Instrument A. TRLECE Licensing State Administrator Interview Protocol

Understanding Child Care Licensing Challenges, Needs, and Use of Data

Interview Protocol

Child Care Licensing Administrator

The Role of Licensing in Early Care and Education

Before the interview, the interviewer will know:

- Name and contact information for the data systems person, if they have been identified, and date/time of the interview if it has been scheduled.

- Agency/department that houses the licensing unit.

- If the licensing unit monitors license-exempt programs (per the 2017 Child Care Licensing Study).

Introduction

Hello [NAME]. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [PRIMARY INTERVIEWER] and I'm joined by [SECONDARY INTERVIEWER]. I will be leading the interview today and [SECONDARY INTERVIEWER] is going to take notes for the call.

We both work at Child Trends, an independent research organization. Child Trends has a contract with the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, usually referred to as OPRE, to strengthen the field's understanding of the role of the child care licensing system in supporting quality and outcomes for children, families, and key stakeholders. As one part of that contract, we are conducting interviews with all of the state and territory child care licensing administrators. This interview will take between 45 and 60 minutes.

The purposes of this interview are to:

- Understand child care licensing systems and changes that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Understand how licensing administrators use data and research;

- Find out what you would like to learn about licensing systems.

*IF WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE DATA SYSTEMS PERSON AND IT IS **NOT** THE LICENSING ADMINISTRATOR:*

Based on your recommendation, we also plan to talk with [DATA SYSTEMS PERSON] to find out more about the types of data you collect, how often it is updated, how far back it goes, the quality of the data, and how it is used. That information will help us as we think about future research projects and possible state/territory partners.

*IF WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE DATA SYSTEMS PERSON AND IT **IS** THE LICENSING ADMINISTRATOR:*

When you arranged to do this interview, you indicated that you also know the child care licensing administrative data well and are the best person to answer questions about the types of data you collect, how often it is updated, how far back it goes, the quality of the data, and how it is used. That is a separate interview and (we will complete it after this one/it is schedule for [DATE/TIME]). It will take an additional 30 minutes.

IF WE HAVE <u>NOT</u> IDENTIFIED THE DATA SYSTEMS PERSON:

We are also interested in talking to the person in your child care licensing unit who knows the licensing administrative data the best. By "licensing administrative data" we mean all the information the licensing unit regularly collects, including information about licensing inspections, violations, complaints, enforcement, and initial applications. We would like to ask them questions about the types of data collected, the quality of the data, how far back it goes, and how it is used. Who is the best person to answer these questions for us?

> *If it is someone else, note their name, email address, and phone number.*

> *If licensing administrator is the best person:* That interview will take about 30 additional minutes. Should we plan to do both interviews today, for a total of an hour and a half? YES/NO

>> *If no:* I understand. At the end of our conversation today, we'll find a time that works for that second interview.

EVERYONE START READING AGAIN HERE:

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Information will be summarized across all interviews and your name will not be associated with your comments in any reports. You may refuse to answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.

Child Trends and OPRE staff will use the information we learn from you and [DATA PERSON] to plan future activities and identify research priorities. Child Trends will develop an internal report for OPRE which may be shared with its federal partners to inform other federal efforts and may include state- and territory-level information. This report will not be made public, but it may be used to develop documents, as background materials for technical work groups, and to contextualize research findings from follow-up data collections. We may also produce an informational report for OCC and its technical assistance providers to support federally-funded TA.

Because this is a federally funded project, I need to let you know that according to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0356 and it expires on 02/29/2024.

To help clarify our notes, we would like to record this conversation. The recording would only be used to make sure that we correctly capture your responses. It would remain confidential and would be deleted after we use it to finalize our notes from this interview.

Are you okay with having the phone conversation recorded? YES/NO

<u>*Note: If the person agrees, turn on the recorder and ask the question again to record their response*</u>.

Now that we've begun recording, I want to confirm that you give us permission to record the conversation so that we can make sure that we correctly capture your responses. Do you agree to record this?

Do you have any questions before we get started?

We sent you a copy of the questions in advance. It might be helpful for you to have them in front of you as we talk.

Questions about Respondent and Licensing Unit

Before we begin, I want to mention that we use the term "child care licensing system" broadly to include setting child care regulations, monitoring and investigations, enforcing compliance with regulation, provider training, and consumer education—as well as the management of the child care licensing unit including things like hiring, supervision, and caseload management.

First, I would like to ask you a few questions about your current position and the structure of the child care licensing unit in [STATE/TERRITORY].

