

2004 CHILD CARE LICENSING MODELS EVALUATION REPORT

Submitted by Gini Bradley, MSW
Community Solutions Consulting

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EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY: Community Solutions Consulting

Gini Bradley, M.S.W.
Marsha Gould, Ph.D.
Tracey O'Brien, M.P.A.

Principle Investigator and Report Author
Evaluator - Provider Survey
Data Entry and Report Editing

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For further information regarding the evaluation study, please contact Gini Bradley, Community Solutions Consulting, at: ginibradley@aol.com

For general information regarding the Licensing Pilots, contact Sharon Triolo-Moloney triolo-moloney_s@cde.state.co.us or Jenna Davis jenna@ecsystem.com with the Colorado Department of Education.

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I. BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

The Colorado Department of Education, funded by the Colorado Department of Human Services through federal funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, contracted with an independent evaluator to provide the following evaluation report. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine whether three pilot communities in Colorado successfully *developed improved methodologies for outcome-based licensing and monitoring of childcare facilities and provided support to childcare providers (Colorado Senate Bill 00--19)*. The same legislation mandates, after three years of implementing the licensing models, *a working group to evaluate the successes and shortcomings of the various models for licensure, monitoring and providers' support and shall determine which model or combination of models represents the best practices to be implemented statewide*. The evaluation is designed to achieve the legislative mandate described above by focusing on two goals:

- *Provide increased descriptive information on model sites and a comparison to state licensing system.* The evaluation builds on the Year One Child Care Licensing Evaluation Report of the licensing models completed by Susan Eliot in the summer of 2003. Ms. Eliot's report offers excellent data on the type of child care facilities involved in the Licensing Pilot and provides a strong orientation to the three model sites and their differences. Building on the first year report, this evaluation provides descriptive information on the three model sites as well as additional information about how the licensing models compare to the current state licensing system.
- *Provide quality information for members of the Child Care Licensing Model Advisory Committee.* The data and information is designed to assist the committee in developing a set of recommendations for changes to the current system. The report includes key findings, lessons learned and some general considerations. The Advisory Committee will produce the final set of recommendations.

The 2004 evaluation report is divided into four sections, providing the Advisory Committee with a user-friendly format to easily access information:

Section I – Background

A presentation of contextual information to help the reader understand the model sites as well as the state system.

Section II – Descriptive Assessment of Model Sites

A review of the changes the model sites developed to achieve their vision and goals and a comparison of these models to the state system.

Section III – Assessing Results

A summary of results and findings on the impacts of the models through key informant interviews, and a provider survey with comparison groups.

Section IV – Recommendations and Lessons Learned

A summary of recommendations and lessons learned from the three model sites and the state licensing system.

B. Description of the Evaluation Process

1. Overview

In October of 2003, Gini Bradley MSW was hired to evaluate the final year of the Colorado Child Care Licensing Model. Prior to Ms. Bradley, Ms. Susan Eliot had evaluated the Licensing Models, and produced an evaluation report in August 2003 (a copy of the Year One Child Care Licensing Evaluation Report is available upon request from Ms. Sharon Triolo-Moloney at the Colorado Department of Education). The first year report contains excellent descriptive information on the providers involved in the models and the number and type of interventions providers received from the new model. Due to outside educational commitments, Ms. Eliot was unable to complete the second year evaluation study of the licensing models.

With the completion of the first year evaluation and the hiring of a new evaluator, team members met in August and again in October 2003 to revisit possible common outcome measures to be studied in the second year evaluation. After lengthy discussions and review of the site's logic models, the group identified general interest areas for the evaluation (a copy of the logic model for each Model is attached in the appendix). Based on the group's feedback, the evaluator created hypotheses and indicators for the second year evaluation, and, in collaboration with the advisory group, identified strengths and weaknesses of the first year evaluation. From this work, a specific evaluation plan was developed. Tables 1 and 2 below, provide a summary of the evaluation plan.

Table 1. Hypothesis 1 – Indicators and Evaluation Techniques Hypothesis 1 – If the type and/or frequency of child care licensing increases then providers involved with the facility/home will experience a variety of benefits related to the delivery of child care.	
Indicator	Evaluation Technique
Changes in the level of provider understanding of the licensing regulations and ways to maintain compliance	Key informant interviews
Changes in provider communication and rapport with the licensing staff	Key informant interviews
Changes in the providers ability to maintain licensing compliance	Key informant interviews Cost benefit analysis

Table 2. Hypothesis 2 – Indicators and Evaluation Techniques Hypothesis 2 – If a community/state implements an effective child care licensing system then providers will report improvements in their attitude towards of licensing, use of resources and levels of professional development.	
Indicator Evaluation	Technique
Changes in the provider's level of professional development	Key informant interviews
Changes in the provider's use of job related resources	Key informant interviews Provider survey
Changes in the provider's attitude of licensing	Provider survey

In addition to the evaluation techniques described, extensive research was conducted to develop a comprehensive description of each of the models and the state system. Research methods to collect background information included phone calls and emails, on-site focus groups with planning team members, interviews with key personnel and various worksheets that both model and state staff were asked to complete. In addition, the evaluator reviewed reports, newsletters and other program materials developed by the sited. Model sites also conducted a parent focus group to capture the opinions of parents on a variety of issues related to child care licensing (all evaluation instruments may be found in the Appendix).

In the second year, there were two major additions to the evaluation. First, representatives, from the various state agencies and leaders from the models felt that it was important that the evaluation study looked at how the licensing models compared with the current state licensing system. Adding the state licensing system as another model to the evaluation was not an easy task for various reasons, but where possible, the models are compared to the current state licensing system. Comparison information on the state model was collected from interviews and surveys with state licensing staff, key informant interviews with providers outside the models and the creation of a comparison group for the providers' survey and the cost/benefit analysis.

A significant addition to the 2004 evaluation is the cost/benefit analysis report. The first year evaluation had information on the costs associated with operating each of the models, but there was no parallel benefit information. In addition, the report was lacking information on the cost of running the state licensing model. Due to the importance of a well-crafted, informative cost benefit analysis, and the benefits of this to the Advisory Committee, the evaluators agreed to complete an additional cost benefit analysis. This report will be available from the evaluators or the Colorado Division of Child Care.

2. Report Structure

The evaluation report is organized to help move the reader logically through broad background information on the models to more specific results and outcome data. The report is structured in this manner to assist the Child Care Licensing Advisory Committee in determining possible changes to the current licensing system based on the results of the models. In many evaluation reports, the evaluator filters all of the evaluation information and makes final recommendations. For this evaluation, the Advisory Committee will make the final recommendations regarding future improvements to the current licensing system.

C. History of Project

The State of Colorado has had some form of child care licensing since 1943, when the Board of Standards was established and provided basic licensing functions. In 1963, the Colorado Legislature passed the Child Care Act that gave the Department of Human Services the authority to write regulations (Lawrence, Ribisi, 2004). A new set of regulations was produced and put into practice in January 1966. The goal was to provide basic rules and regulations to protect the safety of young children in out-of-home care (Lawrence, Ribisi, 2004).

In 1999, there was a growing interest among Colorado legislators in the role and responsibility of child care licensing as it was currently designed. An interim committee studying a variety of child care issues was formed and the group began to explore concerns related to child care licensing. Senator Dotty Wham, a member of the committee, suggested that several communities from the Consolidated Child Care Pilots (Senate Bill 97-174) be supported to explore innovations in child care licensing. Senate Bill 00-019 was passed to make the Child Care Licensing Model Pilots a reality in Colorado.

By the winter of 2001, communities already participating as Consolidated Child Care Pilots were solicited to become model sites for the Child Care Licensing Model Pilot. The legislation allowed up to four communities to participate as licensing pilots. The long term outcome of the licensing pilot sites (as defined in the legislation) was to develop *"a user friendly licensing system that supports, monitors and enhances early care and education for children in Colorado, birth to twelve years old."*

Four original pilot communities came forward and expressed interest in participating in the licensing pilot. Those communities were El Paso, Larimer, Denver and Triad (representing Jefferson, Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties). Representatives from the Denver and Triad pilots decided it would be valuable to collaborate on the licensing pilot and become one model site. Given the limited number of communities interested in the project, state representatives decided not to complete a competitive Request for Proposal process. Funding for the licensing models was blended into the Consolidated Child Care Pilot grant application. Funding amounts varied depending on the scope of work within each community. Pilots received three years of funding support to implement the licensing models. The child care licensing pilot is slated for completion in June 2004.

While all three geographic areas or pilot communities are part of comprehensive community collaborations through their Consolidated Child Care Pilot, there was a designated fiscal and administrative agent for the licensing models. The administrative agencies are:

El Paso County -- Child Care Connections: Child Care Connections (CCC) is a comprehensive child care resource and referral agency that provides child care referrals, parent education, and counseling to the community of El Paso County. CCC works closely with the child care community providing technical assistance, coaching and support as well as access to a variety of training opportunities for the early childhood community. CCC works collaboratively with a variety of organizations to build a system of care for our youngest population.

Denver/Triad -- The Denver Triad Licensing Model has been developed through extensive collaboration between the Denver and Triad Consolidated Child Care Pilots. In Denver, the project is administered as part of the Denver Public Schools/City of Denver Ready to Succeed Early Childhood Education Council. This Council was established in 1990 to undertake a critical examination of child care and education opportunities available to all young children in the City and County of Denver. In the broad sense, the mission of the Task Force was twofold: (1) to develop a body of data from which critical decisions could be made, and (2) to develop a blueprint for action that would create an immediate and positive impact on the child care and education system – including the Denver Public Schools – from prenatal through second grade. The Clayton Foundation serves as fiscal agent for the project, and with the Ready to Succeed Coordinator, provide system oversight for all Denver Pilot programming efforts.

The administrative host for the Triad model is Family Resources and Child Care Education (FRCCE), at Red Rocks Community College. FRCCE has existed for more than twenty years, and serves as the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson and Park counties. In addition to free referrals to licensed child care facilities, FRCCE administers programs that include training, mentoring, on site and phone technical assistance and consultation to early childhood professionals and families, supply and demand data reports, grants for quality improvement and start up of family child care and other capacity building initiatives. FRCCE also serves as fiscal agent and lead agency for other Triad programming. Program oversight is provided by the Director of FRCCE, who also serves as Executive Director of the Triad Early Childhood Council. Fiscal oversight is provided by Business Services of Red Rocks Community College.

Larimer County -- Several different agencies in Larimer County provide administrative support for the Child Care Licensing Pilot. The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County provides broad project oversight. Oversight includes day-to-day supervision of the Education Resource Specialists as well as programmatic support related to the goals of the licensing model. The Women's Center of Larimer County employs the project staff and provides human resource support as needed. The State Division of Child Care encouraged the local licensing specialist to fully participate in the licensing model effort, as time allows.

D. Community Description

Larimer -- Located in north central Colorado, Larimer County is the 10th largest county in the state with Loveland and Ft. Collins as the primary municipalities. Berthoud, Estes Park and Wellington make up the other major cities and towns in Larimer. The County encompasses 2,640 square miles that include some of the finest irrigated farmland in the state, as well as vast stretches of scenic ranch lands, forests and high mountain peaks. Within the community, there are over 440 licensed child care providers (through 400 child care homes) with approximately 817 individuals employed as child care providers. In November 2003, The Colorado Child Care Program provided subsidies for 1,448 children in Larimer County. In a recent study of the economics of child care in Larimer County, it was shown that over 6,500 families use paid child care in the county. Of these children, 41 percent of their parents would leave the workforce if paid child care were no longer available.

Denver/Triad -- The Denver/Triad licensing model partnership serves an enormous region in central Colorado. Included in this model are the counties of Denver, Jefferson, Clear Creek and Gilpin. The combined population of Denver and Jefferson Counties is over a million people, almost a quarter of the entire states' population. Geographically, the area includes the urban center of Denver and many smaller cities and municipalities as well as the mountainous communities of Blackhawk, Central City and Idaho Springs. In Jefferson and Denver Counties, there are over 80,000 children under the age of five. The median household income in Jefferson County is \$57,339 while in Denver median family income is \$39,500. In Denver, there are 658 licensed child care facilities and in Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties there are 793 licensed facilities.

El Paso -- El Paso County is located 60 miles south of Denver, at the base of Pikes Peak. It is one of the fastest growing counties in Colorado with a population of 547,567 living in approximately 202,428 households making it the second largest county by population in Colorado. It has more children under the age of 18 (146,395) than any other county in the state, with 40,420 under the age of five. El Paso County encompasses 2,127 square miles and includes the city of Colorado Springs (70 percent of the population), and four smaller cities, Security, Widefield, Fountain and Manitou Springs (20 percent of the population). Outlying communities are Monument, Palmer Lake, Green Mountain Falls, Ellicott, Peyton, Falcon, Hanover, Miami, Calhan, Rush, Ramah, Edison and Yoder. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total population living in poverty is estimated at 45,000 with 19,700 under the age of 18 (44%) and 5,580 under age five (12%). There are 823 child care facilities in El Paso County.

E. Brief Description of Current State Model

Provided below is a brief overview of the licensing activities under the Colorado Division of Child Care. While not a separate community as described above, the state system is treated as a separate model throughout this evaluation. A basic understanding of the current State licensing system configuration will help the reader understand the innovations that have occurred within the Pilots and presented in this report.

The mission of the Division of Child Care is to improve lives by supporting quality child care. To achieve this mission, the Division undertakes numerous strategies. One of the Division's primary strategies is to inspect and license child care facilities across the state. The licensing inspection includes a visual inspection of the inside and the outside of the facility for proper safety and health practices, a review of medical and emergency papers and procedures, a count of children in the facility and a review of the written policies. In 2003, more than 9,000 licensed child care facilities operated in the state of Colorado. There exist 22 different types of possible licenses, from family child care homes to secure residential treatment facilities. In any given year, the Division processes an average of 1,000 new licensing applications and closes out about the same number of licenses.

The Division of Child Care employs more than 30 licensing specialists to complete a variety of licensing duties in communities across Colorado. In addition to State employees, the Division contracts with six agencies around the state that employ 33 contract licensing specialists who perform all of the same functions as a state specialist. Contract licensing staff has an average weighted caseload of 200 while the State licensing staff carries a weighted caseload of 350. The state is required to visit facilities on a risk based system varying from once a month to once every three years. The average time between visits is 24 months. If a facility has had serious licensing infractions, they may be put on a schedule to receive more frequent licensing visits. Contractors are able to visit facilities more frequently, as often as once a year, because of their lower caseloads.

The primary job of the licensing specialist is to screen new child care licensing applications, complete licensing inspections on new and existing facilities and investigate complaints and more serious licensing violations. Licensing staff use an in-depth set of regulations to guide their inspection. After each licensing or monitoring visit, the specialist types up a written report for the provider that summarizes any licensing violations. Licensing and monitoring visits may also include the provision of technical assistance to the provider, if time allows. The licensing specialist is expected to return any telephone call within 48 hours.

According to the Licensing Administrator, Dana Andrews, the Division encourages the licensing specialist to develop a supportive partnership with providers on their caseload. Andrews acknowledges that the primary role of the licensing specialist is to ensure the facility is providing a safe and healthy environment for children through the enforcement of the licensing regulations. The provision of extensive technical assistance that focuses on improving the quality of child care would be very difficult to complete unless the current caseloads are lowered.

F. Description of the Planning Process

All three of the licensing models undertook extensive planning processes to develop their vision and action plans for their revised licensing model. The length of the planning process varied slightly among models, but all took more than a year to develop their models. Project planning in the sites was done through a broad-based community planning group made up of community members, child care providers, licensing staff, parents and other professionals in the field of early childhood. While tracking planning hours was not a formal evaluation measure, each participating model acknowledged spending hundreds and in some cases thousands of hours in the development of their pilot models.

The three planning groups studied the strengths and weakness of the local and state licensing system as well as other national research related to licensing best practices. The El Paso group was particularly interested in the military licensing model and models that focused more extensively on child care quality. The Denver/Triad group researched licensing models across the nation including those from North Carolina, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico. Denver/Triad also completed a literature search to discover best practices from other projects and research around the country. Larimer specifically studied how other licensing systems such as fire and health departments were set up in Colorado and reviewed regulations using the Children's Foundation guide to regulations from other states.

It should be noted that each of the three models identified very similar community conditions that assisted them in the planning and development of the licensing model. The common conditions included:

- The presence of a strong and effective early childhood council
- The existence of a motivated group of providers to be part of the pilot
- A high level of trust and collaboration among members of the early childhood community
- A project-coordinating agency that was well respected in the community

Individual communities identified other conditions. Larimer felt their design benefited from identifying clear county boundaries related to existing service contracts. Educare and Credentialing representatives greatly helped Denver/Triad in their planning process, in addition to the strong collaboration between the two large Child Care Pilots. El Paso believed their participation in the Consolidated Child Care Pilot helped them to work together more effectively.

G. Parent Impressions of Licensing

Representatives from the three Child Care Licensing Pilots, as well as professionals assisting with this project, felt it important to capture general information about what parents look for when selecting child care, and parents' level of knowledge related to licensing. The intent of this activity was not to complete a formal evaluation of parent knowledge but to gain insights to assist with future licensing recommendations. Using focus groups and surveys in the three model sites, input was collected from 61 different parents. In addition, during the key informant interviews, providers answered a question about parent observations related to licensing. Below is a summary of parent and provider feedback related to licensing. General comments from the parent focus groups were not broken down by model site because they were all very similar. Providers reported some differing trends; therefore, those comments are presented separately.

