

Background

Food insecurity in New Mexico (NM)

- Highest prevalence of child food insecurity in the nation, with 25% of children experiencing hunger (1)

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

- Helps child care providers serve nutritious foods
- Part of the food and nutrition security safety net for children nationwide
- Sponsors are regionally located agencies that assist child care centers and home-based child care providers with participating in CACFP

Barriers to CACFP access for home-based providers

- Many state-level and national studies have assessed barriers that child care centers experience when implementing CACFP requirements (2, 3)
- Few studies have assessed barriers to CACFP enrollment and implementation for home-based childcare providers (especially for rural and non-English speaking providers) (2, 3)
- Barriers to accessing CACFP disproportionately affect rural and home-based child care providers (4, 5)

Objectives

To describe NM CACFP sponsor staff perspectives on barriers and facilitators to program access for home-based child care providers.



Methods

- We interviewed 11 NM CACFP sponsor staff representing 9 out of 13 agencies (69% response rate) from August-September 2020
- Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded
- Thematic analysis was conducted by a mixture of constructivist and modified grounded theory

Results

- Sponsors described their home-based childcare provider population as Hispanic older adults or grandparents who speak English or Spanish

Barriers		Sponsor Comments
Enrollment	Implementation	
Program administrative burden		<p>"Well, before in the past, sponsor agencies, we recruit the families, and we are the ones who go out and check everything that is in the household to make sure that the house and the home is safe...Probably five or six years ago, the state took over that function... Since then [there is] a very long process of certification, I'm not sure because I think they only have a few staff."</p> <p>"I guess their biggest challenge is the menus, how to get them to us, or the learning of 'em, because there's—obviously they need to meet the pattern...They need to know what qualifies, what doesn't qualify. At the beginning, their first menus are going to be a little bit challenging, 'cause, really, they probably never had to keep a menu before. That's different, and probably serving all components was not something that they would do."</p>
Bottlenecks in registered provider process	Inability to attend required nutrition trainings Need to document attendance and maintain menus	
Eligibility		<p>"A lot of the reason why we lost a lot of homes was because, initially—I mean it was an easy program to get into, and it was definitely based on complete trust, but we started losing providers as requirements got stricter. One of the first things they did—and I say 'they' as in the authorities—is require that providers get background checks."</p>
Background checks (registered provider process)		
Language barriers		<p>"...our state needs to do just a little bit better job in getting paperwork in different languages. We do okay with getting Spanish language paperwork out somewhat, even though some of the regulations are not translated, so we need to make sure that we have every single paper in Spanish, translated in Spanish. Then there are other populations that live here that speak a different language, and we might be able to reach them if we had information in their language, so that's another thing we could change."</p>
Materials not translated into Spanish or other languages	Provider trainings only available in English/need for bilingual staff	
Financial barriers		<p>"Because joining the food program is not a challenge at all, 'cause we pretty much do everything for 'em...—we're talkin' about costs. All the costs are from that end. The registration fee, their having to purchase fire extinguishers, smoke alarm, carbon monoxide alarm, then the first aid kit, and then all the other requirements that they have to have in the home in order to just pass the registration."</p> <p>"...I also sit on the School Nutrition Association's board of directors. I can tell you that reimbursement rates have never kept up with the inflation of commodities and food prices."</p>
Financial costs to becoming registered provider (safety costs)	Inadequate reimbursement to justify the additional effort	
Fear		<p>"Although we allow and absolutely encourage folks who are undocumented to be on the food program, that's a scary process for them as well because...they have to have another agency, formerly CYFD, come out to their home, and then we go out. It's a ton of paperwork. They get really nervous about that, even though there's no tracking involved"</p>
Undocumented providers		

The COVID-19 pandemic:

- Exacerbated backlog in registered home process
- Revealed access to technology and digital literacy challenges related to completing trainings and paperwork virtually/electronically

Results cont.

Recommendations to enhance CACFP enrollment and implementation among home-based child care providers:

- Improve state or sponsor capacity to conduct home inspections required to become a registered provider
- Consider how policies related to background checks and government agencies conducting home inspections may affect engagement of home-based child care providers
- Provide funds to cover enrollment costs (costs to become registered provider)
- Provide bilingual technical assistance and materials in Spanish and other languages
- Enhance the quality and quantity and access to required nutrition trainings
- Increase reimbursement rates

Discussion and Next Steps

- Based on sponsor perspectives, there are several federal and state policies and sponsor practices that could be changed to enhance engagement of home-based child care providers in the CACFP in NM
- These interviews represent only sponsor perspectives. Next steps for the full study include:
 - Interviewing home-based child care providers who are or are not enrolled in CACFP
 - Analyzing state administrative data to examine access to the CACFP for children served through child care assistance

References

- Gundersen C, Dewey A, Kato M, Crumbaugh AS, Strayer M. Map the Meal Gap 2019. Chicago, IL: Feeding America; 2020:14-34. Available at: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/2017-map-the-meal-gap-full.pdf>.
- Speirs KE, Gordon RA, Powers ET, Koester BD, Fiese BH. Licensed Family Child Care Providers' Participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): Greater Benefits and Fewer Burdens in Highly Urban Areas? Early Education and Development. 2020;31(2):153-176. doi:10.1080/10409289.2019.1648087
- Hasnin S. Contextual Factors Influence Childcare Providers' Barriers for Serving Healthy Meals to Preschool Children. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior. 2020;52(7). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2020.04.072>.
- Board F and N, Medicine I of. Barriers and Facilitators to Providing Meals and Snacks That Align with the Current Dietary Guidance. National Academies Press (US); 2012. Accessed April 1, 2021. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK201252/>
- Heinz H, Breidenbach A. Child Care Assistance and Early Literacy. University of New Mexico: Cradle to Career Policy Institute, 2018.

- The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.
- Source of Funding: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation