and 75 percent of income-eligible three-year-olds, were not enrolled in educationally oriented preschool programming (Karoly, Reardon, & Cho, 2007). Since then, drastic budget cuts have occurred, with nearly 200,000 children losing preschool and child care services. In 2012-13, the CDE appropriated approximately $1.7 billion for Child Development Programs in a mix of 70 percent state funds and 30 percent federal funds (CDE, CDD, July 2012), compared to a 2010-11 appropriation of 2.1 billion, representing a 19 percent decrease (CDE, CDD, July 2011).

In addition to cuts in direct child care services, training resources have also been reduced, which is particularly troubling in the case of license-exempt providers, who have no contractual obligation to offer educational experiences to the children in their care. From 2005 to 2010, the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (Network), working with local resource and referral agencies (R&Rs), delivered the Informal Care Training Project (ICTP), funded by federal block grant dollars, CDE, and local fundraising efforts. Unfortunately, the ICTP was discontinued in 2010.

The Child Development Division (CDD) of the CDE echoes the emerging consensus among professionals, and, to an even greater extent, among parents, that young children benefit from educational experiences prior to entering kindergarten. This consensus reflects the accumulation of research demonstrating that high-quality educational experiences in the preschool years, particularly for high-need children, can help to reduce the achievement gap between children of lower- and higher-income families across the state (CDE, 2011). The CDD aims to improve access to quality preschool education while also recognizing the importance of parental choice in selecting child care services; as such, CDD seeks to

expand quality early learning experiences that promote school readiness for preschoolers of low-income families who are cared for by family members, friends or neighbors.

To address the reality that many of California's at-risk preschool-age children receiving subsidized child care services could benefit from, but do not participate in, organized, high-quality preschool or school-readiness experiences, CDD provided support to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California, Berkeley, for an Access to Quality Early Learning Project to examine: 1) the reasons why parents choose license-exempt child care, and their knowledge of the options that may be available to them; 2) the opportunities for and barriers to improving school readiness experiences for at-risk children who attend full-time, license-exempt child care; and 3) how license-exempt providers, and school readiness and preschool programs, might better coordinate and blend their offerings for families.

This report summarizes the findings of this exploration, and offers recommendations that can be used to inform policy strategies promoting greater participation by high-need children, now cared for exclusively in license-exempt settings, in quality educational environments that ready them for elementary school.

Terminology

"License-exempt care" refers to care, not subject to state licensing, that is provided by a child's family member, friend of neighbor (FFN). In most states, license-exempt or FFN care is subject to little or noregulation and monitoring, although states vary in their requirements for FFN providers who wish to receive public subsidy (Sussman-Stillman & Bogart, 2011). In California, a family member can receive subsidy for an unspecified number of children from one family, and a friend or neighbor may receive subsidy for children from one family in addition to her own children. Some policies are in place to ensure the basic health and safety of subsidized children cared for in license-exempt settings. Since 2006, non-relative FFN caregivers in the subsidy system have been required to register with TrustLine, which ensures that they have been fingerprinted and have passed criminal background checks and child abuse screenings. (Such screenings, however, are only for the direct caregiver, and not for others living in or visiting the household.) In addition, all non-relative caregivers are required to complete a health and safety self-assessment checklist. These providers are not required to have any specialized training or formal education related to child development or early education, however, nor are the environments in which children spend time evaluated or monitored.

The term "school readiness opportunities" refers not only to preschool and Head Start programs, but also to a variety of other services that support young children's learning. These include home visiting programs, community library and cultural experiences, and "play and learn" groups, which are organized settings for children birth through five and their caregivers. These groups typically involve children's activities related to pre-literacy, creativity, math, science, and dramatic play, as well as resources to guide caregivers in enhancing children's development in order to promote success in kindergarten. Such groups also offer families and FFN providers a way to connect to community resources and local schools. In seeking to improve children's access to early learning, the CDD is interested in the full range of programs that are considered to offer school readiness opportunities.

Subsidized License-Exempt Care in California

Characteristics of Children in Subsidized License-Exempt Care[1]

In 2012, approximately 300,000 children, including 143,000 three- and four-year-olds, received subsidized early childhood services through the CDE. Among preschool-age children, 31 percent of three-year-olds, and 14 percent of four-year–olds, were receiving services through CDE voucher programs, with the remainder attending contracted preschool and child development centers. Among the three- and four-year-olds enrolled in programs receiving CDE vouchers, 27 percent were cared for by a license-exempt provider, totaling approximately 3,500 three-year-olds and 3,800 four-year-olds across the state. When families who received subsidy for Stage 1 child care through the CDSS are considered, however, the number of three- and four-year-old California children cared for by license-exempt providers grows substantially. Unfortunately, CDSS does not disaggregate usage data by age, so that the size of this population cannot be known or even easily estimated.

Although beyond the scope of this project, it is also important to consider the implications of access to school readiness opportunities for children younger than three years old, since license-exempt care is much more widely used by families with infants and toddlers. In 2012, 34,000 infants and toddlers received services through CDE; 62 percent of these children were in voucher programs, and approximately one-third (34 percent) of those receiving services through vouchers were in license-exempt care. These 7,000 infants and toddlers, as well as their counterparts who are in Stage 1 child care, may also be at developmental risk without more targeted, appropriate early learning experiences.

License-Exempt Providers

While the federal government requires states to prepare annual reports on the children in subsidized child care programs, no similar reporting requirements are in place for license-exempt providers who receive public subsidies. Moreover, CDD does not independently collect information about the demographic, educational, or professional background of license-exempt providers serving subsidized children. The only information about these providers is collected by the Child Development Training Consortium, which gathers demographic, educational, and work experience data on licensed and license-exempt providers who participate in training programs funded by the CDD, using the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) quality dollars. These data, however, cannot be considered representative of the population of license-exempt providers receiving subsidies, as they represent only a fraction of a population that is not required to participate in training. The only other source of information about this population can be drawn from criminal record and fingerprint checks, but these data are collected only on non-relative license-exempt providers and only alert authorities to those who do not pass the background check.

[1] California Department of Education, Child Development Division, April 2012.

Policies Related to License-Exempt Care

Rates

In recent years, reimbursement rates for license-exempt care have been drastically reduced through the state budget process. At their height, license-exempt care rates were 90 percent of licensed family child care rates, which at the time were calculated at 1.5 standard deviations above the mean market rate. Since the passage of AB1497 in June 2012, the reimbursement rate has been 60 percent of the licensed family child care rate, which is currently calculated at 80 percent of the mean regional market rate. As an example of currently low reimbursement rates, license-exempt providers in Los Angeles County are reimbursed at $24 dollars per child per day for children age two through five years, if they care for them for at least six hours per day. For part-time care under six hours per day, the hourly rate per child is $2.27. A license-exempt provider caring for children in Los Angeles County for twelve hours per day earns $2.00 per hour per child. Anecdotal reports from R&R staff suggest that these policies have resulted in fewer license-exempt providers who are willing to provide care, and underscore the financial constraints these providers face if they are expected to pay for training, transportation, or participation fees for community activities for the children in their care. They also explain why policies to promote participation in school readiness activities by children attending license-exempt care are unlikely to succeed if they result in any reduction of payment to providers.

TrustLine

At one time, CDE allowed Alternative Payment (AP) programs to commence payment to providers as soon as their application to TrustLine was completed and their fingerprints had been submitted for a criminal background check. Since 2008, however, the CDSS has not permitted payment to Stage 1 license-exempt providers until they have been registered with TrustLine and their background checks have cleared (Section 1596.67. Amended by Stats. 1998, Ch. 329, Sec. 9.; Cal. Health & Safety Code §1596.67). As a result of a regulatory change implemented in January 2013, license-exempt providers in CDE voucher programs cannot receive payment (and thus, technically, cannot provide care) until their applications have been processed and they are registered in TrustLine. This process is expected to take one to two weeks, but it can take longer depending on the background of the applicant. While exceptions can be made for immediate need, there is now typically a time gap between when the parent selects a non-relative provider and when care can begin. This gap does not apply to grandparents, aunts and uncles, who continue to be exempt from TrustLine.

Findings from the Stakeholder Discussion Groups

FINDING ONE:

Parents and license-exempt providers participating in this project understood that school readiness includes emotional, social, and cognitive skills. They expressed eagerness to be involved in facilitating children's learning, and for children to have the best possible early learning experiences prior to school. These parents and providers, however, often did not communicate about school readiness issues with each other.

Parents and School Readiness

What School Readiness Means

The parents who participated in the discussions viewed school readiness primarily as traditional academics, such as learning the alphabet, numbers, and colors, and early literacy skills. Some parents also mentioned, however, such aspects of social and emotional readiness as the importance of following routines, playing with others, and responding to verbal instructions. Some even felt that there should be a "college-driven culture" in the home—that school readiness is also about getting one's child "college and career ready." Parents in the San Francisco group tended to define school readiness somewhat more broadly than those in other groups, and did not believe in "high-pressure academics" prior to kindergarten.

School Readiness Activities

Many parents indicated that they found school readiness activities in the community, such as swimming, dance and movement, yoga, or drumming classes, and then informed their providers about them. They also mentioned such community resources as churches, parent groups, museums, zoos, local R&R/AP agencies, and even commercial locations such as Home Depot.

Perception of Providers' Participation in School Readiness Activities

Parents mentioned license-exempt providers' lack of training as a serious barrier to offering adequate school readiness experiences. Parents often indicated that they had to ask their providers to conduct school readiness activities—for example, "Can you read to my child for 20 minutes?"— but did not seem confident that providers would do so without such reminders.