1. What Do Parents Look For When Selecting Child Care?

Most parents did not directly report that licensing was an important criterion for them when selecting child care. Only five parents said they looked for the inspection report or certification when selecting a child care provider. This finding should not be misconstrued that parents do not care about the health and safety of their children. Parents did place a high level of interest in issues that are generally considered part of the licensing inspection. Almost a third of all parents looked for cleanliness in a child care facility. Parents also placed emphasis on the level of teacher training and skill. After cleanliness and teacher skill, parents thought safety procedures and teacher/child ratios were the most important factors to consider when selecting a facility. Two parents researched the number of previous licensing violations when investigating a child care facility.

2. What is Parents' Level of Knowledge of Child Care Licensing?

In general, parents reported knowing very little about licensing. Parent responses included a dozen "I don't know much" or "I have little knowledge." Parents made comments, such as, "information is hard to find" and "looked on the web and could not find much." Nine parents did know that licensing looks at ratios, cleanliness, safety and general standards. A few parents also knew the state has something to do with licensing. One parent thought licensing was similar to a driver's license. It should be noted here that parents were also asked how often they talked to their child care provider about licensing. Three quarters of the parents in the focus groups had not talked with their provider about anything related to licensing.

3. What Do Parents Think Licensing Should Be Doing?

Parents clearly wanted licensing staff to focus on the overall safety of their children and the safety of the facility. Parents also felt it was licensing staff's responsibility to monitor staff qualifications and background checks. Surprisingly, parents said they would like licensing staff to provide more education, communication and outreach on licensing criteria, including information on how to interpret licensing inspection scores.

4. What Should Be Different About Licensing?

In closing, parents were asked if they thought anything should be done differently related to child care licensing. Most parents responded to this question with, "nothing," but provided valuable feedback in the form of several suggestions:

- Provide more information to parents about licensing
- Designate money for licensing
- Raise licensing standards
- Advocate for better pay and benefits
- Send periodic reviews to parents
- Inform parents about licensing criteria
- Increase open communication about licensing
- Visit facilities more often
- Provide early childhood training and education as a part of licensing

5. Child Care Providers' Perceptions of Parent Awareness of Licensing

During the key informant interviews, providers reported their perceptions of parent awareness regarding licensing changes. Each model site as well as the comparison group of providers reported a slightly different perspective. The comparison group was made up of ten providers outside of the licensing pilot from Boulder, Mesa and Pueblo Counties.

Table 3. -- Providers' Perceptions of Parent Awareness

Larimer	Providers indicated most parents have not noticed or commented on any of the changes since being a part of the licensing model. Providers reported parents are aware that there is a "certificate on the wall and that is about it." One provider believed parents have a greater knowledge about rules and regulations now, and another commented, "parents want to know more about the licensing model."
El Paso	Every provider interviewed thought parents would report that things had changed since being part of the licensing model. Several of the providers described a partnership type relationship with parents; they share information on licensing and quality with parents, and parents in turn request specific information on related topics. Many of the provider observations related to parent feedback on improvements of facility quality such as room arrangements, equipment and supplies.
Denver/Triad	The majority of providers thought parents would report numerous improvements at their child's facility since being a part of the licensing model. Providers said parents "are more aware of licensing and the role it plays." One provider reported better communication with parents, while another said many of the handouts in the revised handbook had really helped with parent outreach.
"Comparison Group"	Most of the providers in the comparison group acknowledged that their parents do not notice very much about licensing. Parents might know that there is a license on the wall or ask about ratios. One provider indicated that parents notice changes in the quality of the program versus changes to the license. Another provider thought parents were aware of licensing because they received support from the Colorado Preschool Program.

II. DESCRIPTIVE ASSESSMENT OF MODEL SITES

The following section describes the three model sites' vision for enhancing the licensing system and a summary of the broad changes that were made in each of the communities to create a new licensing model. There is also a brief section describing the type of providers participating in each of the models. In addition, there is detailed information on the functions of each of the model staff, and how this role contrasts with the role of the State licensing specialist. Finally, there is a brief rationale and explanation for the reasons the three model sites may have changed the licensing regulations to achieve their end goals.

A. Vision and Actions

Each planning team was motivated by the vision of what they hoped to achieve with a revised licensing model. Often in large-scale initiatives, the clarity of the group's vision is indicative of its ability to follow through and develop its vision. In the case of the licensing models, all three communities were very clear about what they hoped to achieve. Presented below is a summary of how each team described its basic vision for the model and how they carried that vision forward to create programmatic change. Some of the descriptive sections were adapted from the Year One Child Care Licensing Evaluation Report.

Larimer's Vision -- The planning team in Larimer County envisioned a licensing system to encourage quality but not necessarily to regulate it. They wanted a system that was responsive to providers. Larimer desired a system that provided all types of programs with effective and timely support related to licensing. While part of the vision was to provide resources and support, Larimer also wanted providers to take more responsibility for their own improvements. Finally, they wanted to increase the number of providers who were being licensed and staying licensed.

Putting the Vision to Action

The Larimer group did not feel it needed to rewrite the licensing rules and regulations to achieve its vision. Larimer wanted to help child care providers understand and work with the current regulatory system. To achieve this goal, they developed two major strategies. First, the team created a detailed licensing self-assessment tool based on the current state rules and regulations. The self-assessment tool is organized in such a way that a director or owner could determine, via a checklist of regulations, if their facility meets the specific licensing requirement. Once the director or owner has used the assessment tool, the Education and Resource Specialist (ERS), Larimer's model staff, reviews the document with the provider and offers technical assistance and resources in areas of deficiency.

The second major strategy for Larimer was the creation of a dual staffing model for licensing. The state licensing staff would complete the health and safety aspects of the inspection while the ERS provided all the hands-on support and education. The Licensing Specialists' role was clearly defined to assist providers in establishing minimum standards. The licensing specialist would complete an inspection for a new license or if there was a complaint lodged against the facility. There would no longer be routine licensing inspections. In the division of labor established by this model, the licensing specialist focuses on the initial licensing inspection, while the ERS focuses on the routine visits, the review of the self-assessment tool and provision of resources and support. Given the parallel staffing track in Larimer, they have had to fine-tune various communication systems to ensure the Licensing Specialist and EDS are sharing concerns and information. A written agreement clarifies how the Licensing Specialist and the model EDS will interface and communicate.

Denver/Triad's Vision -- This team's basic vision was to make the existing licensing system easier to use and more user friendly for all providers. Denver/Triad was very aware of the mandates of the legislation and wanted to design a cost effective and easy-to-understand model that could fit everyone. The planning team also wanted to get away from reactionary regulations and ambiguous language in the regulations. Another key part of the Denver/Triad vision was to have logical regulations and written resources and materials to supplement the regulation integrated as part of the rules and regulations.

Putting the Vision to Action

To begin work on their vision for an improved licensing system, the Denver/Triad group focused heavily on revising, reformatting, simplifying and enhancing the current rules and regulations. They removed regulations not affecting health and safety, and logically categorized and rewrote the remaining regulations. They added a user-friendly table of contents and an extensive resource section with sample forms and essential credentialing information. They distributed a set of revised regulations that included a resource section of more than 100 resources to each participating child care facility.

Denver/Triad designated a licensing model staff of Licensing Development Specialists (LDSs) to perform the same functions as current State Licensing Specialists, but with lower caseloads. Because of lowered caseloads, LDSs can provide greater technical assistance to providers along with their regulatory functions. LDSs meet with directors to determine current levels of providers' education and set personal goals with individual providers for professional development.

In addition, LDSs offer trainings to center staff and other traditional licensing specialists about the new regulations. Additional information on model staff's job responsibilities is included in the following section of this report on Staff Positions. In addition to the LDS, the Triad component of the Denver/Triad model successfully developed a mentoring program for model sites. Both centers and homes in the model were matched with experienced and trained mentors. Mentors had a variety of responsibilities, but their core functions included providing information on program procedures, linking the individual to resources, sharing teaching strategies, modeling professional behavior and reviewing classroom evaluation instruments on ways to improve the quality of care.

Throughout the planning and implementation process of the new model, the Denver/Triad group included representatives from Educare and Early Childhood Credentialing Office as collaborative partners. Educare coordinates the delivery and assessment of environmental rating scales at the sites, while the credentialing representative provides a direct link to information, resources and training programs needed to meet the various professional development requirements related to licensing. In addition to Educare, the local Resource and Referral office also played a huge role in the scheduling and linking of providers to optional services.

