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Abstract: Who Should Be the Voice of Family Child Care in the United States?

Family Child Care providers in the United States struggle to have a voice in policy decision making. This research is focusing on this dilemma. The research has identified 5 types of advocacy representation methods:

- 1) personal or grassroots advocacy in which a provider or group of providers speak for themselves in policy forums and/or legislative sessions;
- 2) representation by a not-for-profit community based organization;
- 3) representation by not-for-profit organizations that administer government contracts;
- 4) representation by state or national family child care associations; and
- 5) representation by labor unions. The study evaluates the resources and abilities of each type of organization.

The researcher has interviewed two types of family child care providers:

- 1) providers that are actively involved in leadership roles in family child care movements, such as associations and /or unions and
- 2) providers that do not participate in initiatives within the family child care field.

The following needs of family child care providers have been identified:

- 1) recognition and acceptance;
- 2) health insurance;
- 3) higher fees and child care subsidy rates;
- 4) retirement benefits;
- 5) professional training and quality initiatives.

The effectiveness and techniques of advocacy representatives for addressing the needs of family child care providers is being analyzed. Further analysis involves the differing perspectives of the two types of providers.

The study is conducting in-depth analysis of the differences between the roles of individual state family child care associations and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) as compared to major labor unions – American Federation of County and State Municipal Employees (AFCSME) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The relationships between the organizations are being evaluated as cooperative versus adversarial. Child care providers' interviews provide insight into the nature and motivation of these organizations.

The study is a part of a doctoral dissertation that is in progress so implications are not complete at this time. All data analysis is projected to be completed by May 2009. It is anticipated that the study will have recommendations for groups that represent family child care providers and also for individual providers as related to selecting advocacy methods.

A model of the research is being submitted for further information.

Researcher Disclosure/Personal Statement – The researcher was a family child care provider for 25 years and brings this viewpoint to the research. She has been active in family child care initiatives and organization including serving on the executive board of the National Association for Family Child Care.