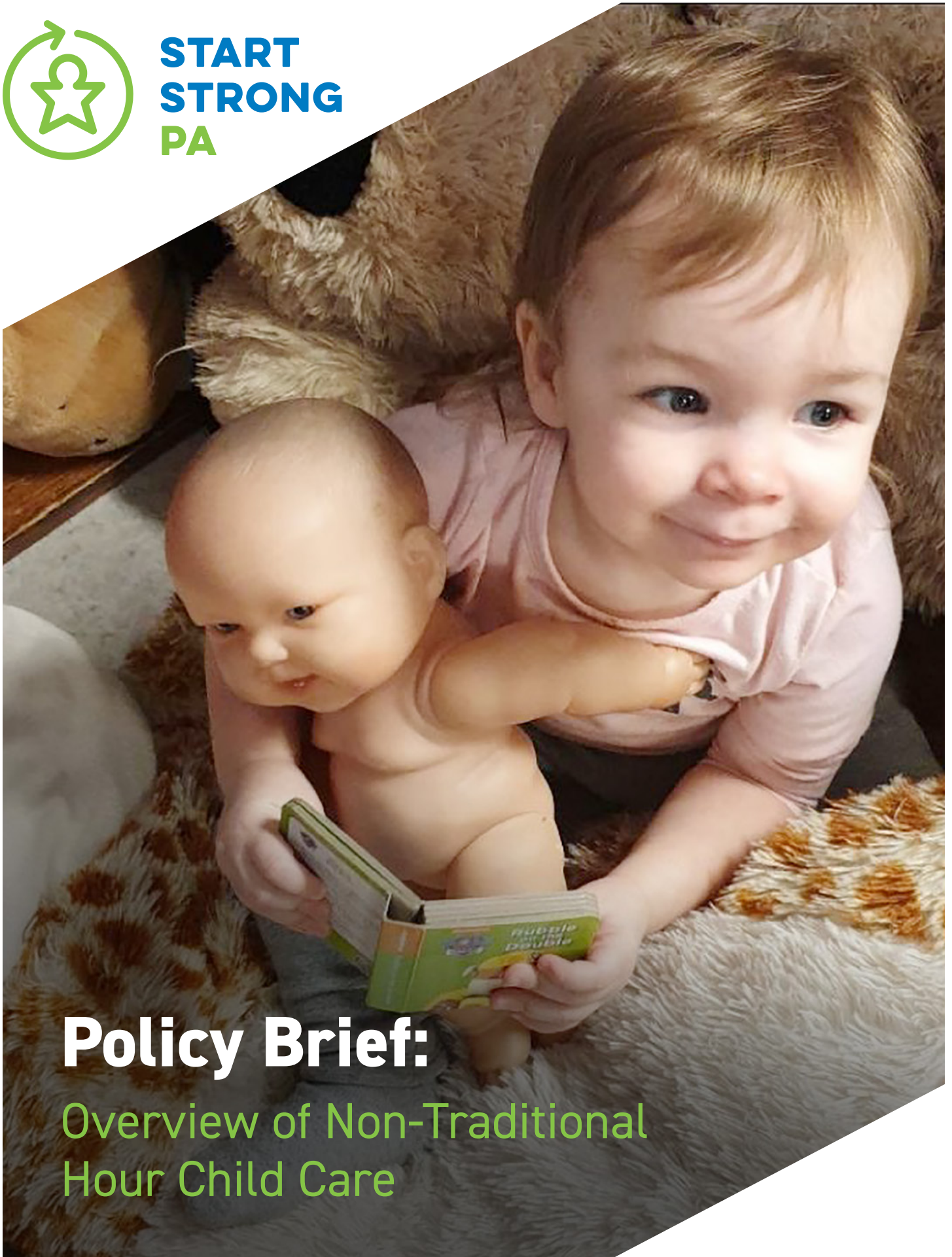


**START
STRONG
PA**



Policy Brief:

Overview of Non-Traditional
Hour Child Care

INTRODUCTION

High-quality child care programs offer safe, nurturing, and responsive environments that allow families to work knowing their children are with qualified and caring professionals. Prior to the pandemic, 70% of Pennsylvania children younger than age five had all adults in their household in the labor force; nearly one in three Pennsylvania families were likely to have non-traditional child care needs¹. As the number of jobs with non-traditional work hours increases, the need for quality child care during non-traditional hours (NTH) continues to grow.