El Paso's Vision -- The El Paso group wanted to create a licensing system that was very collaborative and integrated the quality rating scales with the licensing regulations. They hoped to increase the quality of facilities while at the same time maintaining a high level of basic health and safety at the sites. They wanted to simplify the system by reducing the number of scales and standards a facility had to consider for licensing. Finally, the group envisioned a system that offered more hands-on support to the programs with increased visits and mentoring.

Putting the Vision to Action

El Paso started by rewriting its rules and regulations. In doing so, they used the Environmental Rating Scales to adjust all comparable regulations to a new minimum score of "3" on the rating scales. Items not addressed by the rating scales were extracted from existing rules and regulations and combined with those adjusted by the scale. In addition, they simplified wording and added business practices and staff development sections to the revised rules and regulations. Members of the model planning team continue to meet monthly with the State Licensing Specialist to fine-tune the revised regulations. Licensing model staff, referred to as Early Childhood Specialists (ECSs), were then hired to augment State Licensing Specialists. ECSs initially conducted an orientation visit with each of the pilot child care facilities to orient them to the new regulations. ECSs meet monthly with providers. During their monthly visits, the ECSs focus on the following goals:

- Helping providers develop site-specific improvement goals and plans
- Providing information and materials
- Facilitating the involvement of parents
- Encouraging peer-to-peer mentoring among providers

The ECSs also meet monthly with the local State Licensing Specialist to review and address individual provider concerns and issues. The Licensing Specialist continues the same roles and responsibilities held under the old rules and regulations but inspection reports are immediately shared with the ECS so they may begin work with the facility. The State Licensing Specialist also conducts licensing inspections twice per year for each facility. Finally, El Paso developed an incentive program to reward providers who, 1) demonstrated improved quality of care in their facilities, as measured by the Environmental Rating Scales, and 2) increased the educational levels of their directors and providers. Providers use incentive dollars to purchase materials, equipment and training to improve their child care programs. In addition, the Educare Star Rating System ranks all participating child care facilities, allowing parents to recognize quality providers.

B. Providers Participating in the Three Model Sites

Each of the model sites had a slightly different profile of providers participating in their model programs. Larimer enrolled a total of 42 providers in their model with 50 percent being centers, 14 percent being homes and the final 34 percent representing school age facilities. Denver/Triad's mix included a total of 34 facilities with 88 percent of the programs being center based and child care homes at 12 percent. El Paso had the smallest number of participants with 24 sites. Of those 24, 70 percent were centers, 23 percent child care homes and 7 percent school age programs. Among all of the sites, only 7 percent were considered rural. It should be noted that none of the providers from the three sites were paid to participate in the model. El Paso provided a small incentive stipend to providers in the model to make facility improvements. Additional information on the type of facilities participating in the three experimental models can be found in the Year One Child Care Licensing Evaluation Report.

C. Structure and Design of Model Positions

1. Understanding the Model Positions

All three sites in the Child Care Licensing Model created new positions to assist with improvements to their local licensing model. It is extremely important to understand specifically what these new employees did to improve the quality of licensing in each community. Model staff provided the majority of services that are considered part of the model program. Table 4 below provides a basic overview of the positions. Where possible, information and comparative data on the state licensing specialist position was included. The subsequent narrative reviews, in greater depth, the responsibilities for each of the model positions as well as the State Licensing Specialist. Resource information for this section was gathered from a review of job descriptions and questionnaires completed by each of the model staff.

Table 4. Summary of Key Information about Model Positions

DESCRIPTION	DENVER/TRIAD	EL PASO	LARIMER	STATE OF COLORADO
Name of Model Staff Position	Licensing Development Specialist (LDS)	Early Childhood Resource Specialist (ECRS)	Education and Resource Specialist (ERS)	State Licensing Specialist
Supervised By	Triad Position – Red Rocks Community College.(Patricia Bolton) Denver Position – Clayton Foundation (Ted Liepold)	Deb Lawrence, Director, Child Care Connections	Terry Santi (CDCC) and project steering committee	Dana Andrews, Licensing Administrator Rodger Esquibel, Deputy Licensing Administrator
Qualifications	Triad: B.A. /B.S. in Early Childhood and five years experience. Denver: Same but one year experience	B.A./B.S. in Early Childhood and five years experience	B.A/B.S. with ECCE emphasis plus five working with children	B.A./B.S. in Human Services or A.A. with two years experience
Role of Model Staff	Serve as an enhanced licensing specialist and provide technical assistance to providers on new regulations and resources	Provide intensive monthly education and consultation to providers and review licensing report to identify areas of improvement	Provide technical assistance to providers through review of licensing self assessment tool and the provision of needed resources	Ensure a facility complies with the regulations by onsite inspection for a new license, renewal license, supervisory contact or a change of service request
Role of State Licensing Specialist in model	Acted like a model staff but with higher caseloads	Worked as a team with model staff to develop reports and plans for facilities	Focused on basic health and safety licensing standards	
Caseload by Position	26 (1.5 FTE)	12 (2.0 FTE)	42 (2 PT ERS = 1.0 FTE)	150 centers 300 family homes (1 FTE) (Contract Staff – 200 per FTE)
Frequency of Model Staff Visits (Annually)	1 supervisory visit; 2-3 visits for technical assistance	12 visits; 1 every month to five weeks	2 extended visits; 1-3 visits to provide T.A.	1 to be licensed; monitoring visit every 24 months

2. Similarities and Differences in Model Positions

Each of the model position employees were asked to describe their average workday. While there are unique aspects to each of the three positions, there was considerable overlap in job functions among the three model positions. The following job functions appeared to be common to each:

- **Extensive Technical Assistance** -- Technical assistance (T.A.) is a general term for providing support and information to providers on an as-needed basis. T.A. can involve answering one question over the phone or holding a lengthy meeting to address a specific situation affecting the provider. T.A. most often occurred by phone, or was completed in person or through email.
- **On-Site Coaching, Mentoring and Training** -- This area included the more structured provision of on-site support to one staff member or to multiple staff. Coaching and mentoring typically involved hands-on instruction with staff over a series of meetings. All sites provided coaching and mentoring upon review of a licensing inspection report, the licensing regulations or the self-assessment tool.
- **Research and Communication of Professional Resources** -- All positions had to research, organize and communicate information on a wide array of resources. Sample resources included such items as training calendars, information on best practices and “how-to” instruction worksheets. In some cases, getting the right resource information meant referring the provider to a different agency or individual.
- **Outreach and Collaboration** -- All positions had to attend various meetings with the planning team and many other related community agencies in the child care field. All positions had to market and promote the project in their community.
- **Administrative Duties** -- All positions had to complete varying levels of administrative functions. These included report writing, data management, filling out logs, filing, reviewing regulations and inspection reports and budgeting.

The three positions were clearly different in several aspects. The Denver/Triad Licensing Development Specialist (LDS) was most similar to the state licensing specialist position. The LDS completed annual licensing visits with a revised set of regulations, but did not investigate complaints or complete pre-licensing inspections. The LDS was unique in using the revised rules and regulations as a teaching tool. With improvements to the regulation manual, it appeared the LDS used the manual as an effective teaching and resource tool. The LDS was also unique in the degree of participation in a team of child care professionals. The position was very much a part of a collaborative team promoting systems change in licensing.

El Paso’s Early Childhood Resource Specialist (ECRS) position was unique in its focus on mentoring. The ECRS completed monthly on-site mentoring visits to pilot facilities. Visits included a detailed review of the licensing reports and the development of an action plan to improve deficiencies. Intensive mentoring and coaching occurred via the phone and Internet as well as on site. The ECRS also helped sites determine the best way to spend their pilot incentive stipend.

The Education and Resource Specialist (ERS) in Larimer County was different from the above two sites in its use of the self-assessment tool as a framework for working with providers. The assumption in Larimer was that providers were in the best position to determine their program’s strengths and weaknesses. The ERS primary role was to review the self-assessment tool with providers and determine what resources they needed.

D. Effective Techniques and Differences from State Licensing Specialist

Employees in the model positions were asked what techniques they found most effective in their new positions and how their positions differed from that of state licensing specialists. Responses are similar among all three sites and provide insight for possible ways to enhance the existing licensing specialist position. Table 5 below, is a summary of the responses:

Table 5. Summary of Effective Techniques of Model Positions	
WHAT TECHNIQUES HAS MODEL STAFF FOUND EFFECTIVE WHEN WORKING WITH PROVIDERS?	WHAT DO YOU DO DIFFERENTLY FROM STATE LICENSING SPECIALISTS?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Build a relationship with the provider and the state licensing inspector➤ Encourage a positive, trusting relationship➤ Stress open communication, availability and effective listening➤ Validate licensing issues➤ Help to solve problems➤ Have face-to-face contact when training➤ Provide practical, hands-on support➤ Demystify the licensing experience with support and information➤ Respond with useful tools➤ Focus on the positive, what can be done versus dwelling on what is wrong➤ Give providers a list of resources➤ Use the self-assessment tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Visit monthly➤ Keep a lower caseload➤ Work as a team➤ Accessible anytime➤ Provide more resources and referrals➤ Spend more time listening and being responsive➤ Spend more time researching, developing and helping sites implement resources➤ Provide more in-depth T.A. on research behind regulations and intent of regulations➤ Look always for the positive➤ Respond to needs instead of regulating

To gain perspective on how the state licensing specialist perceived his or her position in contrast to that of model staff, the six licensing supervisors and the licensing administrator completed a written survey or a personal interview. Supervisors answered a series of open-ended questions related to how they do their job and what changes they would like to see in the licensing field. Summarized below are the significant differences between the core functions of the licensing specialist and the model staff as reported by state staff.

