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# Finding the Rules that Work

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An emerging paradigm promises to close the gap between regulatory compliance scores and the quality of childcare services.

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THIS ARTICLE FROM ISSUE

**JANUARY-FEBRUARY  
2025**

VOLUME 113, NUMBER 1

PAGE 16

DOI: 10.1511/2025.113.1.16

( [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1511/2025.113.1.16](https://doi.org/10.1511/2025.113.1.16) )

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- An old fable recounts how a father and son, taking a donkey to market to sell it, encounter a string of critical villagers who each inform the pair they're "doing it wrong." Their efforts to please each subsequent critic end, absurdly and tragically, with them carrying the beast of burden themselves, ultimately causing its death.

### QUICK TAKE

- **Contrary to historical assumptions**, the quality of childcare programs does not increase linearly as their compliance with rules and regulations approaches 100 percent.
- **All-or-nothing, one-size-fits-all** approaches to compliance and licensing generate skewed data, raise risks of false negatives and false positives, and burden staff with bureaucratic tasks.
- **Substantial regulatory compliance** is an alternative approach that emphasizes compliance with the most productive rules, preserves safety, and allows staff to concentrate more on children.

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