

Frequently Asked Questions on Child Care Regulation

What is the central debate currently ongoing in the early care and education field? The primary discussion revolves around the balance between rules and regulations designed to protect children in out-of-home care and the desire to increase access to child care, often through deregulation. This is not a new debate, having historical roots in discussions about federal childcare standards.

What is "regulatory science" and how does the author suggest it can inform child care regulations? Regulatory science is an emerging field that uses empirical evidence to understand and improve regulatory processes. The author proposes shifting the discussion about child care regulations from the political arena to regulatory science, emphasizing the use of data-driven approaches like risk assessment and the identification of key indicator rules to create more effective and efficient monitoring systems.

What is the "theory of regulatory compliance" mentioned in the text, and what are its implications for child care licensing? The theory of regulatory compliance suggests that achieving substantial compliance with child care rules may be equivalent to achieving full (100%) compliance. This theory, supported by empirical research, challenges the traditional "one-size-fits-all" approach to program monitoring and supports a more targeted, differential monitoring approach based on risk assessment and prediction of overall compliance.

What is "Caring for Our Children (CFOC)" and why is it considered significant in the field? "Caring for Our Children" (CFOC) is a comprehensive set of national health and safety performance standards for early care and education programs, developed and regularly updated by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Public Health Association (APHA), and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (NRCHSCC). It is considered the default set of health and safety standards in the field and serves as a reference for state licensing agencies when developing or revising their regulations.

What is the "child care trilemma" and how does the author propose to address it? The child care trilemma refers to the challenge of balancing access to affordable, high-quality, and safe child care. The author suggests using "Caring for Our Children Basics" (CFOCB), a distilled set of approximately 65 key standards derived from CFOC through risk assessment and key indicator methodologies, as a baseline for regulations. This approach aims to ensure a foundational level of quality and safety without unnecessary burdens that could negatively impact accessibility and affordability.

What are "Stepping Stones to Caring for Our Children" and "Caring for Our Children Basics," and how were they developed? "Stepping Stones to Caring for Our Children" is a condensed version of the full CFOC, containing approximately 120 standards identified through a risk assessment methodology to pinpoint standards where non-compliance posed a higher risk to children. "Caring for Our Children Basics" (CFOCB) is an even more focused set of around 65 standards derived using the key indicator rule methodology, which identifies standards with a strong predictive value for overall regulatory compliance and child safety.

How does the author suggest re-evaluating specific regulations like staff-child ratios? The author proposes moving beyond isolated consideration of rules like staff-child ratios and instead analyzing them in conjunction with other factors, such as staff qualifications. For example, a slightly higher staff-child ratio might be acceptable if coupled with a requirement for more highly qualified staff, suggesting innovative approaches to balancing quality and cost considerations. The author also suggests that any increased revenue from a slightly higher ratio could be directed towards increasing the salaries of the more qualified staff.

What is the author's main recommendation regarding the current calls for deregulation in child care? The author cautions against a "knee-jerk reaction" of broad deregulation driven by political expediency. Instead, they advocate for a more measured and evidence-based approach, using the principles of regulatory science and resources like "Caring for Our Children Basics" to ensure a baseline of health, safety, and quality while addressing the challenges of accessibility and affordability in child care. They emphasize using empirical data to inform regulatory decisions rather than relying solely on political pressures.