- **Caseloads** -- The most glaring difference between the state and model staff was the size of caseload. A state licensing specialist's average caseload can include more than 200 to 300 homes or centers. The caseloads for model staff were never above 26 homes or centers. The significance of caseload size is enormous. All of the state licensing staff said they would love to do more training and resource provision but due to caseload size did not have time to address these areas.
- **Focus on Enforcement** -- State licensing staff clearly indicated their primary job function was to ensure child care facilities were licensed and following the requirements to ensure child safety. Whenever possible, resource materials, information and technical assistance were provided, but again, due to caseload, the volume of technical assistance provided is limited. In contrast, the model positions all clearly focused on the provision of support and technical assistance with less focus on enforcement.

- **Diversity of Job Functions** -- State licensing staff have a greater variety of job functions in addition to larger caseloads. State licensing staff complete, not only licensing inspections and monitoring visits, but also screen applications, investigate complaints, follow-up with negative licensing and conduct Stage II investigations. Due to the design of their position, model staff's job duties have a narrower scope related to the provision of support.
- **Perception of the Position** -- Despite efforts to change the image of the state licensing staff, many child care providers continue to perceive the licensing specialist as the “enforcer” or “cop.” Given these perceptions, it is sometimes difficult to have open and honest communication between provider and specialist. Providers perceive model staff more as resource providers than regulators.

E. Insights on the Future of Licensing from Both Model and State Licensing Staff

In questionnaires to both state and model staff, staff stated the top three things they would like to see changed in the current licensing model. The hopes and insights for the state licensing system are very similar despite differing positions and perspectives. Table 6 describes staff responses from the questionnaires.

Table 6. Suggestions for Improvements from State and Model Licensing Staff	
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS FROM STATE LICENSING STAFF	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS FROM MODEL LICENSING STAFF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decrease caseloads ➤ Change the perception of the licensing staff ➤ Rewrite regulations to be less open to interpretation ➤ Increase training opportunities for staff professional development ➤ Provide more opportunities for out-stationed staff operating alone to work with peers ➤ Improve computer technology in the field ➤ Formalize technical assistance component ➤ Change visits to every 4 to 5 years for stable quality providers ➤ Shift resources to provide more technical assistance to struggling facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decrease caseloads ➤ Hire specialists with an early childhood background ➤ Adopt the NARA (National Association of Regulatory Agencies) curriculum for thorough and consistent training of licensing specialists ➤ Make both regulations and visits more consistent ➤ Make whole system more responsive ➤ Create model that is less punitive ➤ Create a more user-friendly approach ➤ Improve response time ➤ Increase mentoring to providers ➤ Increase accessibility ➤ Add more inspections and monitoring visits ➤ Add more coaching and support

F. Changes to the State Licensing Regulations

Two out of the three model sites chose to change and/or reformat the State licensing regulations. Both Denver/Triad and El Paso believed that revising the regulations was a crucial strategy in creating a user-friendly licensing model. Larimer County felt that they could address the needs of the licensing system without changing the regulations. Presented below is a brief explanation of how the Denver/Triad and El Paso models undertook changing the licensing regulations. Also presented, is greater rationale as to why Larimer chose not to change the licensing regulations.

Larimer

In Larimer County, a committee of local individuals interested in developing a licensing pilot was assembled. The group began by listing the pros and cons of the current system. The planning meetings also involved extensive discussion on what the ideal system might look like and how well the current licensing regulations were working. After reviewing other licensing regulations from across the country, it was determined that, regardless of what licensing regulations were utilized, if the system did not have adequate resources (including manpower) to assist child care providers in maintaining their licenses, then it would not matter what the regulations were in the long run. Based on the belief that it was the entire licensing system that needed modification and not simply the regulations, Larimer chose not to revise the regulations.

Denver/Triad

The Denver/Triad planning group completed extensive surveying to collect feedback on the regulations from licensing specialists, contract specialists, home and center providers as well as parents. The group then held numerous community forums and completed extensive research to gain a greater understanding of what regulations needed to be changed. The group also studied the NARA curriculum that provided a systematic process for making regulation changes.

Based on the research, the Denver/Triad group completed the following steps to revise and improve the State Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations:

- Removed any ambiguous or hard to interpret words such as “adequate”
- Removed redundancy in the regulations stated in one area and listed elsewhere in the document
- Reorganized sections, added page numbers and created a table of contents
- Indexed the document and added over 100 easy to use resources
- Incorporated information on other programs in Colorado, such as the Professional
- Credentialing Program, the Educare Rating System and the Triad Mentoring

El Paso

The El Paso planning group convened a large group of stakeholders representing all areas of child care in the community as well as licensing specialists and staff from the local CORRA agency. After numerous discussions of the current licensing regulations, the group began to focus their discussions on how to use the Environmental Rating Scales as the foundation of a new set of licensing rules and regulations. The planning group formed work groups to make the revisions to the regulations, using the rating scales. The workgroups were formed by facility type, and included infant and toddlers, preschool, school age and family child care. Using the rating scale score of “3” as a minimum, the groups matched Environmental Rating Scale scores to existing regulations. When an existing licensing standard did not fit within one of the rating scales, it was added separately.

G. Overall Perceptions of Success

Although input provided by members of planning teams and various licensing supervisors at the state is subjective, it is important to understand what the pilot teams believed to be most successful about their own licensing project. During site visits in December 2003, representatives from the three planning teams shared what components of their own models they believed to have made the greatest difference for providers. To understand successes within the State Licensing System, components of the state system that the Licensing Administrator was most proud of are included. Summarized below are their responses.

Table 7. Perceptions of Successful Program Components for Providers

LARIMER	DENVER/TRIAD	EL PASO	STATE OF COLORADO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use of the self assessment tool by providers created personal responsibility ➤ Outreach to provide more resources without being threatening ➤ Providing responsive technical assistance to answer provider questions ➤ Increasing access to information on professional development ➤ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improving organizational structure of the regulations through revising manual ➤ Adding extensive licensing resources into regulation manual ➤ Increasing training for licensing staff ➤ Providing hands-on support to providers ➤ Including Educare and Credentialing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rewriting regulations based on rating scales ➤ Providing additional mentoring support for sites ➤ Including financial incentives to enable sites to make improvements ➤ Adding more licensing inspections and Educare Star Rating ➤ Holding team meetings for programs in model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Licensing applications are processed in 60 to 90 days ➤ Investigating 90% of complaints within required timeframe ➤ Positive feedback on provider feedback form ➤ Process a 1000 new licensing applications a year

II. ASSESSING RESULTS

A. Key Informant Interviews

In the winter of 2004, eight randomly selected providers from each of the three model sites participated in key informant interviews. Ten child care providers from Boulder, Mesa and Pueblo also completed interviews. The 10 providers from outside the model sites were made up of a similar number of child care homes and centers as found in the models and served as a comparison group for this component of the evaluation. Providers answered a total of 11 questions by phone. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes (a copy of the key informant interview protocol may be found in the appendix).

The purpose of the key informant interviews was to collect detailed information from the model providers regarding their experiences and impressions as participants in the licensing pilots. With the comparison group, the evaluators wanted to know what type of experience providers had with the existing licensing staff. Questions focused on what services helped the provider maintain compliance, quality of communication with staff, improvements in access to professional development services and general impressions about the level of support providers received.

Interviewers recorded narrative responses to all 34 interviews and then reviewed them for themes and trends. Whenever possible, comments and answers are presented in a table. Additional information on the similarities and differences in the programs are explored in the narrative sections. It should be noted that the intent of the key informant interviews was not to rank one program against another. Because information was collected through interviews, it is difficult to measure one verbal response against another. However, key informant interviews do provide excellent descriptive information on the impacts of each model on child care providers.

1. Techniques Providers Found Most Helpful

Key Finding 1 – Providers from all three pilot models reported that increased site visits, more timely responses to questions and the provision of better resources were helpful techniques model staff used to improve their understanding of the licensing regulations.

During the key informant interviews, providers described which specific techniques, provided by the model staff that helped them to best understand and comply with licensing regulations. The comparison group addressed the same issue for the licensing specialist. The techniques identified by providers in the three model sites were very similar despite the varying model structures. Table 8 reflects the most helpful techniques providers said they learned from the model staff or licensing specialist.