Parent comments also implied that providers often were not engaged in or aware of school readiness activities available to children in the community. Parents discussed such barriers to participation as safety, transportation, and the cost of some activities themselves, but also expressed willingness to take the time to locate such activities in order to ensure that their children received them. The general consensus of parent participants was that there was a great deal of room for improvement by providers in this area. There were exceptions, however; a Fresno parent, for example, expressed great satisfaction with her provider, who she felt was teaching her child things that she as a parent would not have taught him.

Parents were also quick to note that provider payments were very low, impacting their ability and motivation to participate in school readiness activities in the community. As one parent said, "Exempt providers get reimbursed $1.99 per hour right now, so with that kind of money, where can they take the children?"

Providers and School Readiness

What School Readiness Means

When defining school readiness, providers emphasized the importance of social-emotional intelligence, discipline, and developing such social skills as getting along well with other children, knowing how to share, decision making, separating from parents, and following a schedule and directions. Some providers noted that the mixing of age groups offered opportunities for children to learn from each other; as one said, "You're teaching competence that way, because you're teaching the younger how to be stronger, more confident individuals. You're also teaching the older to be more communicative, and understanding of the younger person."

School Readiness Activities

Providers believed that they focused on school readiness skills with the children in their care, feeling that it was very important to understand the needs of children and to teach them through play. The Los Angeles group, in particular, talked about teaching through cooking, which encompasses many areas of development that are needed for kindergarten, including language, math, reading, following instructions, measurement, fine motor skills, and creativity.

Most providers expressed positive feelings about the role of libraries in school readiness; indeed, these were the one resource with which providers most consistently seemed to be familiar. Providers also mentioned museums and planetariums, as well as a variety of stores such as Barnes and Noble, Home Depot, Lakeshore Supply Company, and supermarkets that offered activities and field trip experiences for children. Providers from Los Angeles County mentioned participating in First 5-funded activities such as Best Start, dental screening, and eye exams, as well as opportunities for multiple providers and their children to do activities together, including play groups, zoo trips, and sports in parks. Solano County providers mentioned Boys & Girls Clubs, schools, resource personnel for children with special needs, churches, and parks. Tulare County providers noted movie theatres, roller rinks, and miniature golf, and Butte County providers noted the Valley Oaks resource room and the Family Resource Center.

Communicating About School Readiness with Parents

Some providers felt that parents were unable to assist their children with school readiness activities, due both to work schedules and to lack of interest. "With some of my parents they work these long hours and they are so tired when they get home they are not interested. I do find that a lot. They're not interested in helping them [children]." Providers also emphasized the importance of two-way conversation with parents in order to determine the needs of the child. They wanted to support what the parents were doing at home, but also wanted to help parents develop skills. A provider summarized, "You just want to introduce them and help them develop their skills so that they will be more proactive and able to address the situation correctly. And then the child ultimately is the winner."

Providers were also asked whether they discussed with parents what they as providers would do to help prepare their children for school. The Los Angeles County providers offered the most feedback about parent communication, saying that parents vary in how much information they ask for; typically don't use such terms as "school readiness" or "getting ready for school," but want to know what activities will be provided; sometimes ask about what children should be doing at a particular age; and often need reassurance that their children will be safe while in the provider's care.

In summary, we were struck by the disparity between parents' and providers' perspectives about how knowledgeable or involved each other were in the area of school readiness. While both groups said that this issue was important to them, parents often said (with some exceptions) that their license-exempt providers should be more involved in school readiness, even needed reminders to do such activities as reading to children, and were relatively uninformed about school readiness opportunities available in the community. Parents also acknowledged the lack of provider training, and poor compensation, as barriers. Providers, on the other said, generally said that they were offering a variety of school readiness activities, and that it was often parents who were relatively too busy or apathetic to be engaged in this issue.

FINDING TWO:

R&R and AP staff perceptions of why parents choose license-exempt care mirror the research literature, which identifies complex interactions among preferences, constraints, and available options (Chaudry, Henly, & Meyers, 2010). In addition, the design of California's subsidy system strongly impacts how parents make child care decisions, requiring them to make choices quickly and limiting resources for parent education.

According to the research literature, families balance a number of factors when making child care decisions, including cultural and religious values, cost, convenience of location, provider schedules, child care needs of siblings, children's physical and emotional needs, and parent work schedules, which may include odd-hour shifts or weekends. In addition, families often make child care decisions with limited information about program quality. Although California has a state-funded R&R system to provide families with child care information, many families are not informed of or referred to these services when they first access their child care subsidy. As a result, many parents rely on family members or friends for advice, and may not learn about the full range of child care options available to them (Walker & Reschke, 2004).

Research also states that FFN is the most frequently used'type of care for infants and toddlers (Chase, 2005). Many families select such care, particularly for very young children, for its intimate and family-like nature (Li-Gring & Coley, 2006; Whitebook et al., 2004), believing that people whom they know and trust will be more likely to provide safe and loving care to their infants (Pungello & Kurtz-Costes, 1999). Further, according to the literature, many minority families select FFN providers who are of the same cultural group, preferring a caregiver whose child socialization techniques and language are likely to resemble their own, so that cultural values that they consider important are reinforced when they are absent (Emarita, 2007; Faddis et al., 2000; Layzer & Goodson, 2006).

According to Morrisey (2007), families with siblings often find it difficult to juggle the higher cost of center-based settings for multiple children, and the inconvenience of two or more child care arrangements, and opt to send their siblings to the same provider. In addition, many parents who work lower-wage shift jobs choose FFN care for its flexibility in providing care during non-standard hours (Coley, Chase-Lansdale, & Li-Grining 2001; Maxwell, 2005). Further, families frequently have to make child care decisions under time constraints (Kontos et al., 1995), especially when work life, family life, prior child care arrangements, or subsidy status change unexpectedly (Chaudry, 2004).

R&R Staff Perceptions of Why Parents Choose License-Exempt Care

R&R staff participating in the discussion groups reported that parents choose license-exempt care for multiple reasons. Staff agreed that parents feel the most comfortable with a friend or family member: as one said, "They have the same values, they have the same life, they have the same type of culture." Another said, "They just want a safe environment for their child, and it's a trust issue. 'I want my mother to take care of my child.' 'I've known my girlfriend all my life, so I trust her.'" Yet another felt that parents appreciate the fact that children in the group may be related to each other, and that "they are more familiar with that environment; they perceive that their children would get more one-on-one attention."

R&R staff also stressed that another important reason parents choose FFN care is that it allows subsidy money to remain within the family. Subsidies for FFN care can be an important source of family income (Snyder, Bernstein, & Adams, 2008). Diverting care from FFN providers, who are often family members living in the household, to pre-kindergarten programs, even for part of the day, would also mean diverting income from the family. Such financial considerations may contribute to families' choosing FFN care for their preschoolers and not accessing available preschool programs.

Further, R&R staff noted that families perceive license-exempt care as more convenient and flexible, often accommodating variable and non-traditional work schedules such as evenings and weekends, and

being able to care for siblings of different ages, eliminating the need to use multiple settings.

R&R staff reported, moreover, that parents do not always receive the information they need in order to understand the full range of child care options available to them. Subsidy caseworkers often do not provide this information (see below), and R&R staff often do not have access to parents when they first sign up for the child care subsidy.

Finally, R&R staff mentioned that parents' choices of child care providers can change over time; they often choose license-exempt care at the beginning of their child care journey, when they are under pressure to secure child care arrangements. "When you need care, you need it by next week," as one staff member said, while another added, "They're not really thinking about school readiness. They just need somebody to care for the child while they're in school or working." R&R staff reported that parents can also be resistant to hearing about other options if they have already chosen a provider. As their children approach kindergarten and parents become more familiar with the child care system, however, parents often transition their children to more formal settings.

AP Staff Perception of Why Parents Choose License-Exempt Care

AP staff also felt strongly that parents choose license-exempt care because of cultural values and relationships with family, reporting that families believe it is important for children to have time with grandparents, and that they perceive relative care as a safer alternative to other child care settings. Northern California AP staff, in particular, felt that fear of more formal group settings is particularly true for first-time parents, but emphasized that there are strong regional differences in the use of license-exempt care.

AP staff agreed with R&R staff that license-exempt care has the advantage for parents of keeping subsidy dollars in the family. One Southern California staff member stated the rationale most succinctly: "In our area, with a primarily Hispanic population, mostly why they choose license-exempt care is for monetary reasons; it's an additional income for the family."

Again paralleling the R&R staff discussion, AP staff discussed flexibility and convenience in child care choices, highlighting convenient locations, ease of transportation, availability of non-traditional hours, and keeping multiple children in a family together in one setting. Staff also felt that the flexibility of FFN providers allowed children to attend while mildly ill, or meant that providers could accompany children to doctor's appointments instead of parents. They felt that many parents believed informal care to be much better for very young children than structured time in a more formal child care arrangement. And further, they agreed with R&R staff that keeping child care subsidy income within the family was often an important consideration.

AP staff reported that parents were often not educated about other child care options. As one Northern California staff member said, "They don't know all the options available to them, so they think that exempt care is the best because it's a family member or a friend or someone they know." AP staff agreed strongly that it is very difficult to reach parents during initial registration when they first make their child care choices, but that there is much more opportunity at re-certification. When parents first meet with staff, they are usually in desperate need for immediate child care assistance and are not ready for conversation about child care quality. Further, AP staff said that many parents do not want to talk about choices if they have already selected their provider, but that with more education, parents are more likely to choose licensed providers.

Finally, paralleling the R&R staff, several AP staff indicated that parents tend to change from license-exempt providers to licensed providers as their children grow. Multiple reasons were cited for this shift, including a belief that, early on, children are just "too small to be put into a school-like setting," and that a more formal arrangement could wait until the child was older. Another reason cited was that disagreements or "falling out" can occur between parents and providers who are relatives, leading to relatively frequent shifts in who is providing care.

