

# Yolo County License-Exempt Child Care Provider Needs Assessment

September 2018

## Background

License-exempt providers care for a substantial number of children in the United States and therefore play an important role in supporting children's development, school readiness, and long-term school success. In 2018, with funding from the City of West Sacramento and the Yolo County Office of Education, the Yolo County Local Child Care Planning Council (LPC) contracted with Harder+Company Community Research to conduct a needs assessment of license-exempt child care in Yolo County. The purpose of the assessment is to generate information about the characteristics of license-exempt child care providers, child care quality needs, and strategies to engage providers in quality improvement efforts.

This report brief presents key findings from the needs assessment. It draws on data collected from interviews with nine key informants<sup>1</sup> from organizations that work directly or indirectly with license-exempt child care providers. The interviews were conducted from August-September 2018.

## Key Findings

**Families use license-exempt child care because it is more affordable and accessible than licensed care.** Interview respondents reported that most license-exempt child care providers in Yolo County are family members including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and older siblings. Families use license-exempt child care for a variety of reasons including that it is more cost effective and flexible, particularly for families who need care outside of traditional work hours. One respondent said, "A lot of times families work evenings, they work nights. They have variable schedules. So we do have a lot of parents that just say, 'I can't find a provider that's open 24 hours.' So in that case, they'll go ahead and go with a license-exempt [child care provider] like a relative or a family friend." Another respondent added, "Some families are not able to afford licensed centers and they're scrambling for family members or sometimes young siblings to provide care." Some respondents also said that families use license-exempt providers because they feel more comfortable with their child being cared for by someone they know and trust.

**Programs use a variety of strategies to reach child care providers.** Many organizations in Yolo County work directly or indirectly with license-exempt child care providers. Respondents use a variety of methods to engage providers including collaborating with local community partners. In particular, respondents noted working closely with Yolo Help Me Grow, RISE, Inc., Yolo County Children's Alliance, Empower Yolo, Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency,

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*—Interview respondent*

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<sup>1</sup> Interview respondents represented the following organizations: After School Education and Safety program (two interviews), Children's Home Society, City of West Sacramento, First 5 Yolo, RISE, Inc., Yolo County Children's Alliance (two interviews), and the Yolo County Library.

Communicare, family resource centers, food distribution centers, laundromats, and local libraries. Respondents also said they reach providers by advertising in local newspapers and through email and mail distribution lists.

**Child care quality improvement efforts are available in Yolo County, though some are not specific to the needs of license-exempt providers.**

Interview respondents shared that a number of resources are available in Yolo County to support providers to increase program quality. Available quality improvement efforts include conferences as well as more structured workshops and training. Specifically, respondents provided the following examples:

- **Workshops** through the Children’s Home Society and the City of West Sacramento IMPACT program for child care providers that focus on quality improvement related topic areas.
- **Early learning kits** available for check-out through the Yolo County Library (in collaboration with the City of West Sacramento IMPACT program) that were created specifically for licensed-exempt providers.
- **Resource and referral library** offered by the Children’s Home Society that has new toys, games, and books that can be checked out by child care providers.
- **Walk-in visits** offered by the Children’s Home Society to support environmental enhancements.
- **Provider cafes** offered by the Children’s Home Society to support networking among license-exempt child care providers.
- **Conferences** including the annual Child Development Conference hosted by the Children’s Home Society.
- **Community-based early learning programs** such as Storytime (run by the Yolo County Library) and Playschool Experience offered by Empower Yolo, RISE, Inc., and the Yolo County Children’s Alliance.

However, several respondents noted that some resources are not tailored to the needs of license-exempt providers. For example one respondent said, “We send out the workshop list, but it’s for all providers. Maybe if we have specific workshops just for license-exempt providers that could help.”

**Organizations coordinate services to increase program participation.**

Several respondents described how they coordinate with community partners to connect providers to available quality improvement resources. One respondent stated, “The Children’s Home Society has a mailing list that mails every single person who provides child care in Yolo County. I send them my program’s flyer to include in their monthly mailings.” Another respondent shared, “We have collaborated with the Children’s Home Society because they provide a lot of training for family child care homes and so do we. We’ve worked with them to say “when you’re doing this training can you tell them about ours and vice versa.”