Table 8. Helpful Techniques Learned by Providers			
LARIMER	DENVER/TRIAD	EL PASO	COMPARISON GROUP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of the self assessment tool with staff ➤ Personal one-on-one visits ➤ Responsive, timely communication to questions ➤ Creation of a trusting relationship ➤ Consistent support with email, phone and visits ➤ Provision of appropriate materials as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Explaining the rules and regulations manual ➤ Being more responsive to questions ➤ Indexing the regulation ➤ More frequent site visits ➤ On-site trainings and technical assistance for staff ➤ Resources in manual as well as other material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More frequent onsite mentoring and technical assistance ➤ Responsive feedback to questions ➤ Classroom observations with coaching ➤ On-site training ➤ Quality resources ➤ Review of Educare rating with suggestions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Returning phone calls with information ➤ Walking through facility and giving pointers ➤ Attending coalition or director meetings ➤ Sending notice of visit from Licensing Specialist

2. Improvements in Understanding and Compliance with Licensing Regulations

Key Finding 2 – Providers in all three models reported that the support, education and information they received through the enhanced services increased their ability to understand and comply with the licensing regulations.

Key Findings 3 – Providers in the comparison group indicated that they received adequate information to comply with licensing but would have liked more support and resources if they had been available.

Comparison – In general, the comparison group described a positive experience getting and maintaining their child care license. Of the ten providers interviewed, none described licensing as negative or difficult. For example, providers said, “It all went pretty smoothly for me” and “It was pretty cut and dry.” A couple of providers admitted feeling nervous before the licensing specialist’s visit, but once s/he arrived, the experience was straightforward and comfortable. Most providers said the specialist visited once a year and was available by phone if they had additional questions. Providers did not indicate that they received extra information or services to make complying with licensing regulations easier for them. Only one provider reported receiving such information from her specialist. The information obtained in the interviews indicated that most of the communication related to complying with licensing regulations was done on an as needed basis with providers calling and requesting information from the licensing specialist. One provider from Boulder put the current situation succinctly, “I got the basic information but could have used more support and resources in dealing with licensing issues.”

Larimer – Providers in Larimer said the revised licensing model seemed more responsive and less intimidating. As one provider put it, “It feels like we are a team working to achieve compliance.” Providers described a more open and supportive system where they were not afraid to ask questions of the model staff. Almost every provider interviewed in Larimer used the term “responsive” when describing the new licensing model. Providers also described a shift from a punitive model of interaction to one that is uplifting. “I look forward to their visits versus dreading them.” Several providers thought the self-assessment tool was a very helpful addition to the model.

Denver/Triad – The providers interviewed in the Denver/Triad Licensing Pilot described a licensing model that is now much easier to use and understand. Providers identified the revised regulation manual as being the cornerstone of their new understanding. One provider said, “The new regulation book is so much easier to use. Things are in black and white and easy to understand. Before, it seemed like you could interpret the regulations in different ways. Now it is clearer what they want from a particular regulation.” Providers also reported using many of the resources included in the manual to assist them in maintaining licensing compliance. While many of the providers in the Denver/Triad model focused on the importance of the manual and the resources, an equal number talked about the improved communication with, and access to, their model licensing staff. “It [the model] is more personal. We feel more relaxed and we get more resources and attention.”

El Paso – Providers in El Paso described the new model as more team oriented and supportive because of the on-site mentoring from the model staff. Providers reported appreciating being a part of the creation of the new regulations. “We have had real impact through providing feedback on how the regulations were written. It was a team approach.” Numerous providers commented on the value of using the rating scales as part of their licensing preparation. “The rating scales have served as a real guidance tool for us. We know what is expected of us and we get the support we need to make positive change happen.” Almost all of the providers interviewed in El Paso identified visits that are more frequent by both their model staff and licensing staff as extremely valuable. “The frequency of the visits has forced us to pay more attention to the regulations. We like having the licensing staff visit us more often. It has improved our relationship with licensing staff.” Providers reported being better prepared for a licensing visit when it did occur. Finally, several providers in El Paso acknowledged that the group licensing meetings gave them a chance to learn about creative licensing solutions and ask specific questions.

3. Specific Changes to Facility/Home as a Result of Improved Understanding

Key Finding 4 – Twenty-two of the twenty-four providers (92%) interviewed from the model sites were able to provide specific examples of how they improved their facility/home because of support from model staff.

Key Finding 5 – Only five of the nine providers (50%) in the comparison group could provide examples of improvements made to their facility/home because of working with the state licensing specialist.

To document whether improved understanding for the licensing regulations resulted in actual changes to the child care facilities, key informants were asked to identify specific improvements resulting from information and resources provided by the licensing pilots. The comparison group identified improvements resulting from their work with the licensing specialist. It should be noted that nearly all of the comparison group’s changes were related to obtaining their initial license.

Table 9. Summary of Specific Improvements to Facility

LARIMER	DENVER/TRIAD	EL PASO	COMPARISON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Started using rating scales ➤ Installed floor thermometers ➤ Changed entire filing system to track requirements ➤ Improved outside play area ➤ Improved staff filing system ➤ Helped with general cleanliness ➤ Developed a disaster plan ➤ Helped with specific behavior problem(s) ➤ Answered questions about what is verbal abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Revised medication and fire inspection policy ➤ Organized records and files ➤ Revised forms for field trips ➤ Used forms from resource book ➤ Made numerous physical changes to classrooms ➤ Redesigned playground ➤ Created better interior space for learning ➤ Used literacy and parenting information to make changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developed new play/computer centers ➤ Gained skills to work with difficult children ➤ Bought room furnishings and changed room arrangement ➤ Added sandbox cover and wall posters ➤ Made physical changes to toddler room ➤ Changed what we were looking for in new staff ➤ Improved materials and equipment ➤ Added a parent library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Helped with room and playground design ➤ Changed window well configuration ➤ Added new light fixtures ➤ Used baby swings less

4. Improvements in Professional Rapport and Communication

Key Finding 6 – Providers in the comparison group, Larimer and El Paso Counties described communication with their state licensing specialist as limited. Denver/Triad providers were unique in reporting positive levels of communication with their licensing staff prior to the addition of model staff.

Key Finding 7 - Providers in all three models reported that communication with their model staff was excellent and greatly enhanced their ability to maintain compliance.

Key Finding 8 – Providers in all three models indicated that increased personal contact, timely returning of phone calls and clear expectations were conditions that promoted improved communication.

According to Webster’s Dictionary, rapport is “a relation marked by harmony and conformity.” For this evaluation, rapport relates to the quality of the relationship between the child care provider and either the model or licensing staff. To gain a sense of changes in rapport, providers answered open-ended questions about the quality of their communication and the user-friendliness of the licensing system. There was a clear, common set of conditions that appeared to improve communication and rapport in all three model sites. Conditions that encouraged quality communication and rapport in all sites:

- Personal contact at facility
- Creation of comfortable, non-judgmental learning environment
- Timely return of phone calls
- Frequent phone calls, emails and faxes to check in
- Clear expectations about what providers need to do
- Quality materials and resources
- Attendance at child care coalition meetings.

Comparison Group

Most providers in the comparison group described their communication with the licensing specialist as infrequent and on an as-needed basis. Generally, providers reported hearing from their specialist once a year unless they contacted them with a question. “The licensing system could be more proactive. As the provider, you have to figure everything out. You have to go to them versus them coming to you.” A few providers complained about the time delay in getting questions answered while others reported that their questions were answered in a timely fashion. Several could not identify their specialist, which made communication difficult.

Larimer -- Numerous providers in Larimer reported limited communication with their licensing staff. They saw them rarely and had a difficult time getting questions answered by phone. With the addition of the Education and Resource Specialist, providers reported a new sense of openness and support related to licensing issues. Providers said they received frequent phone calls and emails from the Education and Resource Specialist, as well as seeing the specialist more often either at meetings or during home visits. Improved communication was described using words such as, “positive, open, responsive, partnership and comfortable.” One provider said improved communication with the resource specialist helped her to feel more comfortable contacting the licensing specialist with additional questions.

Denver/Triad -- The Denver/Triad providers reported a positive level of communication with their licensing specialist prior to model changes. With the addition of the Licensing Development Specialist (LDS), Denver/Triad providers reported improved communication and a better understanding of expectations. They said the LDS was very accessible, open and positive. Providers liked seeing the LDS more frequently. Many also commented that the new licensing regulation handbook had made regulations easier to understand, and as a result, improved communication. One provider effectively captures the shift in communication that occurred in Denver: “It is better now. It is nice to know that you have someone there to ask questions and be positive. It feels like we have someone looking out for our best interests.”

