



Navigating Uneven Funding: Child Care Providers Share Experiences

Advocacy work at VFCCA

Introduction:

The landscape of childcare underwent significant transformations during the COVID-19 pandemic, with state and federal governments responding by releasing funds to support providers. Valley Family Child Care Association (VFCCA) members, consisting of both voucher and private-pay providers, found themselves grappling with the impact of uneven funding distribution. In this article, we explore the challenges and triumphs faced by these providers, shedding light on the complexities of stipends, grants, and ARPA funding during these unprecedented times.

Uneven Funding and Its Impact:

The dichotomy between voucher kids (state-paid) and private-pay kids became more pronounced during the pandemic. While state-funded childcare providers received support, private-pay providers navigated a tougher road. One provider shared, “I struggled during Covid a lot, especially with private pay. Families left during Covid, and those who stayed weren’t qualified for state aid due to their work status.”

Renovation Grants and ARPA Funding:

VFCCA providers had their eyes on various grants, including renovation grants and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. However, the uneven distribution of these funds created disparities. Many providers, especially those relying on private pay, found it challenging to access the financial support they desperately needed.

Positive and Negative Experiences:

When asked about the impact of uneven funding, providers shared both positive and negative experiences. One provider highlighted, “I applied for many grants but received hardly anything. It made my business harder to keep going, and I felt unappreciated. Fellow providers receiving more support made me feel divided and frustrated.”

Another provider expressed the difficulty in applying for grants, stating, “The paperwork and process were very complicated, even with webinars. I’ve had subsidy but not at the right times or dates.” This sentiment echoes the frustration shared by many providers facing barriers in accessing available financial assistance.

The Emotional Toll:

The uneven distribution of funds not only affected providers financially but also took an emotional toll. Providers spoke of feeling shame for seeking help and care for their businesses. One provider admitted, “I started to feel shame for thinking I, as a provider, deserved any help or care for my business. So, I just did my best on my own.”

Conclusion:

As we reflect on the experiences of VFCCA providers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, it's clear that the uneven distribution of funding had a profound impact. This narrative underscores the importance of equitable support for all childcare providers, irrespective of their funding source. Moving forward, policymakers must address these disparities and create a more inclusive system with all providers included to recognize and value the contributions of all childcare professionals.