**Knowledge of age-appropriate child development was identified as a key need among license-exempt providers.** When asked about the greatest needs that license-exempt child care providers face with regards to child care quality, all respondents said knowledge of age-appropriate child development. One respondent said, “I’m thinking of grandmothers who are taking care of their grandchildren and they’re providing a safe place, they’re providing love and care and healthy food and these types of things, but maybe don’t focus enough on letter recognition and how to hold a pencil and how to use scissors.” Another respondent added, “Just knowing

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**“Just knowing about children’s developmental stages and what’s appropriate is a need [among license-exempt providers].**

*–Interview respondent*

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about children’s developmental stages and what’s appropriate is a need [among license-exempt providers]. Do they know about positive behavior reinforcement and developmentally appropriate practices with children and that kind of thing?” Several respondents also said that providing license-exempt care can be isolating and that providers may benefit from greater access to support networks.

**Limited data is available on license-exempt care in Yolo County.** While the number of licensed-exempt child care providers and the number of children who receive care is not consistently collected across Yolo County, the CalWORKs Child Care Subsidy program and Child Care Payment program collect information about the care used by families who receive subsidies. These data show that in 2018<sup>2</sup>, 380 children were cared for by 185 state-subsidized license-exempt child care providers.

**Exhibit 1. Characteristics of children and state-subsidized license-exempt child care providers in Yolo County**

|   | Number |
|---|--------|
| Children cared for by license-exempt providers                | 380    |
| Children 0-2 years  | 64     |
| Children 3-12 years   | 316    |
| License-exempt providers who care for children with subsidies | 187    |
| Provider county of residence                                  |        |
| Yolo  | 165    |
| Sacramento  | 16     |
| Solano  | 3      |
| Contra Costa  | 1      |
| Provider language <sup>3</sup>                                |        |
| English   | 62     |
| Spanish   | 9      |
| Russian   | 1      |

<sup>2</sup> Data from the Child Care Payment Program reflects number of children and providers as of September 1, 2018. Data from Yolo County Children’s Alliance reflects number of children and providers as of July 30, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Provider language is only provided by the Child Care Payment Program.

## Opportunities

Based on the findings from this needs assessment, there are several opportunities to inform the work of the Yolo County Local Child Care Planning Council moving forward.

| Recommendation  | Sample strategies  |
|---|--|
| <p>Adapt quality improvement resources to ensure they meet the unique needs of license-exempt providers in Yolo County.</p>                       | <p>While resources exist in Yolo County to enhance child care quality, some are not specific to license-exempt providers. To increase interest and motivation to participate, organizations may consider adapting workshops to focus on the needs of license-exempt providers, offering breakout sessions at annual conferences that are designed for license-exempt providers, and creating dedicated space in the resource and referral library for providers to network. The LPC could provide these suggestions to organizations who offer quality improvement programs.</p>   |
| <p>Continue to coordinate to maximize engagement and ensure that stakeholders are aware of available quality improvement programs.</p>            | <p>Organizations coordinate to share information about upcoming quality improvement opportunities, which will be helpful to continue to maximize outreach and engagement. The LPC may also want to develop a resource list of available quality improvement efforts. This could be shared with key stakeholders such as providers, parents, and program staff that engage with license-exempt child care providers on a regular basis.</p>   |
| <p>Explore opportunities to gather more information on license-exempt child care in Yolo County.</p>  | <p>Currently, no countywide data exist on the number of children in licensed-exempt care or the demographic, educational, or professional background of license-exempt child care providers. LPC could convene key stakeholders to discuss options for consistent data collection in order to gain a better understanding of needs and assets.</p>   |
| <p>Review promising practices for working with license-exempt child care providers and identify strategies that may work best in Yolo County.</p> | <p>A number of promising practices have been implemented to support license-exempt child care providers to increase program quality. This includes the Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn program through the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (<a href="https://www.rnetwork.org/informal_caregiver_training">https://www.rnetwork.org/informal_caregiver_training</a>), as well as several projects funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation’s Children, Families and Communities program (<a href="https://www.packard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Engaging-Family-Friend-and-Nearby-Informal-Caregivers.pdf">https://www.packard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Engaging-Family-Friend-and-Nearby-Informal-Caregivers.pdf</a>). The LPC may want to review these programs to identify how they could be implemented or adapted for Yolo County.</p> |