



Streamlining professional record keeping in child care licensing

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Every year, Nebraska pays to send child care licensing personnel to providers statewide to gather and verify documentation on employee training and credentials.

The Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Records System (NECPRS) offers a budget-neutral way to streamline this process and create significant procedural and cost efficiencies in our child care licensing system.

Key Points

- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services conducts annual verifications to ensure licensed child care staff members meet training and professional educational requirements for licensure.
- This process currently requires a significant investment of time and staff resources on the part of state government to manually gather and catalog this information.
- Fully integrating the use of the existing, online **Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Records System (NECPRS)** into this process is a **cost-neutral way to create cost and procedural efficiencies for both state government and child care providers.**
- As part of Nebraska's child care licensing protocol, NECPRS would also generate invaluable data for strengthening the professional quality of Nebraska's early childhood workforce and improve parent choice in child care options by satisfying licensing statute 43-2606.

1. Background

Nebraska's licensed child care infrastructure is largely based on its ability to ensure that these services meet core standards for the safety and well-being of the children in their care. This involves verifying, at least once per year, that licensed child care staff possess the requisite professional training and education to deliver these services.

Currently, this verification process is conducted by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and requires in-person visits to licensed child care providers to gather and catalog the necessary training records and other documentation. In 2017, 23 DHHS child care licensing personnel conducted more than 6,000 visits statewide, the majority of which involved verifying these records.

As cumbersome as this process is for state employees, it also represents a burden to the providers themselves, who must be responsible for maintaining and providing hardcopy files for each employee. Moreover, each site visit interrupts the provider's operations and focus on the children in their care.

While verifying the professional credentials and knowledge base of the early childhood professional workforce is critically important to ensuring that children are being cared for in safe and developmentally appropriate settings, there is a better and more efficient way to handle that process.

2. What is the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Records System (NECPRS)?

The Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Records System (NECPRS) is an online database launched by the Nebraska Department of Education in 2014. It was designed to provide early childhood educators with a dashboard to record and track their professional experience, credentials and trainings. Each user who enrolls in NECPRS receives a unique ID number to register for trainings and automatically update user profiles once professional development milestones are completed. Currently, 7,994 users are enrolled in NECPRS.

In effect, NECPRS not only meets the professional development needs of individual providers, but offers a potentially ready-to-use record keeping platform for state administrators responsible for the child care licensing.

3. Benefits of integrating NECPRS into Nebraska's child care licensure process

A. Governmental Efficiency

NECPRS can greatly expedite and simplify the process of verifying provider training and education that is now conducted manually by child care licensing personnel. In many cases, agencies and organizations that offer trainings can use NECPRS to record this information and verify providers' completion of these professional development activities themselves.

Because NECPRS was designed to accommodate all Nebraska child care providers, this system is flexible and extendible enough to minimize the workload on state employees no matter how many providers choose to pursue licensure. Whereas this process can currently take hours to complete through on-site visits to providers, NECPRS can reduce that time to minutes.

B. Benefits to early childhood professionals

In-person site visits to verify and record training information and credentials is not only labor-intensive for licensing personnel, but also affects the operations of providers in their place of business. NECPRS offers a way to minimize the time state employees must spend on site with providers, allowing educators to better focus their attention on the children in their care and the management of their businesses.

NECPRS eliminates the need for providers to store and maintain hardcopy documentation on professional trainings and professional credentials. This reduces the administrative burden of physical record keeping,

while making it easier for child care licensing personnel to verify training equivalencies. In turn, this has the potential of allowing highly experienced and qualified early childhood professionals to forgo redundant requirements or trainings.

C. Usable data for public policy

NECPRS plays an essential part in Nebraska's efforts to create an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS).¹ As a component of this project, NECPRS will enable legislators and state administrators to develop more informed early childhood policies based on the the practical effects of provider education levels, training, professional experience and other factors.

D. Parent choice in child care

Enabling parents to make informed choices about child care has practical benefits to families, employers and the child care industry statewide. Ordinarily, this is a difficult process for parents, despite the fact that Nebraska statute 43-2606 requires a "system of documenting training levels of staff in specific child care settings to assist parents in selecting optimal care settings."²

A system that satisfies this statutory requirement is not currently in place. Using NECPRS to document this information would enable the state to meet this requirement without creating a new database.

4. Conclusion

The Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System is a ready-made solution to multiple inefficiencies in our state's administrative procedures at no public fiscal impact. It adds no new regulations to burden child care providers, while making it easier for them to address documentary requirements for licensure. Given the broad range of benefits of NECPRS, First Five Nebraska encourages policymakers to make it an integral part of our state's child care licensing protocols.

¹ www.firstfivebraska.org/uploads/NE_ECIDS_8.31.pdf

² <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=43-2606>