FINDING THREE:

AP and R&R agency staff participating in this project reported being burdened by large caseloads and limited resources, as a result of budget cuts that have limited their ability to talk with parents about school readiness and child care choices, to offer training or other activities for providers, or to improve collaboration between AP and R&R services.

Reductions to R&R Services for License-Exempt Providers

R&R staff discussed numerous programs for license-exempt providers—many, in their opinion, quite successful—that had existed before recent budget cuts. The most comprehensive such program was the Informal Care Training Project (ICTP), administered from 2005 to 2010 by the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, and funded by federal block grant dollars, CDE, and local fundraising efforts. Local R&R agencies delivered four training modules designed for license-exempt providers in their service areas: 1) The Vital Role of the Caring Provider, 2) Safety, Health, and Nutrition, 3) Discipline, Guidance, and Family Support, and 4) Family Literacy. In addition, FFN providers were able to participate in the Network's larger Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP), which provided support to home-based providers for achieving licensing, as well as an additional set of training modules focused on building quality environments for infants and toddlers.

Home visits to license-exempt providers were also consistently mentioned as a successful school readiness initiative no longer being offered. One R&R staff member described a program, offering multiple visits to providers, that included needs assessments, donations of safety equipment, toys and other materials, and modeling of age-appropriate activities with children.

Increasing Caseloads for AP Staff

AP staff spoke about budget cuts that had greatly increased parent caseloads, resulting in less time and fewer resources to talk with parents about child care choices, both at initial enrollment and at re-certification. In some situations, one-to-one conversations had been changed to small group meetings to better utilize limited agency resources. A Southern California staff member indicated that budget cuts were impacting their ability to communicate with parents, "so the quality part is what gets lost along the way."

FINDING FOUR:

Providers and parents participating in this project were willing to learn more about school readiness, and to participate in school readiness-related activities with children, as long as they were easily accessible, were offered either free of charge or at low cost, and did not lead to a decrease in their provider payments. R&R and AP agency staff, as well as school readiness program providers, expressed interest in implementing or expanding promising practices if resources were made available.

States have designed and implemented a number of initiatives aimed at improving early learning experiences for children receiving subsidy and attending FFN settings. These typically focus on offering training, promoting licensing, distributing materials, linking FFN care with pre-kindergarten programming, and providing home visits (Porter, 2010). Such initiatives have often led to changes in subsidy rules and regulations, to enable children and FFN providers to participate in programs in ways that do not interfere with the provider's subsidy income, which is often vital to family economic well-being.

Parents

Parents appeared to believe that their license-exempt providers would be willing to participate in school readiness activities outside the home, but often felt that lack of transportation or the cost of activities were barriers. Others felt that home visitation would be a better option, so that providers did not have to deal with transportation and safety issues. Los Angeles parents also discussed the idea of a mobile preschool bus.

Parents emphasized the importance of using technology, including email, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to communicate with parents and providers about available community resources related to school readiness. Some emphasized that these messages should be brief, and that low-tech methods such as mailings and newspapers should also not be discounted.

Providers

Providers emphasized the importance of transportation, and of receiving plenty of advance notice of events, or even of having multiple dates to choose from, in order to avoid scheduling conflicts. They also emphasized the importance of knowledgeable and experienced trainers for professional development events. In particular, they often wanted to see greater involvement of local public schools, both as providers of services and as communicators of available information on community school readiness activities.

Providers also gave feedback about resources that local R&R or AP agencies could offer to make school readiness opportunities more accessible. These included a Hotline that providers could call when needing immediate assistance; being kept up-to-date on professional development opportunities, particularly those being offered free of charge; and workshops on children's issues.

R&R Staff

R&R staff recommended the reinstatement of the ICTP and home visiting programs as a means of ensuring more focus on school readiness among license-exempt providers. Many also mentioned offering videos to providers as an effective means of communication. Others noted that it would be helpful to require at least 10 hours of training for license-exempt providers, focusing on school readiness issues, "hands-on" activities, the importance of play, and children's developmental stages. Staff also mentioned the importance of making resources available to license-exempt providers so that they could invest in learning games and activities.

R&R staff also suggested that children who are cared for by license-exempt providers could enroll in Head Start and other part-day preschool programs, such as State Preschool, although some expressed concern about the fees required for the State Preschool program being a barrier for parents.

AP Staff

When AP staff were asked what would facilitate providers' use of school readiness-related activities, they highlighted the accessibility issues of convenient location and/or providing transportation, and of offering programs free of charge or at low cost. In particular, they emphasized that providers should not have to lose any portion of their reimbursements for participating in school readiness activities. Staff also stressed the importance of incentives—including food, but preferably stipends—for assuring provider attendance.

AP staff also discussed an apparently close relationship between the number of children enrolled in license-exempt care in a community, and low-performing schools in that community. One provider said, "There is a local school, elementary school, and the students in the school are doing really poorly. And we also noticed that the majority of the families that take their children to that particular school are people who we are servicing as license exempt providers, with grandparents and aunts and uncles and neighbors caring for the children. So I personally think there is a huge tie." Many suggested that CDD/CDE should help facilitate better communication between their funded child development programs and license-exempt providers, and better coordination with local public schools.

Improved R&R and AP Services and Collaboration

Notably, many parents mentioned that they never heard anything about school readiness when they registered for child care assistance. Common refrains included: "Nobody told me anything about that," and "They just wanted to get me signed up, know who my provider was, and get all their information"—but while they felt that R&R and AP staff could be doing more, they also acknowledged the need for more funding to ease heavy caseloads and to make it more possible to discuss child care quality and school readiness.

R&R and AP staff offered suggestions for making child care information more available to parents during the subsidy enrollment process. AP staff talked about the need for additional staff training on working with overwhelmed parents. R&R staff talked about more cross-training and collaboration between R&R and AP staff, so that parent counseling skills could be embedded in the subsidy process.

We noted, however, that while both parents and AP staff taking part in our meetings expressed interest in discussing child care quality and school readiness, both groups perceived the other as being too busy or overburdened to engage in such discussions.

School Readiness Providers

Parents of low-income children are typically the target population for many community-based early learning programs outside of Head Start and Preschool. Whether designed as a home-visiting program, or a community-based gathering in a park or other facility, we found program directors open to adapting their parent-based services to license-exempt providers if necessary resources were available. One director, for example, said, "It doesn't necessarily have to be Mom or Dad that represents the child. It just needs to be an adult representing the child." Another director expressed interest in adapting her home visitation program to serve license-exempt providers, indicating that "we would need dedicated staff to implement such an expanded model. If it was very similar to what we are currently doing it would be very easy to do. That's the business that we're in." Another program director mentioned resources such as after-hour use of her facilities to bring together license-exempt providers offering non-traditional hour care for families.

Those already serving license-exempt providers offered lessons they had learned. First, it is important to offer services in locations where providers already congregate, such as parks and libraries, and to provide financial and other incentives to ensure participation. They also emphasized that license-exempt providers should not lose any subsidy income due to participating in a more formal school readiness program with the children in their care.

Recommendations for Improving Access to School Readiness Experiences for Preschoolers in License-Exempt Care

The following recommendations emerge from input provided by discussion participants representing a variety of stakeholders—parents, license-exempt providers, R&R and AP staff, and school readiness program providers—about how to improve access to school readiness experiences for preschool-age children in license-exempt child care. These stakeholders recognized the benefits associated with high-quality school readiness experiences for children from low-income backgrounds, and were eager to identify strategies that could increase access to such experiences for three- and four-year old children cared for by license-exempt providers.

Recommendation 1:

Reinstate funding for the Informal Care Training Project (ICTP) in each county, and establish program design guidelines that meet diverse county needs, based on best practices and implementation lessons identified by the Network and their member R&R agencies.

License-exempt providers themselves, parents, and R&R and AP agency staff all identified training for license-exempt providers as a fundamental service necessary to ensure children's access to school readiness experiences. Universally, study participants lamented the cuts that had led to the elimination of these too short-lived programs, citing how ongoing training for all providers is fundamental to quality learning experiences for young children. Agency participants also spoke to the many lessons that had been learned about effective program design, including how to enlist provider participation, and bemoaned how improvements in these training programs had been derailed by severe cuts and the elimination of public resources. They urged the CDD to build on this knowledge by embedding lessons learned in the guidelines that accompany any future license-exempt training resources.

Recommendation 2:

Restore funding to R&R and AP agencies to reduce staff caseloads in order to allow agency staff sufficient time to provide each parent with initial and ongoing information about child care options and school readiness opportunities available to their children.

While drastic cuts in public funds have decreased subsidized services for children of low-income families in California, they have simultaneously, as a function of staffing cuts, increased caseloads for R&R and AP staff, resulting in insufficient time for parent education. Although many agencies have developed strategies to streamline and simplify parent eligibility processing (e.g., online applications), such efficiencies can also reduce or eliminate opportunities to educate parents about the full range of child care choices and school readiness activities available to their children.

Recommendation 3:

Encourage R&R and AP agencies to coordinate and integrate their services in order to maximize opportunities for parents to learn about the range of child care options for their children and school readiness enrichment opportunities in the community in which children and license-exempt providers could participate.

Information about child care options and school readiness opportunities is difficult to share with parents when they are anxious to make their child care arrangements quickly in response to work requirements. Requiring parents to learn about child care choices in an initial meeting, before applying for subsidy, can promote better parent education and choice. Additionally, ensuring that parents receive updated information about child care choices and school readiness opportunities periodically (e.g., at re-certification) may increase their receptivity to such information, as parents' priorities often change as their children get older, and their anxiety about participating in formal child care programs often decreases over time.

Recommendation 4:

Require all license-exempt providers receiving payment through federal or state funds (CCDF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Social Services Block Grant, and AP funds) to participate in initial training focused on health and safety protections for children, such as safe sleeping practices, first aid and cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and reporting child abuse. Provide monetary incentives in the form of enhanced reimbursement rates to all providers who participate in 24 hours of training per year in child development and behavior guidance, learning activities, addressing the needs of children with special needs, or working with children whose first language is not English.

Parents, providers, and R&R and AP agency staff all recognized the importance of initial and ongoing training for both relative and non-relative license-exempt providers receiving public funds to care for children of low-income families. Given the low reimbursement rates for license-exempt providers, discussion participants emphasized the importance of augmenting payments to providers who participate in training as an incentive for their participation and as an acknowledgement of their effort.

Recommendation 5:

Encourage license-exempt providers to engage children in their care in school readiness activities, ideally those that include learning experiences for providers themselves, by providing targeted outreach and information about free or low-cost programs in the community, offering transportation as needed, and altering regulatory policies to ensure that such participation will not result in reduced income for providers.

Regulatory policies that reduce payment to license-exempt providers if children in their care attend organized school readiness activities outside the home discourage participation, particularly given already low reimbursement rates. In addition, depending on the location of services, free or low-cost transportation is often necessary to encourage participation. Ideally, co-located school readiness and provider training programs, or those that are designed for the participation of both providers and children, serve an added function of diminishing the isolation of license-exempt providers, who often spend long days without adult contact.

Recommendation 6:

Establish statewide and local linkages between license-exempt providers and local institutions such as Head Start and State Preschool programs, neighborhood public schools (especially Kindergartens), libraries, museums, and merchants. Support local R&R and AP agencies to actively disseminate targeted information to providers about school readiness opportunities and resources offered by these institutions.

Discussion participants spoke about the isolation of license-exempt providers, who often do not know about such community resources as child development programs, story time libraries, free days at museums, or activities at public schools. Similarly, these institutions might not be familiar with the license-exempt providers in their area. It was suggested that both the

CDD and local R&R and AP agencies help establish connections between license-exempt providers and these local institutions. CDD should provide resources for local AP and R&R agencies to disseminate information to providers about these ongoing activities, strengthening the link between the child's home and school environments and promoting school readiness.

Recommendation 7:

Improve data available about license-exempt providers who receive payment through federal or state funds (CCDF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Social Services Block Grant, and AP funds) by requiring the collection of education, work and demographic information in the application and re-certification process and at training activities. R&R and AP staff, along with Stage 1 staff at county welfare offices, should be provided with the tools and resources needed to collect and report this data to CDD and CDSS. In addition, require the CDD and CDSS to coordinate, align and integrate their license-exempt data systems so that all stakeholders will have accurate and timely information about license-exempt usage and the characteristics of license-exempt providers.

In order for policy makers and other stakeholders to increase access to school readiness experiences for children of low-income families and assess progress over time, it is essential to establish a mechanism that allows for more coordinated and comprehensive information about children in license-exempt care and the characteristics of their providers, as well as the stability and ongoing training of the license-exempt provider population. The starting point for this information is to establish a process to ensure that baseline descriptions of subsidized license-exempt care, for each county and statewide, are available, in order to identify opportunities and gaps that influence the quality of children's early learning experiences, and to inform policy. Once workforce registries are available in counties, subsidized license-exempt providers, along with all members of the workforce in licensed settings, should be mandated to participate. In the interim, these data should be maintained, as well as collected, by the agencies working directly with license-exempt providers, using the uniform participant profile form developed by the CDD for participants in CCDF professional development training programs and incorporated into the registries now under development.

Greater interdepartmental alignment of policies can ameliorate the consequences of early childhood services being administered by two different agencies in California. Uniform data elements across agencies, and more detailed information about license-exempt care, are necessary in order for policy makers and other stakeholders to understand how federal and state resources are being used to support school readiness experiences for California's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. While the Golden State once held distinction as a national leader in early learning services, it is now ranked at the bottom of the nation in many aspects of child care and early education (Child Care Aware of America, 2013). In the absence of adequate data, the status quo is more likely to escape the necessary scrutiny that can lead to improvements and allow California to regain its role as a leader in early care and education.

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Appendix 1: Methodology

Five groups of stakeholders—parents using license-exempt care, license-exempt providers, R&R staff, AP staff, and school readiness and child development providers—were recruited to participate in discussions with the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) researchers about increasing access to school readiness activities for children participating in license-exempt care. Structured protocols, described below, were used to guide the discussions, all of which were audio recorded and transcribed.

Participants in the discussions were not meant to represent the full range of opinion among stakeholders in each category in California. Efforts were made, however, to include participants representing each group of stakeholders from all regions of the state, representing rural, suburban, and urban communities. (See Table A1-1.)

Table A1-1: Five California Regions, by County[2]

Northern	Bay Area	Central	Southern	Los Angeles County
Butte	Alameda	Alpine	Imperial	Los Angeles
Colusa	Contra Costa	Amador	Kern	
Del Norte	Marin	Calaveras	Orange	
El Dorado	Monterey	Fresno	Riverside	
Glenn	Napa	Inyo	San Bernardino	
Humboldt	Sacramento	Kings	San Diego	
Lake	San Benito	Madera	San Luis Obispo	
Lassen	San Francisco	Mariposa	Santa Barbara	
Mendocino	San Joaquin	Merced	Ventura	
Modoc	San Mateo	Mono		
Nevada	Santa Clara	Stanislaus		
Placer	Santa Cruz	Tulare		
Plumas	Solano	Tuolumne		
Shasta	Sonoma			
Sierra				
Siskiyou				
Sutter				
Tehama				

[2] This description of regions by counties is similar to that of the California First 5 Association, with one exception: we have combined their two northern regions (http://www.f5ac.org/committeelist.asp).

Participant Recruitment and Participation

Parents and License-Exempt Providers

Staff from the Network assisted with recruitment for the parent discussions by sending emails to coordinators of Parent Voices chapters throughout the state, informing them of the project.[3] Shortly afterwards, CSCCE sent a follow-up email about the discussions to these coordinators. This approach yielded one parent discussion in San Francisco.

Additionally, the Network recruited the representatives of eight R&R agencies who had participated in a group discussion on October 24, 2012 (see description below). These representatives were asked to schedule 90-minute parent and/or provider discussions in their communities. Seven counties expressed interest in hosting a parent and/or provider discussion. Parent and provider discussions were scheduled in San Bernardino, San Diego, and Shasta Counties, but were cancelled due to lack of participants. The five remaining counties generated a total of seven group discussions (two parent groups, three provider groups, and one combined parent and provider group), completed between December 10, 2012 and February 22, 2013. In total, 21 parents and 27 providers participated in the discussion groups, representing Butte, Fresno, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Solano, and Tulare Counties. (See Table A1-2.)

The combined parent and provider discussion took place in Butte County; it was included on the agenda of a regularly scheduled workshop. The San Francisco parent discussion also took place during a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The remaining parent discussions took place in Fresno and Los Angeles Counties. The provider discussions were held in Los Angeles, Solano, and Tulare Counties.

Extensive efforts were made by staff in these counties to increase participation, including flyers distributed at subsidy certification appointments, emails, mailings, and repeated phone calls. Specific details about the recruitment process for the individual parent and provider discussions can be found in Appendix 2.

Table A1-2: Parent and Provider Participation in Discussions, by Region of the State

Number and type of discussions, by region	Number of parent participants, by region	Number of provider participants, by region	Total number of parent and provider participants, by region
Northern (N=1 - combined parent/provider)	3	3	6
Bay Area N=2 - 1 parent, 1 provider	9 9	11	20
Central N=2 - 1 parent, 1 provider	6	8	14
Southern, excluding Los Angeles County N=0	0	0	0
Los Angeles County N=2 - 1 parent, 1 provider	3	5	8
Statewide N=7 discussions , 4 regions	21	27	48

[3] Parent Voices (www.parentvoices.org), a project of the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, has 18 local chapters in 17 California counties working to improve access to child care for all families.

R&R Staff

Participants for the resource and referral staff discussions were recruited by Network staff, who scheduled a 90-minute session at the Network's annual conference in Sacramento on October 24, 2012. Network staff identified staff and trainers from each of the five regions who either had direct contact with license-exempt providers and parents using license-exempt care, and/or held a more policy-related or managerial role in their respective agencies.

The R&R staff group discussion included nine participants, representing eight agencies in 10 counties. Two additional discussions with individuals R&R staff members were completed. The first was an in-person discussion with a case manager from Central Valley Children's Services in Fresno County, who was unable to attend the R&R discussion at the annual conference. The conversation took place in-person and onsite on December 12, 2012.

The second additional discussion was a conference call on February 19, 2013 with a manager and specialist from the Shasta County Office of Education. The Shasta County parent and provider discussions were canceled due to lack of participants, but staff remained eager to participate in the project. Shasta County Office of Education staff offered an important perspective, as their agency administers both contracted- and voucher-based subsidized programs, while many of the R&R agencies manage voucher programs only. Table A1-3 describes the counties, agencies, and staff roles represented in the R&R discussions, and Table A1-4 describes R&R staff participation by region of the state.

Table A1-3: Counties, Agencies and Staff Roles of Participants in the R&R Discussion Groups

County	Region	Agency	Staff role
Alpine	Central	Choices for Children	R&R Coordinator
Amador	Central	The Resource Connection	R&R Supervisor
Butte	Northern	Valley Oak Children Services	Deputy Director
Calaveras	Central	The Resource Connection	R&R Supervisor
El Dorado	Northern	Choices for Children	R&R Coordinator
Fresno	Central	Central Valley Children's Services Network	Case Manager
Los Angeles	Los Angeles County	Crystal Stairs, Inc.	R&R Supervisor
Merced	Central	Merced County Office of Education	R&R Supervisor
Sacramento	Bay Area	Child Action, Inc.	R&R Supervisor and LPC Coordinator
San Bernardino	Southern	San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Kids N Care	Manager
Shasta County	Northern	Shasta County Office of Education	Manager and Specialist – Early Childhood Services
Solano	Bay Area	R&R Trainer	Solano Family and Children Services

Table A1-4: Number of Participants in R&R Discussion, by Region

Northern	2	2	4
Bay Area	3	0	3
Central	2	1	3
Southern	1	0	1
Los Angeles	1	0	1
Statewide	9	3	12

AP Staff

Staff from two AP agencies were asked to recruit staff from AP organizations in their geographic areas who worked closely with license-exempt providers and with families using license-exempt care.

Staff from the Contra Costa Child Care Council scheduled a discussion, and recruited AP staff from the greater Bay Area counties. This discussion occurred on January 22, 2013, and included nine AP staff from five agencies, representing Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties.

The second discussion, held on February 13, 2013, was organized by staff from the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, and included participants from numerous agencies in Los Angeles County. Alliance members from nine agencies participated. Table A1-5 describes the counties, agencies, and staff roles represented in the AP discussions.

Table A1-5: Counties, Agencies, and Staff Roles of Participants in the AP Discussion Groups

County	Agency	Staff Roles
Alameda	Bananas Inc.	Subsidy Manager AP Counselor
Alameda	Child Care Links	Executive Director
Contra Costa	Contra Costa Child Care Council	Quality Assurance Manager Supervisor
Los Angeles	Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles	Program Manager
Los Angeles	International Institute of Los Angeles	Assistant Director
Los Angeles	Pathways	Program Director
Los Angeles	Crystal Stairs	Manager
Los Angeles	Options	Supervisor
Los Angeles	Mexican American Opportunity Foundation	Manager
Los Angeles	Connections for Children	Manager
Los Angeles	Child Care Resource Center	Subsidy Training Manager
Los Angeles	Pomona Unified School District Child Development	Child Development Manager
Sacramento	Child Action, Inc.	Two managers
Yolo	Child Care Links	Executive Director

School Readiness and Child Development Program Providers

CSCCE attempted discussion with school readiness programs that either served or could be adapted to serve licensed-exempt providers. These included:

- programs working directly with license-exempt providers to help them incorporate school-readiness activities into the care they provide for preschool-age children;
- programs working with parents of preschool-age children being cared for in license-exempt settings, to help them better understand and meet the school readiness needs of their children; and
- programs working with other types of child care providers or broader groups of parents on issues related to school readiness, and that could be modified or used as a model to engage license-exempt providers or children cared for in license-exempt settings.

The California First 5 Association, asked by CSCCE to help identify child development and school readiness programs currently receiving funding from a local First 5 agency, provided a list of approximately 280 such programs. CSCCE researchers reviewed program descriptions, categorized the programs by location in the state and by type of program (e.g., home visits, parent participation), and identified six potential programs for a discussion, sending them information about this project. Three of the six programs expressed interest and participated in a discussion by conference call.[4] Two additional such discussions were held with child development and school readiness programs identified by colleagues. The five conference calls were completed between March 6 and April 3, 2013. The following is a description of each program and the representative who participated in the call.

- National Director for Early Childhood Education-U.S. Programs, Save the Children; *Early Steps to School Success*. This program provides a continuum of services from birth to Kindergarten, including home visits, individualized transition-to-school plans, book exchanges, and opportunities for children to participate in group settings.
- Administrator of Child Development Programs and Services, Butte County Office of Education; *Sparkle*. This is an early literacy enhancement program that also addresses the educational environment, and includes family engagement activities.
- Resource and Referral Department Supervisor, Options, Child Care & Human Services Agency, Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles; *Gateway to Early Educators*. This program provides training opportunities for licensed and license-exempt providers in the greater Los Angeles area.
- Principal at Sheridan Elementary School, Western Placer Unified School District; *Parent Participation Preschool.* This half-day program for children includes a requirement for parents to volunteer for three hours a week and attend a weekly workshop.
- Executive Director, Connections for Children; *Family Time*. This program provides once-a-week preschool activities at neighborhood parks. Parents and providers observe the children at play, and engage in discussion with Connections for Children staff about learning activities.

Discussion Protocols

The protocols for all discussions included open-ended questions. Before the discussion groups were held, the U.C. Berkeley Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects determined that the project did not constitute Human Subjects Research as described in federal regulations. Notification of exemption was received on July 24, 2012.

[4] A similar recruitment process was used with the California Head Start Association and the California Child Development Administrators Association (CCDAA). The Executive Directors of both agencies sent an email to their members describing the purpose of the project, and instructed them to contact CSCCE staff directly if they were interested in participating or learning more about the project. About 160 Head Start directors received the email. The number of administrators contacted via the CCDAA list was unavailable. Although a handful of programs expressed interest in participating, further clarification about the types of programs sought narrowed down the pool of potential participants. This outreach did not generate any opportunities for discussions with school readiness and child development program providers.

The questions in the protocol varied, depending on the participants in a given discussion, but similar topics were covered in all discussions.

Parents were asked to discuss:

- their children's ages, whether their care was full- or part-time, and whether the provider was a relative;
- their understanding of the expression "ready for school," and whether they discussed children's learning with their provider;
- the types of activities that they or their provider did to help children become ready for school, such as accessing community services (e.g., story time at the library);
- information and support that might encourage providers to access community school readiness resources;
- examples of early school readiness programs operating in other communities (e.g.,. drop-in "play and learn" activities in parks, mobile programs, and home visiting services that support providers in doing school readiness activities with children) that they would like to have available for their children, and the resources necessary to encourage their providers to access them;
- information they had received about school readiness when they initially signed up for the child care voucher or subsidy and at recertification, and what would be helpful in these situations; and
- other issues they would like to discuss.

Providers were asked to discuss:

- the ages of children in their care, whether they provided full- or part-time care, and whether they were related to the children in their care;
- their understanding of the expression "ready for school," and whether they discussed children's learning with parents, and if so, the types of things they discussed;
- the types of activities they did at home or in the community to help children become ready for school;
- their awareness of school readiness opportunities in the community, such as story time at the library, and if they use them;
- obstacles and challenges that made it difficult to access community resources, and the information and support that might facilitate and increase usage;
- examples of school readiness opportunities in other communities (e.g., drop-in "play and learn" activities in parks, mobile programs, and home visiting services that support providers in doing school readiness activities with children), whether they would be interested in them, and the support they would need to access them;
- information they had received about school readiness when they initially became certified to offer care through the child care voucher or subsidy program and at recertification, what would be helpful in these situations, and what information and support they would like to receive from the subsidy agency; and
- other issues they would like to discuss.

R&R staff were asked to discuss:

- the reasons why parents in their communities chose license-exempt care;
- how they raised the issue of school readiness with families being served by their agencies, particularly those that select license-exempt care;
- how they raised the issue of school readiness with license-exempt providers, and what resources they offered providers to learn more about what they can do to promote school readiness for the children in their care;
- the barriers they encountered in linking children in license-exempt settings with school readiness opportunities, and whether their agencies had had any success in overcoming them; and
- what policies and/or resources would allow them to better help parents and license-exempt providers to access school readiness opportunities.

AP staff were asked to discuss:

- the reasons why parents in their communities chose license-exempt care;
- the process for enrolling parents to the subsidy program, and how this process differed depending on whether the parent had or had not already selected a provider;

- whether and how they raised the issue of school readiness with families who enroll in the subsidy program, especially families that have selected license-exempt care;
- the barriers they encountered in linking children in license-exempt settings with school readiness opportunities, and whether their agencies had had any success in overcoming them;
- what policies and/or resources would allow them to better help parents and license-exempt providers to access school readiness opportunities; and
- whether they considered access to school readiness opportunities for children in license-exempt care an appropriate state priority, and how they viewed their role as an agency in this endeavor.

School readiness and child development program providers were asked to discuss:

- their programs, including population served, program goals, tenure of operation, funding sources, and participant recruitment process;
- the challenges and successes they experienced in working with the population served;
- their awareness of the needs of children using license-exempt care in their community;
- how their agency or program worked with children in license-exempt care, if it did, and why they focused their program on this population;
- whether and how the program could be modified to include license-exempt providers as participants, and the extent to which they perceived a need to do so in their community; and
- possible barriers in using their program model for license-exempt provider participation, and what their agency would need in order to make the necessary modifications.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed in two steps. The first step was to inductively code all open-ended questions, in order to establish recurring categories that captured the meanings expressed by participants. Study team members individually read and coded transcriptions for one of each of the five groups of stakeholders—parents using license-exempt care, license-exempt providers, R&R staff, AP staff, and school readiness and child development providers—then met to compare codes and settle disagreements by consensus. One team member then coded additional transcriptions. Once these categories became saturated (Straus & Corbin, 1998), we finalized the coding scheme for each question. These codes were the basis for analyses of open-ended interview questions.

The second step involved the process of categorical aggregation described by Stake (1995). Portions of each transcript were sorted according to their assigned codes (see step 1), and were read to get a sense of the meanings given to each code. Research staff then wrote a summary of the conceptual meaning behind the code, as reflected by responses provided by the discussion participants for each stakeholder type. This report provides a summary of these more detailed responses.

Appendix 2: County and Agency Descriptions, and Discussion Recruitment Process and Participants

Butte County

Situated in California's agricultural heartland, Butte County is 60 miles north of Sacramento, bordered on the west by the Sacramento River and on the east by the Sierra Nevada. The county's major industries include agribusiness, manufacturing, informational technology, and creative industries (http://butte-edc.com/).

