Staffed Family Childcare Networks
staffed family childcare networks
Our mission is to support all young children in their development...
Improving Access to Child Care

The Office of Early Childhood’s mission is to support all young children in their development by ensuring that early childhood policy, funding and services strengthen the critical role families, providers, educators and communities play in a child’s life. The Office’s Strategic Plan states the agency will ensure universal access to high quality infant-toddler care. To support this goal, the state’s Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan calls for the creation of staffed alliance networks for family child care providers (FCC Networks) to increase licensed infant and toddler care. These networks will be staffed by professionals who can provide business and child development training and technical support to current and potential family child care providers.
Connecticut’s Family Child Care Providers

The hundreds of family child care providers who operate small home-based child care businesses are an important component of the child care system in Connecticut. They are a key source of care for infants and toddlers – the age group where demand for licensed care far exceeds supply. FCC providers often come from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds as the children they care for, ensuring effective communication with families.

However, FCC providers face challenges unique to them. Providers can feel isolated from spending long hours with young children; they do not benefit from the resources, supports and professional development available to those working in center-based programs; and some operate outside the licensed child care system.
Providers may join a network for a more rewarding career, to improve the FCC home’s performance as a source of income, or to enhance the quality and market appeal of their services to families. According to a study conducted by Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy, professionally staffed networks can help improve outcomes for children enrolled in affiliated family child care homes.

What are FCC Networks?
A staffed FCC network is a community-initiative that has paid staff with expertise in working with FCC providers who deliver a menu of ongoing support services and resources to affiliated FCC providers. The services of a network may include professional development, coaching and consultation, visits to the home, and business and administrative supports. All of these strategies increase the quality and sustainability of the FCC business and increase the providers’ connections to the community. FCC Networks are a form of shared service business alliances – a growing trend and emerging best practice in the child care field. Research suggests that providers who affiliate with networks for support provide higher quality care in their homes.
Developing Connecticut’s Framework for FCC Networks

A meeting of key stakeholders in Connecticut whose work supports family child care providers was held in 2016. This meeting reviewed the Herr Research Center study on family child care networks, and the stakeholders agreed with the study’s key findings; namely children in family child care homes benefit when their care provider is part of an FCC network. The Office of Early Childhood has identified the primary components of staffed family child care networks in Connecticut, based on this research and input from key stakeholders.
Promoting growth & development
Connecticut is promoting the growth and development of FCC networks to build the supply and quality of infant and toddler care. To support this goal, the Office of Early Childhood issued an RFP to establish funded Family Child Care Networks in Connecticut. The funding is, in part, from the state’s federal and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). This offers financial support to 1) organizations that currently support family child care providers who are interested in expanding technical assistance and shared service business alliance functions; or 2) groups or individuals interested in launching a new shared service business alliance for family child care providers.
One of the greatest strengths of Connecticut’s Family Child Care Network system is that each network is developed to meet the specific needs of their individual community. Because the networks are located in the geographic areas they serve, they are more in touch with the providers and families in their community. Read on about each of Connecticut’s FCC networks to learn about the ways they are supporting their communities and improving the quality and quantity of childcare in their region.
Meet Connecticut’s NETWORKS

All Our Kin Family Childcare Network
All Our Kin (AOK) trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. Through All Our Kin’s programs, family child care professionals succeed as early childhood educators and as business owners; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond.

Hartford Family Child Care Provider Network (HFCPN)
HFCPN’s mission is to support family child care providers by strengthening their knowledge and practices in early childhood care and education, and business operations. HFCCN helps providers develop high-quality programs that serve children and help them become school-ready. HFCCN has been providing nutrition support to a network of family child care providers in the region for years. These providers expressed an interest in professional development resources, so the network broadened the scope of their support services.

CERCLE Collaborative
CERCLE Collaborative is focused on high quality shared staffing support and professional development to increase the quality of early childhood care and education. Cercle is building a minority teacher recruiting and training program to support center-based and family child care providers by developing a substitute pool of high-performing, high-quality early childhood teachers.

Danbury Family Childcare Network (DFCN)
DFCN, a collaborative effort led by the United Way of Western CT and All Our Kin, works to connect existing providers, assist new providers through the licensing process, and help families find, afford, and understand the benefits of licensed care.

TEAM’s FCC Network
TEAM’s goal for their FCC Network is to increase the supply and quality of Early Childhood Care. They strive to implement and strengthen best practices for FCC providers by supporting them as businesses and helping them to improve their quality of care for young children. TEAM is Head Start Child Care Federal Grantee, providing comprehensive child and family services in Waterbury and the surrounding area. TEAM’s established relationships with FCC providers ensured a successful launch of their FCC Network, with 30 providers joining.

Ed Advance’s Family Childcare Network (FCN)
Ed Advance’s Family Child Care Network is committed to helping child care providers become business professionals and grow their businesses. Their goal is to increase the supply and quality of infant and toddler care in the community.

