



Micro-centers: A Child Care Growth Strategy for the New Economy

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What is a Micro-Center?

A micro-center is a small (one or two classroom) child care program located in a residential or commercial setting, with pedagogical and business leadership from an off-site entity.

Why is Growing Micro- Centers an Important Policy Issue?

The supply of small child care sites – small centers as well as Family Child Care Homes -- has declined dramatically over the past decade.

- In 2019, 21,500 centers in the US enrolled fewer than 25 children
- In 2012, 28,100 centers in the US enrolled fewer than 25 children.
- This is a 28.5% DECREASE in only seven years.

Source: National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)

Best practice Micro-Center Operation: Networks

Successful implementation requires automation and revisions to:

- Classroom and admin staffing;
- Licensing and/or QRIS (in many states or cities);
- State and local policy, such as rates and reporting requirements.



MICRO-CENTER HOST LOCATION ROLE



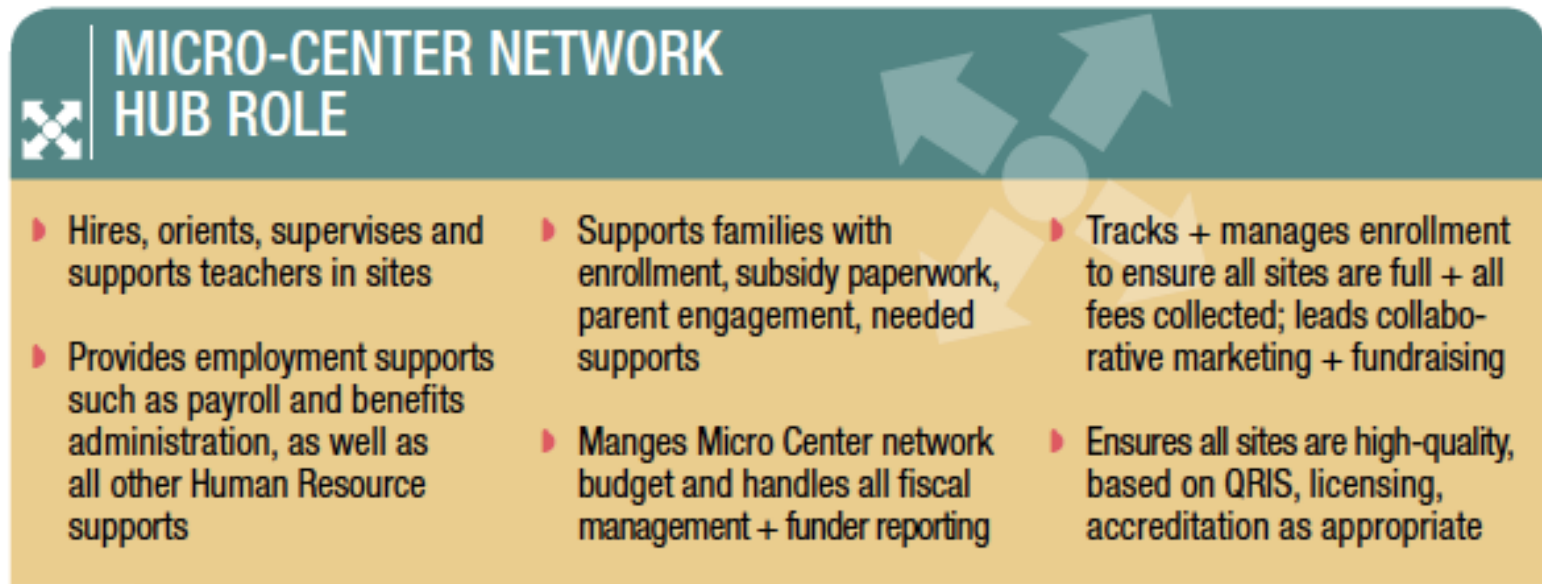
- ▶ Makes a classroom space + related facility supports (e.g. janitorial, maintenance) available free (or minimal cost)
- ▶ Helps support cost of needed renovation, equipment, furnishings
- ▶ Collaborates with Micro-Center Hub to ensure compliance with licensing, insurance, and local fire and safety requirements
- ▶ Ensures consistent communication regarding issues that could impact Micro-Center operation
- ▶ Markets services to employees

An Innovative Capacity-Building Strategy

The Micro-Center Network approach is ideal for employers and rural areas where it is possible to secure donated or low-cost space and overhead support.

An Emerging Leadership Opportunity

The Micro-Center Network approach is ideal where it is possible to identify a Hub agency with skilled leadership staff (business + pedagogical) and capacity to scale.



Growing Micro-Centers:

Early Adopter States

Oregon

- [Senate Bill 1040 B](#) signed into law this year.
- Legislature allocated \$225,000 to DELC to administer a pilot program in the 2023-25 biennium.

Tennessee

- Micro-Centers allowed under Tennessee Group Child Care rule
- Chambliss Center for Children has operated a Micro-Center Network since 2002.
- New RFP that can fund micro-center start-up/expansion. Earmarked \$5M for Community Child Care Hubs.

Oregon

Definition of Micro-Center

Micro Center means a child care program locate inside a residential or nonresidential facility that on a regular basis serves a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 30 children for more than four hours a day.

Role of CCDF Lead Agency

The Department of Early Learning and Care shall establish by rule a pilot program to develop a sustainable model for micro centers to provide affordable, high quality early learning opportunities to communities in this state.

Lessons from Oregon

- Making the case for Micro-Centers
- Strongest supporters
- Roadblocks
- Advice for other states

Tennessee

Definition of Micro-Center

Tennessee currently allows Micro-Centers under the definition of Group Day Care Home:

Group Day Care Home. Any facility operated by a person, social agency, corporation or institution, or any other group which receives a minimum of eight and a maximum of 12 children (and up to three additional school-age children who will only be present before and after school, on school holidays, on school snow days, and during school summer vacation) for less than 24 hours per day for care outside their own homes, without transfer of legal custody.

Tennessee

Over 20 years ago...

Began with innovative agency --
Chambliss Center for Children -- in
partnership with local school district.

Crafted micro-center business model,
building on creative interpretation of
existing law.

Grew to include at least 1 site in every
public school

Tennessee Grants

(from CCDF Lead Agency)

[Growing Child Care
Capacity in Tennessee
Community Child
Care Hub Grants](#)

Funding to develop and establish locally managed child care administrative hubs.

Administrative supports: staffing, marketing, budgeting, technology, fiscal, and curriculum development and implementation.

May include -- but is not limited to -- new Micro-Center sites.

Lessons from Tennessee

- Building support in DHS for start-up and expansion grants
- Experience with the RFP process
- Advice for other states
- Business model/finance shifts that are needed to successfully implement Micro-Centers
 - donated space/facility costs is key



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