In 2010, Butte County's population was 220,000, averaging 134.4 persons per square mile (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states). Population estimates for 2011 describe the county as 74.5 percent White, non-Hispanic; 14.7 percent Hispanic (Hispanics may be of any race, so are also included in applicable race categories); 4.4 percent Asian; 4.2 percent of two or more races; 2.3 percent American Indian; 1.8 percent Black; and 0.3 percent Pacific Islander. As of 2011, 85.7 percent of the county population spoke English at home, 8.9 percent Spanish, and 3.2 percent an Asian or Pacific Island language (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

Demographic measures concerning economic wellbeing suggest the breadth of need for early care and education and subsidized child care services for low-income families in Butte County:

- Median household income in 2011 was $42,971 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2011, 19.8 percent of residents had incomes below the poverty level (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2010, 26.0 percent of children 0-5 years of age lived in poverty (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2010, 32,386 children under the age of 12 resided in the county, 61 percent of whom had parents in the labor force (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- Of children under age 12, 14,833 were under age six (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2011, the educational attainment of females over the age of 18 in Butte County was as follows: 9.7 percent had completed less than high school; 23.8 percent had completed high school or the equivalent; 45.1 percent had completed some college or an associate degree, and 21.4 percent had completed a bachelor's degree or higher (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

The following are summary statistics concerning child care supply and demand in Butte County as of 2010 (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011):

- 5,170 licensed child care slots were available: 68.1 percent in child care centers, and 31.8 percent in family child care homes.
- Child care slots were available for only 26 percent of children ages 0-12 with working parents.
- 1,449 children were on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy.
- Major reasons for families seeking child care included employment (76 percent), parent in school or training (11 percent), and parent seeking employment (9 percent).
- 12 percent of child care requests were for care during non-traditional hours including evenings, weekends, or overnight care.

Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The CDE provided information about Butte County children whose parents received vouchers for subsidized care through CalWORKs Stage 2 and Stage 3, and/or the AP program—both the overall number of children, and the number of three- and four-year-olds.

According to the CDSS, 53 percent of children statewide whose parents receive CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidies are in license-exempt care (CW 115 - Child Care Monthly Report - CalWORKs Families, March 2013). While these data about Stage 1 usage are not disaggregated by children's age, it is reasonable to assume that additional three- and four-year-olds in Butte County are covered by Stage 1 vouchers, and some are likely to be in license-exempt settings.

Valley Oak Children's Services: Subsidy Enrollment Process, Recruitment Process, and Discussion Participants

The parent and provider discussion was hosted by Valley Oaks Children's Services (VOCS), a private nonprofit agency serving Butte County. VOCS's primary function is to "support, empower, and advocate for children, families, and child care providers through education, resources, and the promotion of quality child care services" (http://www.valleyoakchildren.org/).

Parents and providers eligible for the CalWORKs child care subsidy program in Butte County jointly attend a 1.5-hour Caregiver Workshop. During the workshop, they receive and go over a Caregiver Handbook that includes information addressing safety, health, child development, challenges, parents and providers as teachers, and building partnerships. At the end of the workshop, participants are assisted in completing their paperwork for enrollment in the subsidy program. Workshops are scheduled twice a month.

VOCS invited us to a regularly scheduled Caregiver Workshop on January 18, 2013. Parents and providers were informed that the Access to Quality Early Learning program discussion would be taking place during the first 30 to 45 minutes of the workshop.

We spoke to three pairs of parents and license-exempt providers—a total of six people—who were at VOCS to sign up for the subsidy program for the first time. Only one provider cared for children who were related to him; specifically, his two nephews. The other two providers cared for one or two children. The five children's ages ranged from one year to 11 years old, with two of the children between the ages of three and five.

Table A2-1: Number of Children in Subsidized Child Care Programs in Butte County

Subsidized Child Care Program (April 2012)	Children of All Age Groups	Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
CalWORKs Stage 2	236	99
CalWORKs Stage 3	112	45
Alternative Payment Program	148	50
TOTAL	496	194

Fresno County

At over 6,000 square miles, Fresno is the sixth largest county in California. With the Coast Range foothills to the west, the Sierra Nevada to the east and the valley floor between, Fresno County is one of the state's most physically distinctive regions, and one of the most productive agricultural counties in the country. The county is also home to food processing, manufacturing, distribution and warehousing, call center operation and retail businesses (http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/CountyPage.aspx?id=19947).

In 2010, Fresno County's population was 930,450, averaging 156.2 persons per square mile (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states). Population estimates for 2011 describe the county as 50.9 percent Hispanic (Hispanics may be of any race, so are also included in applicable race categories); 32.4 percent White, non-Hispanic; 10.3 percent Asian; 5.9 percent Black; 3.0 percent American Indian; 2.9 percent of two or more races; and 0.3 percent Pacific Islander. As of 2011, 57.1 percent of the county population spoke English at home, 32.7 percent Spanish, and 6.2 percent an Asian or Pacific Island language (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

Demographic measures concerning economic well-being suggest the breadth of need for early care and education and subsidized child care services for low-income families in Fresno County:

- Median household income in 2011 was $46,903 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2011, 23.4 percent of residents had incomes below the poverty level (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2010, 42.0 percent of children 0-5 years of age lived in poverty (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2010, 199,057 children under the age of 12 resided in the county, 63 percent of whom had parents in the labor force (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- Of children under age 12, 94,404 were under age six (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2011, the educational attainment of females over the age of 18 in Fresno County was as follows: 24.0 percent had completed less than high school; 23.9 percent had completed high school or the equivalent; 35.2 percent had completed some college or an associate degree, and 16.9 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

The following are summary statistics concerning child care supply and demand in Fresno County as of 2010 (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011):

- 26,385 licensed child care slots were available in Fresno County, 33.1 percent in family child care homes, and 66.9 percent in child care centers.
- Child care slots were available for only 21 percent of children ages 0-12 with working parents.
- 2,909 children were on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy.
- Major reasons for families seeking child care included employment (78 percent), parent seeking employment (10 percent), and parent in school or training (7 percent).
- Four percent of child care requests were for care during non-traditional hours, including evenings, weekends, or overnight care.

Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The CDE provided information about Fresno County children whose parents received vouchers for subsidized care through CalWORKs Stage 2 and Stage 3, and/or the AP program—both the overall number of children, and the number of three- and four-year-olds.

According to the CDSS, 53 percent of children statewide whose parents receive CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidies are in license-exempt care (CW 115 - Child Care Monthly Report - CalWORKs Families, March 2013). While these data about Stage 1 usage are not disaggregated by children's age, it is reasonable to assume that additional three- and four-year-olds in Fresno County are covered by Stage 1 vouchers, and some are likely to be in license-exempt settings.

Table A2-2: Number of Children in Subsidized Child Care Programs in Fresno County

Subsidized Child Care Program (April 2012)	Children of All Age Groups	Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
CalWORKs Stage 2	2,049	729
CalWORKs Stage 3	1,472	425
Alternative Payment Program	2,214	694
TOTAL	5,735	1,848

Central Valley Children's Services Network: Subsidy Enrollment Process, Recruitment Process, and Discussion Participants

The discussion was hosted by Central Valley Children's Services Network (CSN). The organization promotes high-quality care for children in Fresno County by providing parents, guardians, and child care providers with support and education; links to community resources; and tools to empower caregivers to advocate for children (http://www.cvcsn.org/).

Parents can apply for child care services either in person or by mail. Families are placed on a waiting list once the required paperwork is received by the agency. If funding is available, families that qualify are selected, and an orientation appointment is scheduled to review their information and status, and to complete additional paperwork. Depending on the type of provider the family has chosen, the provider may be required to come in at the same time. The orientation is done one-on-one, at which point clients are educated about the different child care options available (email communication dated 3/29/13).

CSN scheduled a one-hour discussion specifically for the Access to Quality Early Learning project. Parents were informed of the discussion through flyers given at subsidy certification appointments, emails, and phone calls. CSN offered parents an incentive for their participation, in addition to light refreshments.

Over 100 parents who received subsidies through the agency and had an established rapport with CSN staff were told about the discussion in person, by phone, or by email. Outreach was focused on parents, since very few license-exempt providers historically had attended non-mandatory events. Staff made reminder calls the day of the discussion, December 11, 2012, to the 16 parents who had RSVP'd; of these, only six attended. When asked about possible reasons why people did not attend or were not interested in attending, the discussion organizer stated that they were likely to be "busy at school or working odd hours."

We spoke to six Fresno County parents currently using license-exempt child care, all of whom received subsidies. None of the providers receiving subsidies were related to the children in their care. Among the six parents were 19 children under the age of 18: nine between birth and age five, and six between three and five.

Los Angeles County

Approximately 27 percent of California's residents live in Los Angeles County, making it the highest-populated county in the nation. It is extremely diverse, "with more than 140 cultures and as many as 224 languages." With over 244,000 businesses, the county is also the country's largest manufacturing and international trade center (http://www.lacounty.info/wps/portal/lac).

In 2010, Los Angeles County's population was 9,818,605, averaging 2,419.6 persons per square mile (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states). Population estimates for 2011 describe the county as 48.1 percent Hispanic (Hispanics may be of any race, so are also included in applicable race categories); 27.6 percent White, non-Hispanic; 14.2 percent Asian; 9.3 percent Black; 2.8 percent of two or more races; 1.5 percent American Indian; and 0.4 percent Pacific Islander. As of 2011, 43.3 percent of the county population spoke English at home, 39.4 percent Spanish, and 10.8 percent an Asian or Pacific Island language (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

Demographic measures concerning economic well-being suggest the breadth of need for early care and education and subsidized child care services for low-income families in Los Angeles County:

- Median household income in 2011 was $56,266 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2011, 16.3 percent of residents had incomes below the poverty level (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2010, 26.0 percent of children 0-5 years of age lived in poverty (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2010, 1,677,798 children under the age of 12 resided in the county, 64 percent of whom had parents in the labor force (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- Of children under age 12, 772,756 were under age six (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2011, the educational attainment of females over the age of 18 in Los Angeles County was as follows: 22.5 percent had completed less than high school; 21.0 percent had completed high school or the equivalent; 29.9 percent had completed some college or an associate degree, and 26.6 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

The following are summary statistics concerning child care supply and demand in Los Angeles County as of 2010 (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011):

- 247,254 licensed child care slots were available in Los Angeles County, 67.6 percent in child care centers, and 32.4 percent in family child care homes.
- Child care slots were available for only 23 percent of children ages 0-12 with working parents.
- 29,562 children were on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy.
- Major reasons for families seeking child care included employment (69 percent), parent in school or training (16 percent), and other parental needs (6 percent).
- Six percent of child care requests were for care during non-traditional hours including evenings, weekends, or overnight care.

Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The CDE provided information about Los Angeles County children whose parents received vouchers for subsidized care through CalWORKs Stage 2 and Stage 3, and/or the AP program—both the overall number of children, and the number of three- and four-year-olds.

According to the CDSS, 53 percent of children statewide whose parents receive CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidies are in license-exempt care (CW 115 - Child Care Monthly Report - CalWORKs Families, March 2013). While these data about Stage 1 usage are not disaggregated by children's age, it is reasonable to assume that additional three- and four-year-olds in Los Angeles County are covered by Stage 1 vouchers, and some are likely to be in license-exempt settings.

Table A2-3: Number of Children in Subsidized Child Care Programs in Los Angeles County

Subsidized Child Care Program (April 2012)	Children of All Age Groups	Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
CalWORKs Stage 2	18,785	7,033
CalWORKs Stage 3	7,035	2,018
Alternative Payment Program	6,297	2,076
TOTAL	32,117	11,127

Crystal Stairs, Inc.: Subsidy Enrollment Process, Recruitment Process, and Discussion Participants

The discussions were hosted by Crystal Stairs, Inc., one of nine resource and referral agencies in Los Angeles County. Crystal Stairs, Inc., prides itself in helping "families to succeed, children to learn, and child care providers to be competent, confident caregivers" (http://www.crystalstairs.org/about_us/).

Parents who are eligible for subsidized child care are assigned to an enrollment specialist and sent an enrollment packet via mail. Their enrollment specialist contacts the parent to set up a required in-person interview, at which the specialist reviews child care options and collects all necessary documentation. (Parents and providers are not required to come in together.) If parents have not selected a child care provider, they are referred to the agency's resource and referral department for assistance. Subsequent meetings can be held over the phone or information is exchanged by mail (email communication dated 3/28/13).

Crystal Stairs, Inc. scheduled two one-hour discussions specifically for the Access to Quality Early Learning project. Fifty parents from the case management database, currently receiving subsidies from Crystal Stairs and using license-exempt care, along with 50 license-exempt providers who were either participating in CCIP or had an active agreement with Crystal Stairs, were initially called with information about the discussion. Interested parents and providers were mailed a flyer with additional information, and received a reminder call several days before the discussion. Crystal Stairs offered various incentives to parents and providers for their participation, and a light dinner was also provided (email communication dated 3/28/13).

Twenty parents and 27 providers RSVP'd to the event, of whom only three parents and five providers attended. When asked about possible reasons why people did not attend or were not interested in attending, the discussion organizer stated that:

- some parents and providers had an evening class or work to attend;
- some providers still had children in their care during that time;
- a few parents/providers did not have transportation; and
- some were simply not interested because it wasn't a training.

Of the three parents receiving subsidies who currently used license-exempt child care and participated in the discussion, only one parent's children (three children, all under the age of five) were cared for by a provider who was related to them. The other two parents had three to four children each. A total of 10 children were represented by these three parents; five were between birth and five, and two were between three and five.

We spoke to five license-exempt child care providers in Los Angeles County, four of whom received subsidies to provide care, and one who was in the process of getting a family child care license. Three providers cared for children who were related to them. Only one of them cared for only one child. The remaining four providers cared for multiple children, ranging from two to 20 children in a given week. The 30 children's ages varied from two months to 11 years old. Almost one-quarter of children cared for by these providers (23 percent) were between the ages of three and five; 10 were between birth and five.

The parent and provider discussions both took place on February 6, 2013.

San Francisco County

San Francisco is known worldwide for being the home of "an eclectic mix of cultures and ethnicities, art and architecture, politics and sports" (http://www.visitsfbayarea.com/). The county's key industries include high technology, fashion, film, life sciences and health care, and tourism (http://www.oewd.org/Site_Selection-Key_Industries.aspx).

In 2010, San Francisco County's population was 805,235, averaging 17,179 persons per square mile (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states). Population estimates for 2011 describe the county as 41.8 percent White, non-Hispanic; 33.9 percent Asian; 15.4 percent Hispanic (Hispanics may be of any race, so are also included in applicable race categories); 6.3 percent Black; 4.0 percent of two or more races; 0.9 percent American Indian; and 0.5 percent Pacific Islander. As of 2011, 54.7 percent of the county population spoke English at home, 26.8 percent an Asian or Pacific Island language, and 11.6 percent Spanish (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

Demographic measures concerning economic well-being suggest the breadth of need for early care and education and subsidized child care services for low-income families in San Francisco County:

- Median household income in 2011 was $72,947 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2011, 12.3 percent of residents had incomes below the poverty level (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2010, 8.0 percent of children 0-5 years of age lived in poverty (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2010, 79,210 children under the age of 12 resided in the county, 69 percent of whom had parents in the labor force (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- Of children under age 12, 41,340 were under age six (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2011, the educational attainment of females over the age of 18 in San Francisco County was as follows: 14.5 percent had completed less than high school; 13.3 percent had completed high school or the equivalent; 22.8 percent had completed some college or an associate degree, and 49.4 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

The following are summary statistics concerning child care supply and demand in San Francisco County as of 2010 (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011):

- 24,815 licensed child care slots were available in San Francisco County, 75.1 percent in child care centers, and 24.9 percent in family child care homes.
- Child care slots were available for only 45 percent of children ages 0-12 with working parents.
- 4,316 children were on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy.
- Major reasons for families seeking child care included employment (77 percent), parent seeking employment (35 percent), and parent in school or training (18 percent).
- Two percent of child care requests were for care during non-traditional hours including evenings, weekends, or overnight care.

Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The CDE provided information about San Francisco County children whose parents received vouchers for subsidized care through CalWORKs Stage 2 and Stage 3, and/or the AP program—both the overall number of children, and the number of three- and four-year-olds.

According to the CDSS, 53 percent of children statewide whose parents receive CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidies are in license-exempt care (CW 115 - Child Care Monthly Report - CalWORKs Families, March 2013). While these data about Stage 1 usage are not disaggregated by children's age, it is reasonable to assume that additional three- and four-year-olds in San Francisco County are covered by Stage 1 vouchers, and some are likely to be in license-exempt settings.

Table A2-4: Number of Children in Subsidized Child Care Programs in San Francisco County

Subsidized Child Care Program (April 2012)	Children of All Age Groups	Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
CalWORKs Stage 2	775	265
CalWORKs Stage 3	506	178
Alternative Payment Program	385	133
TOTAL	1,666	576

Parent Voices, San Francisco Chapter: Recruitment Process and Participants

The discussion took place in the offices of San Francisco Children's Council, but was hosted by the San Francisco chapter of Parent Voices. The Parent Voices chapter invited us to a regularly scheduled monthly meeting; parents were informed that the Access to Quality Early Learning discussion would take place during the meeting's second half. The parent discussion took place on February 22, 2013, and lasted approximately one hour. The nine participants—four parents, four grandparents, and one soon-to-be parent—were all members of Parent Voices, and either:

- were currently receiving subsidies for the care of their children (two parents);
- had previously received such subsidies (two parents);
- anticipated receiving subsidized child care when their child was born (one parent); or
- were presently license-exempt providers receiving payments through the subsidy system to care for their grandchildren (four grandparents).

A total of 13 children were represented by these five parents and four grandparents; nine were between birth and age five, and five were between the ages of three and five.

Solano County

Situated midway between San Francisco and Sacramento, Solano County is home to farmlands, waterfronts, and rolling hillsides. Solano County limits residential and commercial development outside of cities, preserving approximately 80 percent for open space or agricultural use. The county has a thriving agricultural economy, and is home to biotechnology and other growth industries (http://www.co.solano.ca.us/about/default.asp).

In 2010, Solano County's population was 413,344, averaging 503 persons per square mile (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states). Population estimates for 2011 describe the county as 40.6 percent White, non-Hispanic; 24.6 percent Hispanic (Hispanics may be of any race, so are also included in applicable race categories); 15.2 percent Asian; 15.2 percent Black; 6.5 percent of two or more races; 1.2 percent American Indian; and 1.0 percent Pacific Islander. As of 2011, 70.6 percent of the county population spoke English at home, 16.1 percent Spanish, and 9.7 percent an Asian or Pacific Island language (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

Demographic measures concerning economic well-being suggest the breadth of need for early care and education and subsidized child care services for low-income families in Solano County:

- Median household income in 2011 was $69,914 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2011, 10.8 percent of residents had incomes below the poverty level (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2010, 29.0 percent of children 0-5 years of age lived in poverty (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2010, 71,158 children under the age of 12 resided in the county, 70 percent of whom had parents in the labor force (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- Of children under age 12, 32,236 were under age six (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2011, the educational attainment of females over the age of 18 in Solano County was as follows: 11.7 percent had completed less than high school; 22.6 percent had completed high school or the equivalent; 41.3 percent had completed some college or an associate degree, and 24.4 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

The following are summary statistics concerning child care supply and demand in Solano County as of 2010 (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011):

- 11,034 licensed child care slots were available in Solano County, 53.9 percent in family child care homes, and 46.1 percent in child care centers.
- Child care slots were available for only 22 percent of children ages 0-12 with working parents.
- 2,920 children were on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy.