CT Early Childhood Professional Development Platform (CTAEYC)
The mission of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CTAEYC) is to enhance the care, education, and development of Connecticut’s young children, in the context of family and community; and to support the professionals who care for them. CTAEYC provides training to increase the skills and competencies of professionals and promotes them through support and advocacy activities.

All Our Kin Family Childcare Network
All Our Kin (AOK) trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. Through All Our Kin’s programs, family child care professionals succeed as early childhood educators and as business owners; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond.

TEAM’s FCC Network
TEAM’s mission is to support family child care providers by strengthening their knowledge and practices in early childhood care and education, and business operations. HFCCN helps providers develop high-quality programs that serve children and help them become school-ready. HFCCN has been providing nutrition support to a network of family child care providers in the region for years. These providers expressed an interest in professional development resources, so the network broadened the scope of their support services.

CERCLE Collaborative
CERCLE Collaborative is focused on high quality shared staffing support and professional development to increase the quality of early childhood care and education. Cercle is building a minority teacher recruiting and training program to support center-based and family child care providers by developing a substitute pool of high-performing, high-quality early childhood teachers.
What Makes the Network Unique

DFCN takes a holistic approach to increase both the supply of and the demand for licensed care. They educate parents and families through several community-based parent education programs. One of these, the Community Messenger program, trains parent volunteers to be experts on resources for families in Danbury on topics that include housing, economic support, schools, activities, and how to advocate for your child in the school system. The ultimate goal of this is to make parents into ambassadors in their community. Additionally, DFCN assists providers with quality of life and financial support, and guidance in accessing resources.

“We’re not just here for providers that are just starting out, we’re here for the seasoned providers and are working to build a strong community with a robust menu of professional development resources. We want parents to know we’re here to support not only providers, but also families in accessing quality care. We are working to co-create this network and value feedback and input.”

United Way wants the community to know this network will be the creation of the providers and families who participate in it. The organization wants providers to be inspired to join the network because it offers value to everybody, at all stages of their career.
Their Work in Action:

DFCN offers providers assistance through the All Our Kin License Toolkit Coordinator. The coordinator helps potential new providers navigate from start to licensure. DFCN has already achieved success helping new providers become licensed, and maintains a steady queue of potential providers in pre-inspection and paperwork stages.

DFCN has expanded the sense of community amongst providers by helping members support one another. Two network providers had open spots in their rosters. Through the network they were able to connect with providers who had turned families down due to full rosters. As a result, the families without licensed care were referred to the licensed providers with open spots, benefiting everyone.

Sources of Funding:

CT Office of Early Childhood
United Way of Western CT
Bloomberg Philanthropies Grant
TEAM employs a consultant and staff who partner with FCC providers to help them develop and enhance business management effectiveness and quality of care. TEAM works closely with FCC providers to conduct an assessment of their business practices and identify opportunities to improve financial and business management efficiencies. In addition, TEAM consultants and staff work closely with providers to assess childcare environments and approaches in the areas of early childhood education and family engagement. The assessment results are used to recognize the strengths of each FCC provider and establish a baseline for developing a program enhancement plan that focuses on high-quality experiences for enrolled children and families.

“A big part of what makes us unique is the amazing providers in our community. They are eager for professional development resources and determined to provide the best for the children in their care.”
Their Work in Action

**Business:**
TEAM’s consultant met one-on-one with each FCC provider to learn about their business practices, and areas they wish to strengthen or develop. One finding of these meetings was many care providers do not realize the full scope of tax deductions for business owners. As a result, TEAM hired an accountant to hold a “Tax Tips for Small Business Owners” workshop for providers.

**Education:**
The network’s education consultant conducts no-cost home environment assessments Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R)®, and offers support and resources to help promote high quality childcare environments.

**Wellbeing:**
The network’s behavioral health consultant meets with providers to provide one-on-one support, as well as provide feedback to the network, so relevant professional development resources can be offered to groups of providers.

---

**Sources of funding:**
CT Office of Early Childhood
Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (EHS CCP)
Ed Advance’s Family Childcare Network (FCN)

What Makes the Network Unique

FCN works diligently to serve their providers and create a network that represents their community. They have involved providers and grown membership through a focus on professional development. FCN brings in state representatives to connect with providers and serves a wide geographic area. Providers are willing to travel long distances to attend workshops and meetings because they value FCN’s support and resources.
FCN wants providers and the community to know that providers who are part of the network differentiate themselves as committed to providing quality, professional child care. FCN welcomes providers to call them to learn what the network is about, how it can serve them, and how they can join.

Their Work in Action

Business support services and professional development

FCN has offered a group of providers the opportunity to train and apply for their Infant Mental Health Specialist Endorsement. FCN’s education consultant has recommended specific coursework that will efficiently meet the 35 hours of professional development required for this certification. FCN is the first child care network in the state to offer this to their network providers.

FCN has a Spanish speaking consultant who does regular home visits, supporting the Spanish-speaking community’s access to high quality childcare.
CTAEYC wants family child care professionals and providers of infant and toddler care to know that they are there to support them in their professional development and want to do so in a way that’s convenient for them. To support their accessibility goals, CTAEYC resources are free, online and easily accessible.

