



Quality of family, friend and neighbor care

Fundamental facts from the
2004 Minnesota child care survey



FFN caregivers express strong family bonds.

- 82 percent of family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers say they frequently share information with parents regarding the children.
- 82 percent of FFN caregivers say they have a very close relationship with the children they care for.
- 87 percent of FFN caregivers feel that the match between their own childrearing values and those of the parents is “excellent” (47 percent) or “good” (40 percent).
- 85 percent of FFN caregivers report that they and the parents cooperate and work together “very well.”
- 91 percent of FFN caregivers strongly agree or agree that taking care of the children is the best part of their day.
- FFN caregivers of children age 5 and younger tend to have strong partnerships with the children’s parents, more often than do those caring for older children.
- Relatives most commonly report caring for the children to help out their family (61 percent), while friends and neighbors are more likely than relative caregivers to be motivated by their love of children (30 percent) and the income (9 percent).

FFN caregivers are trained and experienced.

- On average, FFN caregivers have provided FFN care for 11 years.
- 17 percent of FFN caregivers are or have been child care teachers or teacher aides in a licensed child care center or program. 12 percent are or have been licensed as family child care providers.
- More than half (56 percent) have participated in parent education, about the same as parents in general.
- 38 percent have participated in a child care training program.
- About 45 percent have taken college classes in child development, nutrition or health and safety.
- 49 percent say they have attended workshops on child development and 86 percent say they are self-taught by reading books or watching educational videos.

Most FFN caregivers report activities (daily or most days) that naturally teach and encourage children’s language, literacy, social, emotional and physical development.

- Children under age 2: Hugging and kissing (98 percent); talking or cooing, telling stories or singing to the child (98 percent) and playing games like peek-a-boo (96 percent).

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FFN caregivers are better prepared to provide quality child care than commonly presumed.

- Children age 2 to 5: Talking, telling stories or singing to the child (88 percent); practicing language or math with the child (76 percent); having the child sing or read along with them or teaching the child songs or stories (74 percent) and reading to the child (72 percent). Also, children play with toys or household items that promote hand-eye coordination (91 percent) and play “pretend” games by using toys and dolls, by dressing up or acting out roles or stories (75 percent).

The following findings are summarized from an observational study of FFN caregivers and a focus group study of immigrant and refugee FFN caregivers.

FFN caregivers demonstrate positive interactions with children.

- FFN caregivers’ interactions with children were warm and responsive, according to trained observers.
- Caregivers acknowledged children’s efforts and supervised them appropriately.
- Caregivers gave children opportunities to play and explore.
- Meals provided opportunities for conversation and development of self-help skills.
- Observers heard and saw no harsh words or actions.
- Care settings generally contained adequate age-specific toys and materials, but they did not consistently have enough age-appropriate books or art materials.

FFN care settings are generally safe and comfortable, but additional precautions are needed.

- The space for caregiving was ample and comfortable.
- A majority of homes had smoke detectors, and equipment and materials were in good repair.
- Children in some settings had access to hazardous items and spaces, such as unsecured indoor stairs and uncovered electrical outlets.
- Few immigrant and refugee FFN caregivers report having basic safety supplies such as first aid kits, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers or latches on cupboards with medicines and household chemicals.
- Many caregivers did not follow common sanitation practices, such as consistent hand washing for children and adults.

FFN caregivers miss opportunities to incorporate learning activities in their everyday interactions with children.

- Care settings generally contained adequate age-specific toys and materials, but they did not consistently have enough age-appropriate books or art materials.
- Caregivers missed natural learning opportunities to talk about feelings and foster social skills.
- Caregivers did not take advantage of “teachable moments” to work on specific language or math skills.
- Caregivers did not set appropriate limits on television use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Download fact sheets and full research reports—*Child Care Use in Minnesota* and *Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers*—at www.wilderresearch.org. 2004 Minnesota statewide household child care survey funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and conducted by Wilder Research, Richard Chase study director.

Additional reports available through the Minnesota Department of Human Services: Tout, K., and Zaslow, M. (Child Trends). (2006). *Observations of Family, Friend and Neighbor Care in Minnesota: A Report of the Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership* funded with the support of a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Bureau (Project Number 90YE0010) and Vang, C. (Chia Consulting). (2006). *Family, Friends and Neighbor Child Care Providers in Recent Immigrant and Refugee Communities*. Download full reports at www.dhs.state.mn.us.

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