

FIRST THINGS FIRST
Quality and Access: Support for Family, Friend and Neighbor Care
Standards of Practice

National estimates suggest that as many as 60 percent of all children need child care due to parent's employment and of these, as many as 50 percent of children ages 5 and under are cared for in home-based settings. Home-based care providers largely do not receive regular access to information, education, or training on children's health, safety and child development. In Arizona, home-based child care providers can legally care for 4 children for pay, with a maximum limit of 6 children under the age of 12, including their own. For these homes, there is no licensing or regulatory requirement; therefore, there is no mechanism or support system in place to assist these providers in creating high-quality environments for the children for whom they provide care. Child care provided by family, friend, and neighbor caregivers – home-based child care that is, for the most part, legally exempt from regulation—therefore, is of growing concern to parents and policymakers.

Nationally, in-home care is the most common type of child care for children under the age of 5 whose parents work (Maher & Joesch, 2005; Snyder, Dore, & Adelman, 2005). Nearly half of all children spend their days – and sometimes their nights – in these types of settings (Boushey & Wright, 2004). Increased availability of information, relevant trainings, and supports for providers who care for children in their homes has been identified by several Regional Councils as a strategy to both improve the quality of care being provided, and increase the over-all professional development of these care providers. Additionally, the strategies include expanding existing services of federal, state, tribal, and community agencies to provide research-based resources, seminars and hands-on training to improve basic parenting/care giving skills, knowledge and understanding.

Evidence suggests that training provided to home-based family, friend, and neighbor caregivers can result in positive outcomes for children. For example, report findings from a national study involving Arizona community partners who provided training and support to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, showed that 81 percent of providers indicated making specific changes in the care provided to the children as a result of their involvement in the program. The impact was noted in the following areas: 1) Safety in the home environment, particularly fire safety; 2) Establishing and maintaining a daily schedule for the children; 3) Encouraging providers to utilize the resources of their local library; 4) Developing a written formalized child care services agreement with parents and 5) Increased knowledge regarding the Child and Adult Food Program. Participants in this program indicated interest in becoming better providers by providing a higher level of care to the children and families they serve. (*ERIC Education Resource Information Center, ED496388, Strategies for Supporting Quality in Kith and Kin Child Care: Findings from the Early Head Start Enhanced Home Visiting Pilot Evaluation. Final Report, <http://eric.ed.gov>*)

Research has also been conducted relative to promoting the health and safety of children by increasing the knowledge base of families. In several studies regarding toddler obesity,

motor vehicle restraint usage, and increasing father participation in the child-raising process, group sessions, seminars and trainings have been shown to be effective service delivery methods.

In recent years, the question of what types of child care programs best prepare children for kindergarten has emerged as a dominant issue in the early care and education public policy agenda. This has been propelled to the forefront due to the national focus on children's school achievement and the widespread creation of state-funded prekindergarten programs for three and four year old children. Growing awareness of the large number of children in unregulated family, friend and neighbor care settings and concerns about school readiness have generated increasing interest in efforts to support these caregivers and their need for professional development. (Research to Policy Connections No. 5, Assessing Initiatives for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care, March 2007).

Those who operate successful child care programs must meet the following requirements:

- Focus on building collaborative partnerships with existing programs and agencies in order to build upon current revenue and funding sources.
- Enhance and expand current training opportunities to include FFN providers.
- Develop evaluative and monitoring processes that are collaborative, ongoing and that include input from providers, program administrators and staff, families, and community members.
- Include pre and post evaluative activities that involve self-assessment by home-based providers, and opportunities for feedback conversations with their trainer/instructor.
- Identify outreach, engagement and retention practices for home-based care providers.
- Demonstrate program effectiveness by meeting and addressing First Things First performance measures, outcomes and key measures.
- Demonstrate evidence that the Grantee can retain high quality staff whose tenure ensures program integrity and consistency in home-based care provider relationships.

While each First Things First funded community-based professional development program may be uniquely designed, they all have a valuable role to play in meeting the complex needs of early care and home based care providers, families, and communities across the State of Arizona. First Things First focuses on programs and services that provide children with the best opportunities for school and life success.

First Things First funded programs may supplement but not supplant other state expenditures on, and federal monies received for early childhood development and health programs. Funding decisions are based upon a robust process of review to ensure programs are supported by research, value the family and use approaches considered to be best practice.

Qualifications for Trainers/Instructors:

- Instructors should be knowledgeable about and possess experience in working with home care providers, adult learners and young children birth to age five.
- Instructors must have experience in early childhood education, elementary education with a concentration in early childhood, child and family studies, or a closely related field. Supervisors must meet or exceed these requirements with at least two years of program management experience. If programs experience hardship in recruitment efforts, they must notify and consult with First Things First.
- Instructors should possess appropriate credentials and experience in conducting professional development activities.
- Demonstrated knowledge and skills that reflect current best practices and research that are aligned with Early Childhood Education standards for children and professionals.
- Minimum five years experience working with young children (combination of classroom and supervisory experience). If programs experience hardship in recruitment of qualified trainers/instructors, they must notify and consult with First Things First.
- Experience working with adult learners and diverse cultures.
- Knowledge of diverse populations and languages preferred.

Applicants delivering professional development opportunities to FFN providers will be required to ensure that opportunities are designed and implemented according to the following principles:

- Professional development opportunities to early care and home based care providers are based upon a culture of trust and respect.
 - Clearly define program objectives to ensure comprehension, engagement, and retention.
 - Create opportunities for and act upon formal and informal feedback ensuring that input shapes on-going decision-making.
 - Encourage honest, open communication between participants and instructors.
 - Maintain confidentiality, being respectful of program participants.
 - Is culturally responsive
- Sessions should be based on current research, core areas of competency, and early learning standards.
 - Curriculum should incorporate and reflect the theoretical framework that informs practice in the classroom/home.
- Sessions should be responsive to the needs of the region's early care and home based care providers.
- Experiences should be relevant to the participant's background and as a home based care provider.
- Sessions should involve adult active learning techniques for participants.

