

## Modernizing California Family Child Care

### A 21st Century Framework for Stability and Quality

Family child care (FCC) is essential infrastructure in California's early learning system—especially for infants and toddlers, mixed-age care, rural communities, working families, and families needing flexible hours.

California's family child care regulations have not received a full modernization since **1982**. Today's educators and families are operating within a framework built for a very different era—before current workforce realities, child development research, and the evolving needs of families.

#### The Case for Modernization California's current FCC regulations and oversight systems do not fully reflect:

- current child development research
- mixed-age learning environments
- workforce professionalization
- relationship-based care and continuity

As a result, the system often feels misaligned with what actually improves quality and stability—creating barriers instead of pathways.

At the same time, the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) has shifted enrollment patterns across the state. While intended to expand access, it has destabilized many FCC programs without leading to infant and toddler expansion at scale. FCC educators are navigating these shifts within outdated regulatory structures that were not designed for the current ecosystem.

**California cannot address a modern child care crisis with a 1982 framework.**

#### The Solution: Modernize FCC Regulations Using the NAFCC Point System

California should move toward a modernized regulatory structure grounded in the **NAFCC Quality Standards and Point System**.

**NAFCC is the National Association for Family Child Care**, and its standards are a nationally recognized framework designed specifically for family child care homes.

This framework:

- reflects modern research
- supports continuous quality improvement
- recognizes FCC as a professional early learning setting
- provides a clear pathway for growth
- is designed specifically for FCC—not adapted from center-based models

**This is not about QRIS.** This is about creating FCC-specific regulations that honor the role of family child care within California's early childhood ecosystem.

This approach strengthens licensing by modernizing how quality and professionalism are defined and supported. **It does not remove health and safety oversight.**

#### The Ask Establish a 6-month Family Child Care Modernization Commission tasked with:

- reviewing current FCC regulatory conditions
- gathering statewide educator input
- comparing California's system to states that have modernized FCC regulations
- drafting a plan to update FCC regulations using an FCC-specific framework grounded in NAFCC standards

#### Why the NAFCC Point System Works

**The NAFCC Point System measures quality in areas that matter most for children and families:**

- Health and Safety
- Child Development and Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Learning Environment
- Family Engagement and Communication
- Professionalism and Business Practices
- Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Responsiveness
- Mixed-Age Best Practices

Instead of a compliance-driven model, it creates clarity around what quality looks like and how educators can build toward it.

### **What California Gains**

Modernizing FCC regulations through an FCC-specific framework would support:

- stronger educator retention and workforce stability
- greater continuity of care for children
- clearer definitions of quality for families and policymakers
- better alignment across licensing, training, and improvement systems
- a structure built for mixed-age learning environments

**This will help stabilize California’s child care supply by reducing FCC educator burnout and preventing workforce loss caused by outdated regulatory pressure.**

### **Why This Matters Now**

FCC is one of California’s strongest tools for solving the child care crisis. Families rely on FCC for stable, relationship-based care and flexible scheduling—especially when center-based options do not meet family needs.

But when regulations are outdated, California ends up relying on patchwork bills and “band-aid fixes” that address one issue at a time without strengthening the system as a whole.

### **The Unintentional Consequence of TK**

A major public promise was that TK would:

- move older children into public programs
- “open up child care spots”
- increase access for infants and toddlers
- support the creation of infant/toddler programs in FCC homes

However, this has not played out as promised. FCC enrollment has been destabilized as older children shift into TK/UPK programs, and infant/toddler expansion has not occurred at scale. Families are still struggling to find infant care—and FCC educators are still operating under outdated regulations that do not support sustainable infant/toddler care in real-world FCC settings.

**Bottom Line Family child care is not secondary care. It is essential infrastructure for California families.**

Modernizing FCC regulations is not optional. It is necessary to stabilize the workforce, strengthen quality, and ensure access for the families who rely on it.

### **Contact**

**Tessie Ragan, M.Ed.**  
**Founder & Director, Perfect Start Learning (Family Child Care)**  
**Founder, Perfect Start Consulting**  
**NAFCC Leader | Early Childhood Educator & Advocate**  
**Save California Family Child Care**  
**Email: [tessieragan@perfectstartconsulting.com](mailto:tessieragan@perfectstartconsulting.com) |**  
**Phone: 661 390 0657 | Website: [www.perfectstartconsulting.com](http://www.perfectstartconsulting.com)**