- Major reasons for families seeking child care included employment (68 percent), parent seeking employment (20 percent), and parent in school or training (9 percent).
- 20 percent of child care requests were for care during non-traditional hours including evenings, weekends, or overnight care.

Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The CDE provided information about Solano County children whose parents received vouchers for subsidized care through CalWORKs Stage 2 and Stage 3, and/or the AP program both the overall number of children, and the number of three- and four-year-olds.

According to the CDSS, 53 percent of children statewide whose parents receive CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidies are in license-exempt care (CW 115 - Child Care Monthly Report - CalWORKs Families, March 2013). While these data about Stage 1 usage are not disaggregated by children's age, it is reasonable to assume that additional three- and four-year-olds in Solano County are covered by Stage 1 vouchers, and some are likely to be in license-exempt settings.

Solano Family and Children's Services: Subsidy Enrollment Process, Recruitment Process, and Discussion Participants

The discussion was hosted by Solano Family and Children's Services (SFCS), an organization "dedicated to enriching children's lives through support and services to families and child care providers by offering access to a variety of child care resources" (http://www.solanofamily.org/).

SFCS conducts CalWORKs Stage 1 parent interviews and orientations over the phone and by mail. If the parent has already selected a provider, an Intake Provider Services Specialist (PSS) starts the process to determine the provider's eligibility. Parents who do not have a provider are referred to the resource and referral department for a list of providers.

CalWORKs Stage 2, Stage 3, and AP families must apply for services in person, usually within 30 days of being transferred from Stage 1 or Stage 2, not to exceed six months. Thereafter, families in these programs are re-certified face-to-face at least once every 11 months.

Parents and providers have different specialists handling their cases. Part of the provider's eligibility is to attend an orientation prior to receiving Child Care Attendance Forms (CCAFs), which in turn generate the provider's reimbursement. Licensed providers are given three months to attend after care has started.

SFCS scheduled a 2.5-hour, "Family, Friend, and Neighbor: Access to Quality Child Care" evening workshop. Managers of the USDA Food Program, AP Program, and R&R Program were informed of the training and asked to provide the information to their clients. In addition, flyers were emailed to all agency staff, were available in the main office, were distributed to license-exempt providers who attended one-on-one appointments, were attached to the monthly Food Program newsletter, and were added to the agency website. Approximately 450 providers received the information, of whom about 300 where called.

We spoke to 10 license-exempt child care providers, all of whom received subsidies to provide care, in a discussion on December 10, 2012. When asked about possible reasons why people did not attend or were not interested in attending, the discussion organizer, in an email communication dated 1/30/13, stated that:

Table A2-5: Number of Children in Subsidized Child Care Programs in Solano County

Subsidized Child Care Program (April 2012)	Children of All Age Groups	Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
CalWORKs Stage 2	613	229
CalWORKs Stage 3	269	84
Alternative Payment Program	161	60
TOTAL	1,043	373

- many were interested, but reported having last-minute conflicts (e.g., the December holiday season was possibly not the best time of year to host the event);
- since the agency's training program project had ended, it had lost some connections with providers and had to "start from scratch" to build relationships; and
- some people lacked transportation, or had other constraints (e.g., child care was not provided for the event).

Only three providers cared for children who were related to them; i.e., their grandchildren or great-grandchildren. Four cared for only one child, and the remaining six providers cared for multiple children, ranging from one to seven children in a given week. The children's ages varied from nine months to 12 years old. One provider concentrated her care on children with special needs, and had an 18-year-old in her care. Three of the children cared for by these providers were between the ages of three and five.

Tulare County

Situated in the Central Valley, with the Sierra Nevada to the east and a fertile valley to the west, Tulare County has become the second-largest producer of agricultural commodities in the country. Packing and shipping operations, as well as manufacturing plants, comprise a substantial portion of the economic landscape (http://www.tularecounty.ca.gov/county/index.cfm/about/).

In 2010, Tulare County's population was 442,179, averaging 91.7 persons per square mile (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states). Population estimates for 2011 describe the county as 61.3 percent Hispanic (Hispanics may be of any race, so are also included in applicable race categories); 32.0 percent White, non-Hispanic; 3.9 percent Asian; 2.8 percent American Indian; 2.4 percent of two or more races; 2.2 percent Black; and 0.2 percent Pacific Islander. As of 2011, 52.5 percent of the county population spoke English at home, 43.2 percent Spanish, and 2.6 percent an Asian or Pacific Island language (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

Demographic measures concerning economic well-being suggest the breadth of need for early care and education and subsidized child care services for low-income families in Tulare County:

- Median household income in 2011 was $43,550 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2011, 23.8 percent of residents had incomes below the poverty level (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states).
- In 2010, 36.0 percent of children 0-5 years of age lived in poverty (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2010, 104,291 children under the age of 12 resided in the county, 64.3 percent of whom had parents in the labor force (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- Of children under age 12, 49,293 were under age six (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011).
- In 2011, the educational attainment of females over the age of 18 in Tulare County was as follows: 26.9 percent had completed less than high school; 24.5 percent had completed high school or the equivalent; 36.4 percent had completed some college or an associate degree, and 12.2 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (http://factfinder2.census.gov).

The following are summary statistics concerning child care supply and demand in Tulare County as of 2010 (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011):

- 13,472 licensed child care slots were available in Tulare County, 50.4 percent in family child care homes, and 49.6 percent in child care centers.
- Child care slots were available for only 20 percent of children ages 0-12 with working parents.
- 8,238 children were on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy.
- Major reasons for families seeking child care included employment (80 percent), parent in school or training (10 percent), and enrichment and/or development (7 percent).
- 14 percent of child care requests were for care during non-traditional hours including evenings, weekends, or overnight care.

Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies

The CDE provided information about Tulare County children whose parents received vouchers for subsidized care through CalWORKs Stage 2 and Stage 3, and/or the AP program—both the overall number of children, and the number of three- and four-year-olds.

According to the CDSS, 53 percent of children statewide whose parents receive CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidies are in license-exempt care (CW 115 - Child Care Monthly Report - CalWORKs Families, March 2013). While these data about Stage 1 usage are not disaggregated by children's age, it is reasonable to assume that additional three- and four-year-olds in Tulare County are covered by Stage 1 vouchers, and some are likely to be in license-exempt settings.

Tulare County Office of Education–Connections for Quality Care Resource and Referral Services: Subsidy Enrollment Process, Recruitment Process and Discussion Participants

The discussion was hosted by the Tulare County Office of Education–Connections for Quality Care Resource and Referral Services, which offers child care resource services to all families and child care providers in the county, in addition to administering state and federal subsidized payment programs to help provide child care for low-income families (http://www.tcoe.org/RandR/index.shtm).

An in-person appointment is made with the parent at the agency office or a place of convenience to both parties, to inform parents of program policies and their responsibilities, and for the parent to sign a Parent Agreement. Parents are given counsel in selecting a child care provider, but in many instances, they have already selected one. When a license-exempt provider is being used, the meeting can take place at the home of the provider.

The agency scheduled an evening activity for providers and the children in their care. Flyers were mailed to approximately 100 license-exempt providers and parents from the AP. Additional flyers were made available to providers when they dropped off their attendance forms. Providers were informed that the Access to Quality Early Learning discussion would take place during the time of the activity. Agency staff stayed with the children and led the activity, while providers were directed to a separate room to participate in the discussion. Refreshments were provided for all discussion participants and children. When the discussion organizer was asked why more providers had not attended, she cited probable lack of interest in the topic, as well as bad weather (email communication dated 4/1/13).

We spoke to seven license-exempt child care providers, all of whom received subsidies to provide care, in a discussion held on December 12, 2012. All providers cared for children who were related to them, specifically their own children, grandchildren, nieces, or nephews. All but one cared for multiple children, ranging from one to nine children in a given week. The children's ages varied from five months to nine years old, with 17.6 percent of the children between the ages of three and five

Table A2-6: Number of Children in Subsidized Child Care Programs in Tulare County

Subsidized Child Care Program (April 2012)	Children of All Age Groups	Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
CalWORKs Stage 2	1,215	462
CalWORKs Stage 3	352	107
Alternative Payment Program	793	178
TOTAL	2,360	747

References

All counties

http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/research/res/pdf/CW115/2013/CW115Mar13.pdf

Butte County

http://butte-edc.com/

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states

http://factfinder2.census.gov

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011 (2011 portfolio)

Child data received from CCCR&RN

http://www.valleyoakchildren.org/

Fresno County

http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/CountyPage aspx?id=19947

http://factfinder2.census.gov

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011 (2011 portfolio)

Child data received from CCCR&RN

http://www.cvcsn.org/

Email communication dated 3/29/13

Los Angeles County

http://www.lacounty.info/wps/portal/lac

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states

http://factfinder2.census.gov

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011 (2011 portfolio)

Child data received from CCCR&RN

http://www.crystalstairs.org/about_us/

Email communication dated 3/28/13

San Francisco County

http://www.visitsfbayarea.com/

http://www.oewd.org/Site_Selection-Key_Industries.aspx

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states

http://factfinder2.census.gov

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011 (2011 portfolio)

Child data from CCCR&RN

http://www.parentvoices.org/about-us.html

Email communication dated 3/28/13

Solano County

http://www.co.solano.ca.us/about/default.asp

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states

http://factfinder2.census.gov

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011 (2011 portfolio)

Child data from CCCR&RN

http://www.solanofamily.org/

Email communication dated 1/30/13 and 3/22/13

Tulare County

http://www.tularecounty.ca.gov/county/index.cfmabout/

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states

http://factfinder2.census.gov

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2011 (2011 portfolio)

Child data from CCCR&RN

http://www.tcoe.org/RandR/index.shtm

Email communication dated 2/20/13 and 4/1/13