While needs, routines, and standards may look different during non-traditional hours, children still deserve the same safe, nurturing, and responsive environments of child care programs that operate during traditional work hours. This allows assurance for parents/caregivers as they work during evenings, overnight, and weekends.



According to Pennsylvania regulations, “non-traditional hours” are defined as *hours of child care provided to a child whose parent/caretaker works on Saturday, Sunday, or between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.* During evening or overnight hours, at least five hours of full-time care or three to five hours of part-time care is provided between the hours of 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. “Night care” is defined as *care for a child between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.*, but nothing beyond the definitions are outlined in the regulations.²

Non-traditional child care can occur in regulated settings such child care centers, family child care homes, group child care homes, and relative care. Many families may also use a patchwork of informal care to meet their needs.

CHILD CARE SETTINGS

Child care centers: Care and education provided to more than seven children in a center that is certified by the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

Family child care homes: One caregiver who provides care and education for three to six children who are not related to them in a home setting that is certified by OCDEL.

Group child care homes: Care and education provided for up to 12 children in a home (or commercial setting) that is certified by OCDEL.

Relative care: One caregiver who provides care and education for no more than three related children in a home setting who may be eligible for subsidy reimbursement. Relatives are defined as grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. All relative providers must be 18 years of age or older and live in a residence separate from the residence of the child for whom they will provide care.

The Keystone Command Center for Economic Development and Workforce 2020 annual report noted the lack of accessible non-traditional child care as a barrier for both employees and employers.³ Prior to the pandemic, fewer than 50,000 (13% of all regulated child care seats) were available for care during non-traditional hours.⁴ Families needing NTH care work in four major industries: health care and social assistance, retail, accommodation and food service, and manufacturing. At the start of the pandemic, many of these industries were essential to keeping America moving, yet many struggled to find child care.



“Not all parents have traditional jobs. Parents who are police officers want to go fight for us and need to know their kids are safe. They can’t do their jobs effectively if they feel their kids are not being taken care of.”

Paige Davis

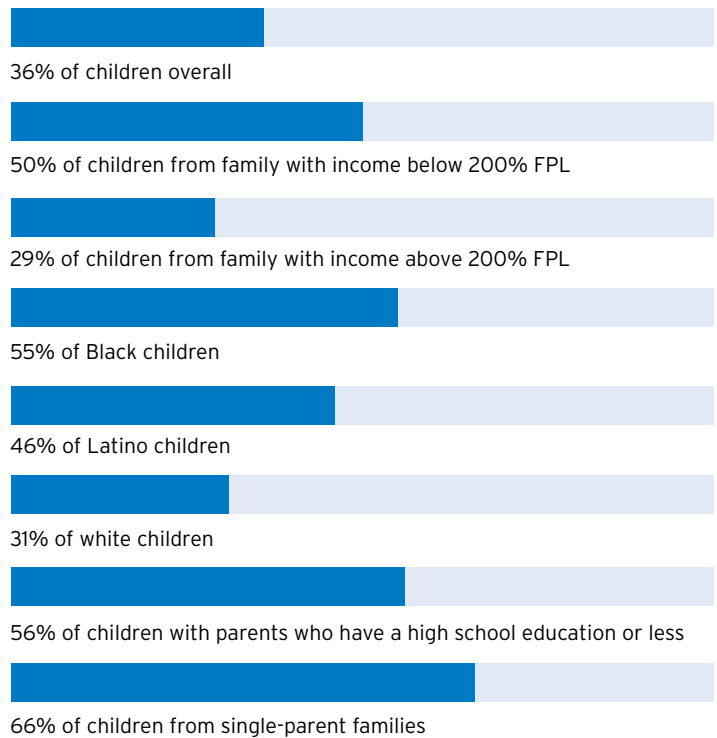
Director at Sweet Dreams & Fairytales in Philadelphia