El Paso -- Providers in El Paso clearly articulated improvements in communication with their licensing specialist because of the addition of the Early Childhood Resource Specialist (ECRS). Because of the intensive support of the ECRS, they felt more prepared and comfortable when the licensing specialist did visit. “The licensing specialist was less of a threat after working with Ginette. We were more at ease and knew what to expect from the visit.” Other providers said the licensing and early childhood resource specialists worked well as a team to support the facility. It appeared that the model staff had answered most of the day-to-day questions and comments providers had about licensing and the ECRS was open and responsive to provider needs.

5. Improvements in Providers’ Level of Professional Development Key

Finding 9 – Providers in the comparison group indicated that they received very limited professional development resources from their state licensing specialist.

Key Finding 10 – Twenty-three out of 24 for of the providers interviewed from the model sites reported making improvements in their level of professional development because of participating in the pilot.

Comparison Group

It was clear from interviews with providers outside of the licensing model that they did not receive extensive information from their licensing specialist related to professional development. Most of the 10 providers interviewed reported that if they did receive training information from the licensing specialist, it was fairly general. Providers said, if needed, they sought out professional development resources from their local child care coalition, children’s services department, director meetings or community college.

Larimer -- All of the model providers interviewed in Larimer County reported they were able to make improvements in their level of professional development because of participating in the licensing model. Most learned about more training opportunities from the Education and Resource Specialist. Several providers discovered their professional development training needs by reviewing the self-assessment tool with the model staff person. One provider clearly explained her new approach to professional development: “Before [the model], I felt like I was just getting by and had to fake it in certain areas of licensing. Now, I embrace the learning and feel like I really get it. I feel like it is okay to ask questions.”

Denver/Triad -- As with Larimer, all of the model providers interviewed in the Denver/Triad area reported being able to advance their levels of professional development. Providers learned more about training and credentialing opportunities from model staff and gained professional insights through better understanding the licensing regulations. A couple of providers said they appreciated the on-site mentoring and training from the Licensing Development Specialist.

El Paso -- All but one of the El Paso model providers thought they had made advancements in their level of professional development because of involvement with the licensing model. They articulated a clear link between the changes in the regulations and improvements in the level of professional development. “It feels like the bar has been raised. We are expected to continue our education and there are lots of trainings offered.” A couple of providers said the new regulations clearly require a higher level of training in health and safety as well as quality standards. Two providers said they received tuition assistance for professional development through Child Care Connections, but were not sure if the funds were part of the licensing model or from a different funding source.

6. Improvements in Access to Job-Related Resources

Key Finding 11 – There were 3 out of the 10 providers in the comparison group who reported that they received job-related resources from their Licensing Specialist.

Key Finding 12 – The majority (21 out of 24) of the providers in the model sites reported that they received helpful and frequent resources from their model staff.

Comparison Group

Providers in the comparison group reported receiving minimal resources or referral information for resources from their Licensing Specialist. Most said they received some basic instruction and check sheets during the initial licensing visit, but did not get much after that. A couple indicated they received written updates about licensing changes. No one reported being referred to other local agencies or web sites for resource materials.

Model Sites

The majority of providers in the three model sites indicated receiving helpful resources from their model staff person. Table 10 provides a summary of the resources model staff provided. Because the resources requested were very similar in all three sites, a complementing description of each site’s improvements in this area is not included.

Table 10. Resources Provided by Model Staff

LARIMER	DENVER/TRIAD	EL PASO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self-assessment tools ➤ Emails about upcoming trainings ➤ Lots of pamphlets and checklists ➤ Information sheets on specific topics ➤ Information about guest speakers ➤ Audio and video tapes ➤ Links to other supportive providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emails and faxes with lots of information ➤ Information on training ➤ PIP notes and materials (Parents in Parenting) ➤ Handouts from resource book ➤ Flyers and pamphlets ➤ Paperwork and forms from notebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Links to community resources, books and video ➤ Web sites for more information ➤ Emails on trainings ➤ Flyers ➤ Child Care Response Team ➤ Group licensing meetings ➤ Environmental Rating Scale instruments ➤ Coaching and Mentoring

B. Provider Survey Results

1. Overview

This section of the evaluation report summarizes the results of a survey sent to participants in Colorado's Child Care Licensing Models Pilot and to a comparison group of child care providers who were in the same communities but did not receive the same services as the model participants. The survey was designed to document differences between the model participants and the comparison group in three conceptual areas: 1) attitudes toward licensing, 2) use of educational and supportive resources, and 3) the incidence of problematic outcomes such as staff turnover, children's expulsion and children's injuries. The intent of the survey was to provide additional quantifiable data on the impacts of the licensing models that could be used to complement the broad findings discovered through the extensive key informant interviews.

The surveys were distributed to both Model participants and comparison group providers in April 2004 by the Pilot site staff. The person most knowledgeable about the individual program completed the survey. All surveys were returned anonymously.

2. Description of Survey Respondents

In order to determine the validity of a *difference* between model and comparison groups on conceptual areas, it is important to determine that the groups have *similar* descriptive items. In the survey, respondents could be classified on the following descriptive items: 1) community housing the Pilot, 2) comparison or model group membership, 3) type and structure of the respondent's organization, 4) size of student and staff populations and 5) staff to student ratio.

A total of 320 responses were received. Of that total, approximately 30 percent were from model participants, while the remainder was from comparison programs. The comparison group contained responses from programs that did not match the model group in type of structure. For example, the comparison group had preschool and church based programs while the model group did not.

When the unmatched programs were removed, the final sample used in all subsequent analysis consisted of 283 programs, 33 percent of which were model Programs. The larger size of the comparison group did not affect the findings. The model and comparison groups were not significantly different on type of programs, structure of programs, or staff student ratio based on the number of students and number of classroom staff.

Table 11. Type of Program by County

COUNTY	PROVIDER	MODEL (%)	COMPARISON (%)	TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (N)
El Paso	Child Care Home	13	87	24
	Child Care Center	19	81	78
	School Age Facility	8	92	49
Denver/Triad	Child Care Home	53	47	19
	Child Care Center	58	42	36
	School Age Facility	100	0	1
Larimer	Child Care Home	37	63	19
	Child Care Center	65	35	37
	School Age Facility	45	55	20

It is important to note that in the analyses that follow, the total number of respondents may be less than 283. This occurred when a respondent did not answer a particular question on the survey, and therefore, was excluded from the analysis.

3. Attitudes Toward Licensing Scale

Key Finding 13 – Respondents in the three model programs all had more favorable attitudes towards licensing than the respondents from the comparison group.

The survey contains 13 questions that pertain to attitudes toward licensing (a copy of the survey may be found in the Appendix). The survey questions address similar areas reviewed in the key informant interview, such as greater understanding of the regulations and improved ability to maintain licensing compliance. The 13 questions were designed as a scale to be scored individually and then added together to achieve a total score that could quantify a particular conceptual area. The questions were scored 1-4 with the higher score being the most favorable toward licensing. When these questions are combined, the range of possible scores is between 13 and 52, where 52 indicates the most favorable attitude toward licensing. Table 12 demonstrates the average scores within each community for model and comparison group responses to the attitude scale.

Table 12. Attitude Scale – Average Score by County (score range of 13-52)				
COUNTY	MODEL (Average Score)	SAMPLE SIZE (N)	COMPARISON (Average Score)	SAMPLE SIZE (N)
El Paso	41.35	17	41.09	119
Denver/Triad	43.50	29	39.60	22
Larimer	42.13	39	41.30	33
TOTAL	42.42	85	40.94	174

The assumption was that model program participants would score higher than their comparison counterparts. The assumption was proven to be correct, in that all three community the Model programs had higher average scores on the Attitude Scale than the Comparison programs, indicating a more favorable attitude toward licensing.

The difference between model and comparison programs on the Scale in Denver/Triad was statistically significant. While statistical significance is important, the small sample size in each of the communities might account for the inability of the Attitude Scale to measure the full extent of the impact of the Model intervention.

4. Use of Resources

Key Finding 14 – Model programs used more resources than did Comparison programs in all three communities.

The survey identified eight specific types of available resources that respondents could identify as having used. There was also a general “other” category where respondents could list other types of educational resources that they employed to enable them to maintain a licensed facility. The assumption was that model programs would use more resources than their comparison counterparts. This assumption also proved to be correct in that all community model programs employed a higher average number of resources. The difference between model and comparison programs on the use of resources was statistically significant in all three communities.

