



State Child Care Task Forces

Lessons Learned from State Child Care Task Forces

Task Force Sample Selection

NCSL identified 17 states with child care task forces or workgroups in 5 years. We then selected three reports because they are located in the Midwest (Minn., Neb., Mo.) and three additional reports to offer geographical and political diversity (Colo., Utah, Wash.). We reviewed their processes, findings and recommendations for policymakers.

State	Report	Year
Colorado	Infant and Family Child Care Action Plan: A strategic action plan to address infant and family child care home shortages in Colorado	2019
Minnesota	Minnesota Family Child Care Task Force: Legislative Report	2021
Missouri	Ensuring Safe and Quality Child Care in Missouri	2019
Nebraska	Report and Recommendations of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission	2020
Utah	Child Care Access in Utah	2020
Washington	Child Care Collaborative Task Force Recommendations	2018

Legislative actions (Utah, Minnesota, Washington, Colorado), executive action (Missouri) and a non-governmental organization (Nebraska) initiated task forces (sometimes referred to as advisory groups or workgroups) to understand the barriers to expanding child care.

Membership in these groups varied widely. Missouri, for example, included agency staff from the departments of social services, public safety, health and senior services, elementary and secondary education and the attorney general's office. In contrast, the groups associated with Nebraska, Washington, Utah, Minnesota and Colorado represented a wider set of stakeholders, such as employees and directors of government offices, child care centers, businesses, nonprofit organizations and representatives of the wider public such as parents of young children.

Information Gathering Process

State	Surveys of Current and Former Child Care Providers	Surveys of Parents with Young Children	Consulted Outside Experts	Stakeholder Engagement	Other Data Analysis*
Colorado	✓	✓			✓
Minnesota	✓		✓		
Missouri				✓	
Nebraska	✓	✓			
Utah		✓			✓
Washington	✓	✓		✓	✓

**Colorado surveyed city and county officials and conducted cost analyses on infant care and home-based care. Utah conducted analyses assessing the gap between the demand and supply of child care based on publicly available demographic and child care data. Washington conducted an economic impact analysis to better understand the impact of child care on workers, employers and the economy.*

Recommendations

While these task forces differed in their formation, focus and approach, they also shared common recommendations for expanding child care. In line with the domains of the Iowa Child Care Task Force, we summarized these task forces' recommendations spanning four areas: regulatory barriers, financing for the creation and infrastructure of child care facilities, child care workforce issues and employer investment.

Regulatory Barriers

COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

- Streamline paperwork and review processes (Colo., Minn., Wash)
- Resolve inconsistencies between state and local regulations (Colo., Minn.)
- Provide support to navigate the licensing process (Colo., Wash.)

Streamline Paperwork and Review Processes

Minnesota recommended legislation allowing for full and abbreviated licensing review processes based on statistically significant key indicators to maintain full compliance with all applicable rules and statutes. Washington also emphasized the need to streamline licensing and suggested expanding pre-approval of new child care construction and renovation projects as a viable solution. They emphasized the risk child care facilities currently take on, uncertain if costly renovations or construction will ultimately result in a rejected license due to a preventable construction decision that does not comply with the state's standards. The task force in Washington also emphasized the need to streamline the relicensing process after an ownership transfer to prevent the temporary or permanent closure of child care programs. Colorado identified a need to hire additional licensing staff and background check staff to allow for quicker processing.

Resolve Inconsistencies Between State and Local Regulations

Both Minnesota and Colorado identified inconsistencies, duplication and contradictions between state and local regulatory agencies as burdensome to child care providers. Minnesota recommended requiring uniform procedures and paperwork across county licensors and improved communication about licensing processes directly to providers and posted online. Similarly, Colorado's task force recommended better state and local policy coordination and collaboration. The task force noted both levels of government should communicate policy changes, engage in cross-training and align where possible. Colorado also pointed to differences between localities in zoning, fire and building code requirements that do not align with child licensing requirements and can cause confusion. To address this, the task force recommended that local regulators treat home-based child care as residences rather than commercial properties. The Colorado legislature passed [HB21-1222](#) to require home-based child care be classified as residences statewide "for the purposes of licensure and local regulations, including zoning, land use development, fire and life safety, and building codes."

Provide Support to Navigate the Licensing Process

Task forces in Washington and Colorado recommended increasing support to providers as they navigate the licensing process. Recommendations from Colorado included hiring additional licensing specialists to reduce caseloads and to improve specialists' capacity to provide ongoing technical assistance, guidance and training to child care providers. Colorado's task force also recommended developing a flow/process chart outlining the path to licensure, creating additional materials in easy-to-read formats or videos and establishing a single point of access (i.e., 1-800 number) to offer prospective and existing providers guidance. Washington task force members recommended expanding existing technical support and creating supportive tools such as a guidebook that walks applicants through each step of the licensing process in detail.

Financing for the Creation and Infrastructure of Child Care Facilities

COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide loans/grants to support child care facility development (Minn., Utah, Wash.)

Loans/Grants for Child Care Facility Development

States also provided recommendations to support financing the creation and infrastructure of child care facilities. Minnesota, Utah and Washington recommended the creation of grants and/or loans for child care facility development. The task force in Minnesota also recommended reviewing the current public finance programs for modifications that would better support family child care entrepreneurs. Washington's task force also recommended the continued investment in the [Early Learning Facilities](#) fund, an initiative that supports providers serving low-income families to expand, remodel, purchase or construct early learning facilities and classrooms.

STATE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adapt vacant buildings for child care and tax incentives to build centers (Utah)
- Conduct a needs assessment (Mo.)

- Scale up licensing pre-approval to new construction and renovation projects (Wash.)

Child Care Workforce Issues

COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

- Creating career development pathways (Minn., Mo., Neb., Wash.)
- Increasing access to professional development (Minn., Mo., Neb., Wash.)
- Formalizing recognition of tenure/experience in the classroom (Minn., Neb., Wash.)
- Providing operational/business support (Colo., Minn., Wash.)
- Establishing substitute teacher pools (Colo., Neb., Wash.)

Creating Career Development Pathways

Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and Washington recognized the need to foster affordable career development pathways for child care workers. The Nebraska task force recommended creating career development pathways focused less on educational achievement and more on competencies to ensure equity and financial viability. The Minnesota and Washington task forces recommended supporting high school and higher education pathways to train and to credential future family child care providers and to encourage qualified existing providers to stay in the field. The Washington task force specifically suggested continuing existing programs, like the Washington Early Achievers Grant, and recommended the state legislature take action to fund scholarships, loan repayments and other financial incentives to support current and potential early childhood educators to pursue higher education and credentialing. Nebraska’s task force recommended increasing the number of scholarships supporting early childhood educators attending college.

Increasing Access to Professional Development

The task forces in Colorado, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and Washington all recognized the need to increase access to professional development opportunities to ensure quality of care and to support the workforce. Missouri’s task force recommended reviewing professional development standards and competencies, streamlining training requirements and timelines and increasing opportunities and support to participate in professional development activities. The Nebraska and Minnesota task forces also suggested that grant funding for professional development activities may increase child care worker retention and quality of care. The task forces in Nebraska and Washington also considered barriers to access professional development training and suggested offering professional development in multiple formats (e.g., online) and languages to ensure greater access to these training activities. Colorado’s task force identified the need for funding for additional and accessible trainings, particularly for infant care providers and home-based providers. The state stressed the importance of utilizing provider input in the creation of trainings as well as maximizing the use of the state’s professional development information system to track professional development opportunities statewide.

Formalizing Recognition of Tenure/Experience in the Classroom

Minnesota, Nebraska and Washington highlighted barriers to credentialing within the early childhood workforce and recommended formalizing the recognition of certain competencies in formal certification requirements. The Nebraska task force highlighted the difficulties for those unable to access higher education and the need to recognize their skills through career lattice options. The Washington task force cited the recommendations of an

external task force in the state that emphasized the utility of a review process to determine equivalency of experience and credentials for certification. This recommendation, to date, has not been implemented. More specifically, in Minnesota, the task force highlighted the need for family child care mentors, coaches and consultants to receive equivalency credit for their efforts.

Providing Operational/Business Support

Colorado, Minnesota and Washington each described the importance of supporting the early child care workforce in business competencies in order to expand child care in their respective states. Colorado's task force recommended funding business consultants to give prospective child care providers guidance on starting a new business and upfront costs as well as incentivizing existing providers to access business resources and supports. Colorado also recommended funding local family child care or micro-center networks to support recruitment and retention of providers serving infants and toddlers specifically. Minnesota and Washington emphasized the importance of training and technical assistance in financial management, financial planning, human resources management, leadership development, capital investments, licensing, permits and other aspects of running a business.

Establishing Substitute Teacher Pools

Colorado, Nebraska and Washington described the important role that substitutes may play in supporting the child care workforce. Nebraska and Washington's task forces each recommended establishing a pool of substitute teachers available to all providers so that early child care workers can participate in trainings, take sick days or take personal days without interrupting child care activities. Citing the need to support child care providers' well-being and to avoid burnout, Colorado recommended providing direct financial support to providers through grants to cover the costs of substitutes.

Employer Investment

Employer investment is another innovation the task forces considered (Wash.). Employers who provide child care for their employees may be eligible to receive certain incentives (e.g., tax credit), and employees may be incentivized to work for the given organization if offered child care employee benefits (Utah).