As Start Strong PA continues to address the challenges and barriers to high-quality care for families and address the needs of providers, the campaign recognizes the importance of ensuring accessibility to NTH. There has always been a need for increased availability of and support for NTH in our child care system. As more families return to work and will likely have shifts outside the standard work schedule, it is critical that our Commonwealth include NTH care in policy solutions to strengthen our early care and learning infrastructure. We must ensure families have safe and nurturing environments for their children during evenings, weekends, and overnight hours.

RECENT FINDINGS

In July 2021, the Urban Institute released the report *Comparing Potential Demand for Non-traditional Hour Child Care and Planned Policies Across States*. The purpose of the report aimed to better understand the child care needs of parents and caregivers who worked early mornings, evenings, overnights, and weekends. The report analyzed Census Bureau microdata from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey to provide a snapshot for each state. The box below outlines Pennsylvania specific data for children under the age of six with parents working non-traditional hours.

PENNSYLVANIA FINDINGS Children younger than age six with parents working non-traditional hours⁵



“As a single mother and clergy-person, my primary working hours tend to be after the workday ends and on weekends, when my congregants are available. I can’t support my congregants and my community to the best of my ability if I don’t have stable, safe, and engaging care for my child.”

Keren Gorban parent in Allegheny County

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Start Strong PA campaign commends Governor Tom Wolf's administration for allocating \$16.8 million of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) discretionary child care funds for rate incentives for providers that offer child care during non-traditional hours. These funds will support add-on incentives to Child Care Works (CCW) base rates for child care providers that offer at least two hours of care during non-traditional hours. Recognizing the need to increase the rate for non-traditional hours supports the stability of child care providers offering overnight, evening, and weekend care and, in turn, promotes more accessibility for families.

There are other policy considerations that the Commonwealth can consider to better meet the needs of families and support high-quality child care around the clock.

The Urban Institute report reviews states' Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plans from 2019-21 for three major strategies to support NTH care: use grants or contracts to increase the supply; use grants or contracts to increase quality; and differential rates. The Pennsylvania Child Care and Development Fund Plan (both in 2019-21 and 2022-24) proposed policies for NTH child care that do not address these policies. While the ARPA funds will address the differential rate solution that the report suggests, we need to plan for more sustainable and continuous policies to ensure financial incentives for providers and consider other policies, practices, and research to improve our ability to meet the needs of non-traditional child care for both providers and families.

1. Resources and Supports

Pennsylvania should explore how other financial incentives like grants and contracts have the potential to expand the supply and quality of NTH care. This may begin with an analysis of demand to support target efforts to build supply in regions with the most need. A 2018 National Women's Law Center article suggested using grants and mentoring to encourage more providers to offer NTH and assisting those that already offer care. Establishing technical assistance, mentorship, professional networks, and shared services may provide the opportunity to support existing NTH providers and the recruitment of new programs.⁶

More specifically, Pennsylvania should support new and established home-based providers who are more likely to offer NTH child care. According to the 2019 Research For Action (RFA) report titled *Making it Work: Examining the Status of Non-traditional Child Care in Pennsylvania*, home-based providers make up 64% of regulated providers offering NTH care.⁷

2. Standards and Regulations

Only one in four regulated providers offer NTH care, and those that do are half as likely to be a STAR 3 or 4.⁸ Policymakers should consider developing minimum licensing and increasing quality standards for evening and overnight care so that providers have clear benchmarks. Additionally, they should define what quality looks like in caring for children outside the daytime, weekday hours such as routines and activities for bedtime.