Providers of community-based professional development opportunities for early care and home based care providers will:

- Increase the availability of and participation of home based providers in high quality professional development opportunities for those working with or preparing to work with children birth through age five.
- Provide high quality professional development opportunities through innovative and creative approaches.
- Develop outreach and recruitment practices that engage and retain participants.

- Provide resource and referral information to participants on the healthy development of young children; and resources available in the community such as early literacy programs, family support agencies, and physical and oral health resources.
- Provide resource and referral information to participants who indicate an interest in being a regulated provider or obtaining certification or degree related to early childhood education and related fields.
- Identify and coordinate with existing training opportunities within the region.
- Conduct trainings based on best practices and research, giving consideration to:
 - Utilizing subject matter experts (Child Care Health Consultants, local physicians, published authors, researchers, etc.) to enhance training content and delivery
 - The frequency and sequence of training sessions
- Provide professional development sessions that are interactive, model desired behaviors, and address the multiple learning styles of adult learners.
 - Topics should address the core competency areas identified by the National Council for Professional Recognition. At a minimum, topics must include:
 - Understanding the five domains of early childhood development (physical well being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge), including early childhood special education
 - Observing, documenting, and assessing children's behaviors
 - Ensuring safe and healthy learning environments
 - Understanding ethical and professional issues when working with young children
 - Utilizing developmentally appropriate practices
 - Advancing physical and intellectual competence
 - Supporting social/emotional development and using positive guidance techniques
 - Establishing respectful, positive, and productive relationships with families
 - Ensuring a well-run purposeful program responsive to child and family needs
 - Additional training topics may include, but are not limited to:
 - Sensory integration, behavioral health, and special needs
 - Role of creativity in learning
 - Role of materials in the classroom
 - Role of the arts in cognitive and social emotional growth and development
 - Role of the environment and environmental design in children's learning
 - Role of the teacher/educator as researcher
 - Significance of play
 - Written and oral communication skills of providers
- Maintain flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues in the community and the early childhood field
 - Recruit staff from the community who has extensive knowledge of community resources

- Recruit staff that reflect the cultural and ethnic experiences and language of the participants, and integrate their expertise into the program
- Develop a collaborative, coordinated response to community needs.
- Be accessible for program participants
- Ensure the provision of high-quality professional development opportunities through experienced and responsive staff.

Programs delivering professional development opportunities to support Family Friends and Neighbor Care will be required to ensure that these opportunities are designed and implemented according to the following principles:

- Create collaborations with and among agencies and other early care and education stakeholders such as Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Arizona Kith & Kin Project, Child Care Resource and Referral, Regional Libraries, Head Start Programs, School Districts, Child Care Health Consultants, Professional Development Training and Scholarship systems, and other programs working with child-care homes.
- Respond to the diversity among Family Friends & Neighbors (FFN) care providers by addressing the individual needs of home-based care providers.
- Address transportation issues or assist with access to transportation, to and from professional development sessions.
- Provide materials to home-based care providers, including safety equipment and/or safety kits, books, or educational materials that are developmentally appropriate for the children being served.
- Ensure community-based professional development seminars and hands-on training are evidence-based and relevant to the communities in which providers are working, seminars, small group sessions or other methods of gathering home-based providers together so that information and materials can be delivered, peer connections can be made, and opportunities for discussion and group learning can be accessible and available.
- Ensure CPR/First Aid certification, and/or safety training for home-based care providers is part of overall training.
- Ensure a system of support for home-based child care providers that incorporates a mentoring or coaching component, is research-based and proven to improve the quality outcomes for home-based child care, and that can be provided via a variety of service delivery methods.
- “To address cultural competency objectives, early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers shall ensure that children and families receive, from all staff members, effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a culturally competent manner- a manner compatible with their cultural beliefs and practices and preferred language. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should ensure that staff at all levels and across all disciplines, receive ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should develop participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and family-centered involvement to ensure that services are delivered in a manner that

is consistent with the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services and/or the National Recommendations on Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the National Association for the Education of Young Children.” (<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15>; <http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/linguistic>)

FFN services will include:

- Identification and recruitment of in-home providers caring for children birth through age five.
- Fostering professional, supportive relationships between home-based care givers and community-based coaches or mentors.
- Providing assistance, coaching, mentoring and support, by community-based coaches or mentors, to in-home care providers, as needed and appropriate, to increase the quality of child care that is provided and to help move in-home care providers toward appropriate licensure.
- Creating a program improvement plan with the provider, specific to each provider and the children they care for, that will serve as a roadmap for the provider to move towards higher quality of care and potentially towards licensure.
- Implementing a curriculum that is a strength-based approach based on the providers’ needs and recommendations and will focus on safety, brain development, social-emotional developmental needs, positive guidance and discipline, nutrition, parent/caregiver relationships, language and literacy, appropriate learning activities, culture, and health and sanitary practices.
- Developing training materials for providers that identify and utilize available resources.
- Fostering partnerships between existing community agencies and entities so that training, information, services and other supports for in-home care providers can be provided at non-traditional settings and locations, such as public schools, and other “education” settings.
- Coordinating with other First Things First funded programs such as the Kith and Kin Statewide Competitive Grant Program funded through First Things First Statewide Competitive Grant and other programs providing services in the community.