What Makes the Network Unique

CTAEYC has developed an online tool and resource for family child care professionals and providers of infant and toddler care called the Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Development Platform (CT EC PD Platform)®. The Platform is free of charge, and offers online training courses along with supplemental professional development workshops called CTAEYC Platform Academies.

The online platform is uniquely accessible to all providers across the state, benefitting those who have limited time or ability to travel. A Spanish version of the platform is in development and will be available soon, further extending the platform’s reach.
Their Work in Action

CTAEYC’s EC PD Platform consists of a combination of online learning opportunities including courses that focus on ERS-101 Environment Rating Scale tools®, National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)® webinars, and CTAEYC Platform Academy workshops.

CTAEYC has partnered with education vendors to provide incentives and products that providers receive for reaching certain learning milestones. CTAEYC also provides shared business supports through webinars, online learning courses, and Platform Academy trainings: three hour long, in-person deep dives for Professional Development.

Sources of Funding:

CT Office of Early Childhood
All Our Kin Family Childcare Network
Serving New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Norwalk, Danbury, and the surrounding communities

What Makes the Network Unique

AOK has been working with family child care providers for 20 years. AOK works with caregivers at every stage of their professional development. They offer licensing support, educational coaching, business coaching and training, monthly workshops, and a peer support network. AOK’s high-touch model has a proven track record of success in raising the quality, availability, and sustainability of family child care in low-income communities. In New Haven, their efforts have increased the number of family child care homes over the past two decades, and AOK affiliated providers score higher on research-based quality measures and report higher year-over-year earnings. Every dollar invested in AOK yields $15–$20 in macroeconomic benefits for the region they serve.

All Our Kin views family child care providers as true partners in this work, providing the tools and resources to help them develop and reach their own vision of quality care for children. AOK’s model is built on a strength-based, holistic approach to supporting family child care. More broadly, AOK seeks to transform the narrative around family child care, demonstrating what is possible when we invest in the caregivers of our youngest, most vulnerable children and elevate the voices of those who are doing the work.
Their Work in Action

Through the Licensing Tool Kit program, a collaboration with the Connecticut Children’s Museum, All Our Kin provides materials, mentorship and support to help unlicensed family, friend and neighbor caregivers meet health and safety standards, fulfill state licensing requirements, and become part of a professional community of child care providers.

Through the Provider Showcase Program, providers progress through five levels of quality which are aligned with standards set by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). As providers advance through these levels, they gain critical knowledge, training, and individualized consultation from All Our Kin. The highest level includes NAFCC accreditation, the highest indicator of quality that a family child care program can achieve.

The Business Coaching and Consulting Program supports family child care providers as they build their capacity as business owners, improving their financial practices, bringing in new families, increasing their earnings, and enhancing the sustainability of their programs. AOK also provides a zero interest loan program for providers to get resources they need to start or grow a business.

Sources of funding:

CT Office of Early Childhood
Office of Head Start
Early Childhood Councils in New Haven, Norwalk & Stamford
Private Philanthropy
What Makes the Network Unique

Most of HFCCN’s providers are Hispanic, which makes bilingual workshops, business supports and coaching crucial. HFCCN avoids using translators, preferring to hire bilingual staff members to support the Spanish-speaking community.

Source of funding:

CT Office of Education and Childcare
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
City of Hartford
HFCCN wants providers to know that their goal is to build a network that reflects the community, where the providers are involved in decision-making and have ownership of the network. The network brings providers together to support them in improving the services they offer. Providers can get involved by signing up for an event and registering to become an official member of the network.

Their Work in Action

Wellbeing:
HFCCN is working to help providers use tools and develop best practices to create nurturing and safe environments for children, as well as healthy home and center based environments. HFCCN held a training series called “Circle of Security,” which was an 8-week social and emotional training series that taught providers how to assist children in identifying their feelings and monitoring their reactions to those feelings.

Business:
HFCCN, in partnership with All Our Kin, will be offering a 10-week business theory series, which covers a range of topics from how to improve business practices to tracking financials for tax preparation.
CERCLE recognizes the cumulative importance of high-performing, highly qualified teachers on children’s educational outcomes. Moreover, research is clear about the impact a teacher of color has on the outcome of children of color. CERCLE understands the isolation that providers deal with, so the network utilizes the shared service approach, reducing isolation and building support. CERCLE wants the community to know that there’s a great deal of support within this network for finding and developing aspiring teachers with cross training and cross-conversation with providers. This is a system of support for prospective ECE teachers and providers.
Their Work in Action

The apprenticeship program develops highly-qualified ECE professionals by providing on-the-job training, professional development, certification, and job placement opportunities. As part of the apprenticeship program, teachers serve as shared staff for family child care providers within the network, providing mentoring, bolstering sustainability and increasing wellness.

Sources of Funding:

CT Office of Early Childhood
Hope for New Haven
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund Workforce Alliance