1. What is your title?

2. How long have you been in that position?

3. Do you have major responsibilities within your agency, outside of child care licensing (*Remind them of the definition of child care licensing if needed*)?

4. Our understanding is that in [STATE/TERRITORY], child care licensing is housed in [AGENCY/DEPARTMENT]? Is that correct? YES/NO

    a. *If no, record the correct department*

5. Is the [STATE/TERRITORY] Child Care and Development Fund--or CCDF—administrator also in this [AGENCY/DEPARTMENT]? YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

    a. *If no, record the correct department:*

6. Which agencies or department(s) manage child care subsidies (using CCDF or other funds)?

7. Is QRIS in [AGENCY/DEPARTMENT]? YES/NO/DON'T HAVE A QRIS

    a. *If no, record the correct department:*

8. Also, we think that the licensing unit [DOES/DOES NOT] monitor license exempt programs that accept CCDF subsidies. Is that correct?

    a. *If no, note who monitors license exempt programs:*

We know that things have been in flux during the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For that reason, some of these questions will ask you to think back to how things were before the pandemic and then let us know how things have changed since the pandemic began.

For efficiency, we sometimes use the word "you" in our questions—but we want to be clear that we are interested in learning about the licensing unit as a whole.

9. We're interested in understanding some of the challenges that the licensing unit encountered **before the pandemic** in implementing the Child Care and Development Block Grant – or CCDBG -- reauthorization requirements related to the licensing system. What were the biggest challenges you had in implementing the CCDBG reauthorization requirements for licensing? (*Probe for examples. If they do not seem to be familiar with CCDBG reauthorization requirements, prompt with: CCDBG is the law that covers the Child Care and Development Fund program. The Reauthorization in 2014 included new requirements related to improving health and safety of children in child care, helping parents access information about child care, increasing access to high-quality care for children in low-income families, and improving the*

quality of care. Some of the licensing-related requirements included things like hiring qualified inspectors, training requirements for licensing inspectors, monitoring licensed providers, responding to complaints about licensed providers, background checks, and posting information like monitoring and inspection reports, corrective actions taken by the state and program, and fatalities and serious injuries.)

    a. Were you able to resolve those challenges before the COVID-19 pandemic began?

    b. And have you faced new or greater challenges in implementing CCDBG reauthorization **since the COVID-19 pandemic began**? *(Probe for examples)*

    c. Did the challenges differ depending on the type of care, meaning center-based or family child care *[or* license-exempt *if they monitor license-exempt]*? *(Probe for examples)*

10. We are also interested in learning about the effects of COVID-19 on licensing systems. What were the top two or three major changes within the child care licensing unit or to child care licensing practices because of COVID-19? *(If they only mention changes related to one type of care, remind them to think of center based, family child care, and license-exempt [if they monitor license-exempt])*

11. What have you learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that you think could impact or change the licensing system in the long term? *(If they only mention challenges related to one type of care, remind them to think of center based, family child care, and license-exempt [if they monitor license-exempt])*

12. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been more attention to racial equity this past year in the U.S. Has the licensing unit thought about issues of racial equity and how licensing policies and practices might change? (*If they don't describe an example in their response, ask:* Can you give me an example?)

Coordination with Other Entities

Some child care licensing agencies require licensed facilities to pass inspections completed by another entity—like the local health department, county building inspector, or fire marshal. We would like to ask a few questions about these inspections.

13. Before the pandemic began in March 2020, can you briefly describe the communication and coordination between licensing and the fire marshal, building inspector, and health department that inspect child care facilities? *(Be sure to note which agency/ies they are discussing and what the coordination is about.)*

    a. How do you document that licensed facilities have passed inspections by other entities? What level of detail is documented? Is this similar across all the entities (e.g., fire marshal, health department)?

    b. What happens if a facility fails one of these inspections?

        i. When does the licensing unit learn about it?

        ii. Who provides the information to licensing?

          iii.   What information does licensing get?

          iv.   Which agency is responsible for making sure the issue is fixed?

    c.   Does the licensing agency or other entity, like the health department, share inspection results publicly?

    d.   Would the fire marshal, building inspector, or health department ever contact the licensing unit? If so, could you please give us some examples?

14. Would the licensing unit ever contact any of the other entities? If so, could you please give us some examples? Has your communication and coordination with any of these groups changed since the COVID-19 pandemic began? If so, how?

Next, we'd like to ask a few questions about coordination with other state programs, like pre-K or QRIS, and federal programs, like Head Start or the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Coordination could include, for instance, sharing data, having their staff monitor licensing regulations, or having licensing staff monitor some of their regulations or standards. It could also include aligning standards or using the same standards.

