



Staffed Family Child Care Networks: Lessons from a National Community of Practice

By Amy Friedlander

The pandemic and its devastating impact on family child care (FCC) operations and finances, and the federal and state relief funding intended to mitigate that impact, created a level of change and disruption in the early care and education field that enhanced interest in Staffed Family Child Care Networks (SFCCNs).

In 2021, with grant support from the Pritzker Children's Initiative, Opportunities Exchange convened a Community of Practice (CoP) with 7 Staffed Family Child Care Network teams from around the country. SFCCNs are designed to strengthen program quality and financial sustainability of small, home-based child care settings, which, [according to a 2020 Home Grown fact sheet](#) is the most prevalent child care placement for infants and toddlers. While SFCCNs share foundational goals they differ greatly in terms of the strategies they employ.

A new [OppEx Issue Brief](#) highlights lessons learned from participants in the CoP and underscores 7 key strategies, which include the following: 1) Flexibly meet provider member needs; 2) Design a

data collection plan that aligns with project goals; 3) Use technology to benchmark progress— among individual providers as well as across the Network; 4) Promote the SFCCN value proposition and communicate regularly with members, funders, and other key audiences; 5) Use SFCCN experience and data to inform public policy; 6) Collaborate with community partners and trusted messengers; and 7) Ensure a strong and consistent provider voice in Network services, decisions and leadership.

While SFCCNs have existed for decades, their traditional role has been in the sphere of pedagogical supports. As Networks develop robust services to address provider business challenges, it will be important to identify and amplify strategies with meaningful impact on the sector and ensure that resources are available to scale best practice in all communities.

Teams that participated in the Community of Practice include the following:

[Let's Grow Kids](#) | Vermont

[Maryland Child Care Boost](#) | Maryland

[ECE Learning Alliance](#) | Erie, PA

[Greater Newark Shared Services Alliance](#) | Newark, New Jersey

[South Coast Shared Services Alliance](#) | Coos & Curry County, Oregon

[Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network](#) | Wisconsin

[Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative](#) | Nebraska

A series of [tools and resources for Staffed Family Child Care Networks](#) is available on the OppEx website.

[Click Here for the full Issue Brief](#)



The banner features the Opportunities Exchange logo on the left, which consists of two overlapping circles (one green, one blue) above the text "Opportunities Exchange". The main text in the center reads "2022 NATIONAL SHARED SERVICES Technical Conference" in white and yellow. To the right is a graphic of a lightbulb with radiating lines, with the words "THINK BIG" in white and yellow. Below the main text, it says "April 18–20, 2022 | Austin, TX" and "Register Now!" in white and blue. The background is dark blue with an orange bar at the bottom.



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