



Professional Development and Technical Assistance Boost Quality and Longevity Among Rhode Island Family Child Care Providers

Family Child Care and Beyond: Exploring Targeted Child Care Investments in Rhode Island is a research project led by a partnership between Education Development Center (EDC) and Rhode Island's Department of Human Services (DHS). The project examines financial and professional development supports for family child care (FCC) providers.

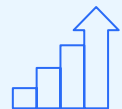
Ongoing training and **professional development (PD)** are important for any profession, including for early childhood educators. PD trainings address a variety of topics, including first aid, business practices, child assessment, and curriculum. In addition to PD, **technical assistance (TA)** can help providers address specific areas in need of improvement. Our study examined the relationship between FCC providers' use of PD and TA and quality improvement and the ability of providers to remain in operation.

In Rhode Island, FCC providers have two main sources of PD and support, both of which receive funding from DHS. The **Center for Early Learning Professionals (CELP)**, which serves as the coordinating center for all approved early childhood education PD and training in the state, offers its own no-cost training courses and provides no-cost TA to providers to help address specific areas in need of improvement. The **Service Employees International Union Education and Support Fund (ESF)** manages the Rhode Island Child Care Training Program, which offers PD and other services to FCC providers that serve children whose families are enrolled in the state's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).



Findings from a Study of PD and TA on Provider Quality and Longevity

- Participating in PD and TA is associated with a small but positive increase in providers' overall quality ratings.
- Participation in PD helps FCC providers remain in operation.



Provider Quality

We examined the association between **(1)** FCC providers attending PD trainings and utilizing TA and **(2)** improved quality as measured by the providers' ratings in Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System, BrightStars. Rating assessments were paused in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed in 2025, providing an opportunity for the FCC providers to improve their programs through PD and TA and a natural time frame for analysis.¹

Participation in PD—regardless of source—is associated with a small but positive increase in providers' overall BrightStars ratings.²



Of the individual BrightStars standards:

- PD was associated with gains in Learning Environment, Minimum Staff-Child Ratio, Child Assessment, Inclusive Classroom Practices, and Family Communication and Involvement.
- TA was associated with gains in Educator Qualifications and Curriculum.

We hypothesize that PD and TA helps providers strengthen their programs, build trust with trainers, and engage more deeply with the process of BrightStars assessment or a combination of these factors related to capacity and motivation.

Provider Longevity

We analyzed whether PD and TA were associated with providers' ability to remain in operation over time. We hypothesized that receiving PD from one of these organizations in a given year would increase the likelihood that the provider would remain open the following year. Using a statistical method called discrete-time survival analysis,² we found that PD reduces the risk of closure.



Association Between PD and Staying Open

Participation in **any** PD increases the likelihood of remaining in operation the following year.

The chance of remaining in operation increases **with each additional hour** of PD.

These results were all the more convincing as we statistically controlled for the contributions of other factors—receipt of a child care stabilization grant, provider's primary language, participation in CCAP, participation in BrightStars, and geographic location—that might affect the risk of closure.

¹ Participation in Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System, BrightStars, is required for any program serving CCAP families.

² Discrete-time survival analysis is used to estimate a risk of failure at a given time interval. We employed this method to estimate a risk of closure for individual FCC providers using the provider's PD activities as the predictor of interest.