15. Before March 2020, can you briefly describe the coordination between licensing and **state** programs, like QRIS or pre-K? *(Be sure to note which state programs they are discussing)*

    a.   Did anything change as a result of COVID?

16. Before March 2020, can you briefly describe the coordination between licensing and **federally funded** programs, like CACFP or Head Start? *(Be sure to note which federal programs they are discussing. If they do not specifically mention CACFP or Head Start, probe about those.)*

    a.   Did anything change as a result of COVID?

If Q5 is No or Don't Know (indicating licensing is in a different unit than the CCDF administrator): We're also interested in learning more about coordination between licensing and the CCDF administrator and team.

17. Before March 2020, can you briefly describe the communication and coordination between the licensing unit and the CCDF administrator's team?

    a.   Did anything change as a result of COVID?

Licensing Administrative Data and Research

Now we're going to shift focus and talk about your child care licensing administrative data. As I mentioned earlier, by "licensing administrative data" we mean all the information the child care licensing unit regularly collects, including information about licensing inspections, violations, complaints, enforcement, and initial applications.

If we are also talking with someone else about data, say: Although we will ask [DATA SYSTEMS PERSON] detailed questions about licensing data themselves, we would like to ask you a few questions about how the licensing unit uses data.

18. Do you ever use data to help guide decisions about the licensing unit? YES/NO

    If yes:

a. Can you give me some examples of the type of data you use and how your agency uses it to help with decision-making? *(Probe for two examples if possible; be sure to get details about the data source and how it influences decisions)*

b. What challenges do you face in trying to use data to help with decision-making?

19. Has anyone used licensing data to examine relationships between two pieces of information, like number of violations and whether a program closed? (*If they do not seem to understand, say:* Another example could be whether violations for unsafe sleep practices declined after the state offered safe sleep trainings. *Probe for examples*).

20. Either before or since the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, can you think of times when you were asked something about your licensing system – maybe by a legislator, department head, or the governor's office – but you did not have the needed data or team members with the needed skills to answer? (*If they are struggling to find examples say:* Remember that licensing data could include information about facilities, inspections, violations, enforcement, etc. *Probe to be sure we are getting multiple examples, if they exist. And for each example, be sure to specify if it was before or since the start of the pandemic. Note the information they do not have.*)

21. Has the licensing unit ever developed a data sharing agreement (*If needed add:* that is, a formal arrangement to share data with another agency or organization that specifies how the data will be shared, used, and stored)? YES/NO/I DON'T KNOW

    If yes:

    a. With whom? (*If they only name other state agencies, say:* Have you ever developed a data sharing agreement with someone outside of state government, like a research partner? *and note non-state agencies*)

    b. About when was the most recent data sharing agreement developed? (*Just note the year)*

22. Did [STATE/TERRITORY] use any licensing data to help in the response to COVID-19? YES/NO

    a. *If yes:* Can you give some examples?

23. What have you and your team learned from the COVID-19 crisis about your licensing administrative data that might affect what you collect or how you collect and use data in the future?

Resources

As part of our work with OPRE, we may develop some research or data-related resources about licensing for states and territories to use.

24. What would you like to learn about your licensing system? (*If they are stuck, say:* Think broadly about child care licensing including regulations, monitoring and investigations, enforcing compliance with regulation, provider training, and consumer education)

25. What advice do you have for us as we develop research or data-related products for people in roles like yours?

    a. Possible Probes: What licensing topics do you think are most important to cover in a new research product? What formats -- such as short highlight documents or graphics -- do you find most useful?

26. Is there someone or some place you turn to if you need a report or fact to help make a point or make decisions? Who/where? *(Probe for examples that are beyond using their own licensing data)*

27. Do you have any examples of resources or reports you have found particularly useful?

    a. Why were they so helpful?

Consumer Education

CCDBG Reauthorization requires that states and territories post information about child care licensing inspections reports, aggregate data about serious incidents, and other licensing information on websites designed for families and the public. The information is intended to help families make child care choices.

28. Does your agency have data about how families **understand and use** the licensing-related information that [STATE/TERRITORY] posts about child care licensing?

If yes:

    a. What kind of data? For example, do you have web analytics? family surveys? other information? *(Be sure to note which ones they have)*

    b. How do you use that information?

Wrap Up

29. As a final question, is there anything else you would like to share about your licensing system, data system, and/or your use of data? Are there any other challenges or issues you'd like to raise that we haven't covered?

If this respondent will also be answering the data questions, either complete that interview now or open the online calendar and schedule that interview for a future time.

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us today. We really appreciate it.