



An Apprenticeship in California Designed for Family Child Care Providers

BLOG POST





By **Elise Franchino**

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Family child care, or licensed home-based care, is a critical component of the child care landscape. Family child care (**FCC**) is a common care environment for infants and toddlers, children from diverse linguistic backgrounds, children from families with low incomes, and children in rural communities. Many **families** choose these programs because of their family-like environments, their geographic accessibility, and their flexibility and affordability. FCC providers are small business owners who carry tremendous assets, including years of expertise in the field, linguistic diversity that provides opportunities for language immersion to young children, and the advantage of being embedded in and belonging to the communities they serve.

FCC educators are generally **older** and less formally educated than their center-based colleagues. **One in three** FCC providers has a degree in early childhood development or a related field and 43 percent have a Child Development Associate (CDA) or state permit. While skills and insights gained on-the-job are not to be discounted, research has shown that deeper knowledge around early childhood development in post-secondary programs leads to **higher quality learning environments** and provides a coherent framework for a **unified workforce**.

One promising program that strengthens FCC providers' knowledge while encouraging their continued participation in the workforce is the Early Educator Apprenticeship

Early Educator Center-Based Apprenticeship, and a Family Child Care (FCC) Apprenticeship, specifically designed for FCC providers.

Funding mostly comes from state and federal initiatives for workforce development. Since its inception, the Early Educator Apprenticeship Program staff have raised over \$4 million in grant funding, primarily from the California Apprenticeship Initiative and the Workforce Accelerator Fund, with roughly \$1.2 million supporting the FCC program.

The FCC Apprenticeship, led by the Service Employees International Union, includes institutions of higher education, ECE employers, resource and referral agencies, and an independent **consulting agency**, whose director is piloting a youth apprenticeship program for early educators in California, with support from New America's **PAYA** initiative. The FCC apprenticeship program is located **across four sites** in California—Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, Antelope Valley, and Alameda County. Tuition for participants is entirely free. The program also covers the cost of books, a laptop, the Child Development Permit application, and the associated background check required.

Once apprentices have completed four months of the program, they begin to receive monthly wage enhancements of \$100 to \$450. Over the entirety of the two-year program, a Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) **report** notes that providers may earn anywhere from \$200 to \$6,850. Many FCC providers invested these **stipends** into their businesses to purchase higher-quality books and materials for their students.

program helps establish a network of camaraderie that participants might not otherwise experience, and advocate as a group **for their needs** within the apprenticeship program.

FCC apprentices earn credentials that culminate in California's Child Development Permits. Permits are not mandated for licensed FCC providers, so participants are self-motivated to improve the quality of care they provide to their students. Holding a permit can ensure educators more freedom to transition between roles and sites and **promote** the excellence of their businesses with families in competitive markets. Additionally, if FCC providers choose to enroll in the state's Quality Rating Improvement System, **Quality Counts California**, they will earn points tied to funding as they obtain credentials.

Other **supports** make this a promising model for the FCC workforce as well. Each apprentice has a transcript analysis performed upon enrollment, and program staff use this analysis to decide which courses are taught in the upcoming semester, ensuring courses are relevant to students' needs. Courses are accessible in both time, on weekday evenings, and location, as the classes are offered at local resource and referral agencies. Some faculty speak Spanish as a first language and provide bilingual support to their Spanish-dominant students.

Coaches visit apprentices on a bimonthly basis to provide coaching on child-teacher interactions, using components from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (**CLASS**) as a guide. CLASS is also a metric used by Quality Counts California, therefore apprentices will be ready to put CLASS into practice once it's been mastered. Coaches' feedback and reflections often occur at a time when providers aren't caring for children, and are scheduled by phone.

have participated in the program. Apprentices **reported** feeling better equipped to engage families, deeper knowledge in child development and creating high-quality early learning environments, and more confident in their role as early childhood educators upon program completion. As one FCC provider told **CSCCE** researchers, “Without this program, I think that we would not have the motivation and desire to say, ‘I want to be better.’ You understand? For those of us in this program, it’s because we are interested in offering quality work.”

Roughly nine states have established registered early childhood apprenticeship programs, which are approved by the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency. Registered apprenticeships meet national quality standards and have the benefit of increased access to federal funding. The FCC program’s on-the-job learning and classroom learning components, financial compensation commensurate with skill gain, and culmination in an industry-recognized credential make it similar to a registered apprenticeship. However, the program is **technically recognized as an on-the-job training** program in the state of California, which among other things, requires apprentices to have an employer and be eligible for worker’s compensation. Opportunities exist for FCC apprenticeships to become registered, with labor unions, shared service alliances, or other intermediary organizations serving as an employer of record. With the number of self-employed individuals in ECE, having intermediaries serve as apprenticeship employers could help address the critical need to connect them with quality education and training opportunities.

Finally, some existing apprenticeships require credentials for enrollment, such as a high school diploma, which would have been a barrier for **one in four** FCC participants.

toward the FCC workforce. As FCC educators are given more opportunities to strengthen

their knowledge, they'll be better equipped to improve the quality of care that **millions** of young children receive.

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