Currently, there is no language beyond defining NTH in the child care regulations. Providers could benefit from additional language or guidance specific to providing quality care in the evening, overnight, and weekend hours. Any changes or updates to the regulations should include the input from providers with experience offering NTH care.

In October 2021, OCDEL announced an impact project to rewrite the child care regulations to focus on equity, quality, and decreasing provider burden. This is an opportunity to address NTH child care in the regulations to help improve quality and increase supply while making it more accessible for families and less of a burden on providers who offer NTH care.



3. Accessibility for families

Only 9% of eligible children use CCW subsidy to pay for NTH child care. Families who qualified and received CCW said it was inadequate to afford high-quality NTH child care.⁹ The add-on using ARPA funds should help to begin to address this problem; however, we must acknowledge that the add-on is added to a market rate that is not the actual cost of care. The costs to remain open and provide quality care are huge barriers for providers, and addressing the base-rates and NTH care add-on is critical for ensuring families have access. The state should monitor how the add-on rate impacts provider offerings and family accessibility.

Many parents/caregivers may rely on a patchwork of care from other family members, friends, and neighbors. We need to better understand the families using relative care and if they are aware of the subsidy options. Families reported NTH care was difficult to find in the RFA report. Pennsylvania should advertise and promote the use of CCW subsidy for NTH care, including for the families using relative providers. A report from the Urban Institute suggests consumer education strategies to increase information about the location of child care services that are offered outside traditional daytime and weekday hours.

“Some are single parents and do not have anyone who can help. I work as many as 14 hours a day, plus Saturday and Sunday without extra pay. I have to arrange my shopping and appointments around their schedule.”

Provider in Crawford County

4. Employer and Business Support

Employers and businesses with non-standard work schedules must be involved in resolving NTH care supply needs. Child Care Aware outlined examples of how employers sought to support the NTH child care needs of their employees. An employer in Kentucky established an on-site 24-hour child care center, while a company in North Carolina partnered with local family child care providers to offer services for their workers. Business and government employers in rural Alabama started the Employer’s Child Care Alliance to provide a variety of child care services.¹⁰ Pennsylvania has a robust business community that understands child care needs and has an opportunity to support the growth of quality NTH child care. Our understanding of the growth of NTH child care will impact employers and businesses’ bottom line and ultimately the economy. Employers who operate shift work during non-traditional hours are even more impacted by the child care challenges facing parents.¹¹





5. Research

In order to consider policies and increased funding for NTH child care across the state, it would be helpful to have a method for updated and ongoing data. Gathering additional information from providers, families, and employers would help policy-makers to better understand what strategies and policies would be most beneficial for NTH child care needs such as:

- Conduct an availability study around providers currently offering evening, overnight, and weekend care to determine supply and demand; separate non-traditional care categories to determine the needs and demand for weekends, evenings, early mornings, overnights.
- Reach out to families working non-traditional hours to learn more about how families pay for and piece together care.
- Collect feedback from employers and schools/training programs who would have an interest in providing child care benefits to their employees. Children First, a principal organization of Start Strong PA, is conducting a survey of the business community in Pennsylvania to better understand the needs of employers and employees for NTH child care for a future report.
- Explore how investments from Build Back Better could be utilized to support families seeking non-traditional care and providers offering evening and weekend hours.

“Quality non-traditional care looks similar to that of traditional care. We focus on their social and emotional development. We support them by providing a stable structured environment where their children are safe and nurtured. There is peace of mind for parents. One challenge is not having adequate quality staff to support the program. The biggest challenge is wages. We need incentives to increase staff willingness to work those shifts.”

Lesely Crawford

Owner and Director ABK Early Learning and Development Center

CONCLUSION

As we think about equitable solutions for children, families, and providers, we must consider how NTH fits into the child care landscape. There is promise and potential with the incentivized add-on rates for NTH through ARPA discretionary funds. However, more guidance and research is needed in order to better meet the needs of working families and NTH providers.

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