Table 13. Number of Resources Used by County			
COUNTY	NUMBER USED	MODEL	COMPARISON
El Paso	Minimum	3	0
	Maximum	8	7
	Average	5.41	3.37
	Sample Size (N)	22	129
Denver/Triad	Minimum	2	0
	Maximum	8	7
	Average	4.94	2.80
	Sample Size (N)	32	24
Larimer	Minimum	0	0
	Maximum	7	6
	Average	4.10	3.10
	Sample Size (N)	40	36
TOTAL	Minimum	0	0
	Maximum	8	7
	Average	4.69	3.24
	Sample Size (N)	94	189

Below, Table 14 demonstrates that written materials were the most common types of resources utilized by both model and comparison groups. The model programs made far greater use of on-site technical assistance, mentoring and phone and e-mail responses to questions than did the control group programs. This finding clearly reflects the impact of the Licensing Model approach.

Table 14. Type of Resources Used by Model/Comparison Groups				
TYPE OF RESOURCE	MODEL PROGRAMS (N=94)		COMPARISON GROUP (N=189)	
	Number of Programs Using Resource	% of Programs Using Resource	Number of Programs Using Resource	% of Programs Using Resource
On-site technical assistance	51	54	40	21
On-site mentoring	65	69	50	27
Written materials, resources	84	89	135	71
On-site group training	39	42	78	41
Off-site group training	58	62	109	58
Phone or e-mail responses to questions	60	64	50	27
Videos	15	16	37	20
Peer to peer meetings/discussions	54	57	94	50

5. Other Outcome Measures

It was assumed that model programs would have lower averages numbers than comparison programs in three areas that might be impacted by the Licensing Pilot: 1) classroom teachers leaving the program, 2) students leaving because of behavioral problems and 3) the incidence of student injuries. These three outcome measures were selected because they are considered to be important issues in the field of early childhood care and education. Staff turnover is felt to impact quality; the incidence of children's behavioral problems is a growing concern; and many state licensing regulations are in place to reduce the incidence of injuries.

Key Finding 15 – In most communities, model programs did not do better than comparison programs on classroom teacher turnover, the number of children leaving because of behavioral problems or student injuries. Only the Denver/ Triad Model programs did better than the comparison group on classroom teacher turnover.

Table 15. Outcome Measures – Average Incidence by Group and County				
COUNTY	GROUP	Average Number of Classroom Staff Who Left the Program	Average Number Of Children With Behavioral Problems Who Left The Program	Average Number of Injuries Occurring to Children
El Paso	Model (N=22)	4.05	1.09	.73
	Comparison (N=129)	2.60	.77	.47
Denver/Triad Comparison	Model (N=32)	.88	.59	.56
	Comparison (N=24)	1.13	.54	.38
Larimer	Model (N=40)	2.70	.68	1.23
	Comparison (N=36)	1.31	.36	.36

In Table 15, we see that the average number of classroom staff who left was higher in the model programs than comparison programs in El Paso and Larimer. Only in Denver/Triad was the assumption proven correct and model programs had fewer staff leave. The difference in Larimer was statistically significant between the model and comparison programs, while the others were not.

In all three communities, the average number of children who left because of behavioral problems was higher in the model programs than the comparison program. In Larimer, the difference was statistically significant.

The same relationship was true for all communities regarding the number of injuries reported by respondents. Model program had higher average (mean) injuries than the comparison programs. In Larimer, the difference was statistically significant.

6. Provider Survey Conclusion

The model and comparison groups in this study differed in size, type and structure of the programs represented, but these differences were determined not to influence the outcomes studied. In all communities, model programs demonstrated more positive attitudes toward licensing than comparison programs. Model programs in all communities also used more resources than their comparison counterparts.

Model programs did not do better on the three outcome measures of staff turnover, child expulsion and number of injuries. This finding is not easy to interpret and there was much discussion among the sites and the evaluator about its meaning. Several issues can be considered when interpreting the outcome finding. One issue to consider is the possibility that the influence of these outcomes were beyond the scope of a licensing model. Since some of these findings were not statistically significant, it is also possible that the results are simply an artifact of the small sample size.

A second issue is the possibility that model programs were more vigilant and therefore documented the outcome measures more carefully and accurately than their comparison counterparts. In this instance, a finding of more problems reflects an openness and lack of defensiveness that could be viewed as a positive result of the model intervention. **This explanation is supported by the key informant interview findings, where model participants reported a more open and supportive system and a shift from a punitive model of interaction to an uplifting, positive model.**

Regarding the specific finding of higher staff turnover, it is possible to view this finding as responsive to the higher expectations set by the models. Alternatively, the finding could be due to factors beyond the control of the Pilots. For example, at one Pilot site, five centers experienced business practices that caused a number of staff to resign.

In summary, the model programs demonstrated positive results on the two areas where they set specific objectives, attitudes toward licensing and provision of resources. The findings in the areas where there were not specific objectives, staff turnover, children's disenrollment, and injuries were less positive, and more difficult to interpret.

III. Recommendations and Lessons Learned from the Colorado Child Care Licensing Models

A. Recommendations

Each of the model sites and representatives from the Colorado Division of Child Care were asked to recommend improvements for the current licensing system based on their experience with the Licensing Models. Representatives provided a list of recommendations and rationale for each (a copy of the worksheet may be found in the Appendix).

Once the sites submitted their recommendations, the evaluator sorted them into common themes. When the 46 recommendations were sorted by topic, 16 significant suggestions remained to improve the current licensing system. The evaluator reviewed both the attached evaluation, and other relevant research in the area of child care licensing, to determine if the recommendation was supported elsewhere in the literature.

Table 16 displays the major recommendations for the current licensing system, each with a brief rationale. Where possible, research is cited from the current evaluation and other outside sources. The sites supporting the recommendation are indicated with an “X.” An additional column indicates if the evaluator supports the recommendation. The findings are presented in order of those recommendations receiving the greatest number of “X’s” or the most support.

Table 16. Major Recommendations for Current Licensing System (S = State Licensing, DT = Denver/Triad, L = Larimer, EP = El Paso, E = Evaluator)						
RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	S	DT	L	EP	E
1. Reduce the caseloads of State Licensing Specialists	<p>NAEYC recommends state licensing staff carry a caseload no greater than 75 center facilities.¹</p> <p>The average caseload for a licensing specialist in the country is 104 providers per licensing specialist (NCCIC). Caseloads in Colorado vary between 150 to 300.</p> <p>The current study revealed that lower caseloads resulted in improved attitudes towards licensing, better use of resources and higher involvement in professional development activities.</p>	X	X	X	X	X
2. Increase the volume and quality of licensing resources that providers can access through a variety of modalities including phone, email, Internet, on-and off-site trainings, resource guides and face-to-face visits with specialists or mentors.	<p>According to NAEYC, licensing agencies should have sufficient staff and resources to effectively implement a regulatory process.²</p> <p>It was clear from the evaluation that providers believed the added resources assisted them in maintaining compliance.</p>	X	X	X	X	X

¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1997). *Licensing and Public Regulation of Early Childhood Programs Position Paper*, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

² National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1997). *Licensing and Public Regulation of Early Childhood Programs Position Paper*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved March 25, 2004 from worldwide web: http://www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/pslicense pp. 14

Table 16. Major Recommendations for Current Licensing System (S = State Licensing, DT = Denver/Triad, L = Larimer, EP = El Paso, E = Evaluator)						
RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	S	DT	L	EP	E
3. Increase the employment requirements for licensing specialists, to include a background in the field of early childhood. Require a criminal background check for specialists. Ensure licensing specialists are consistently trained using a standardized curriculum, such as the NARA curriculum. Each specialist needs an individualized professional development plan.	<p>Pauline D. Koch, Executive Director of NARA, says one of the primary components of an effective licensing program is a sufficient, qualified and well-trained staff.³ There is a general belief that licensing specialists with an early child background have a better grasp of developmentally appropriate practices.</p> <p>According to the current State General Rules for Child Care Facilities, one of the rules 7.701.33 (6e), is that a child care facility shall not employ an individual who has been convicted of any felony involving physical assault, battery, or drug or /alcohol-related offense within the five years preceding the date of application for a license</p>	X	X	X	X	X
4. Ensure the new licensing regulations reduce duplicity and ambiguity, and use precise language and simplified formatting.	<p>Gallagher, Rooney and Campbell reported many inconsistencies in how regulations are explained with health and safety practices described in detail, while other quality practices are referred to vaguely.⁴</p> <p>In the current study, providers from the Denver/Triad and El Paso models reported that rewriting the regulations made it easier for providers to understand expectations.</p>	X	X	X	X	X

³ Koch, P. (2003) Foundation for Training: The NARA Licensing Curriculum. *Child Care Bulletin*, pp. 7

⁴ Gallagher, J., & Rooney, R. & Campbell, S. (1999). *Child Care Licensing Regulations and Child Care Quality in Four States*. Early Childhood Research Quarterly. 14 No. 3.pp. 313-333

Table 16. Major Recommendations for Current Licensing System (S = State Licensing, DT = Denver/Triad, L = Larimer, EP = El Paso, E = Evaluator)						
RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	S	DT	L	EP	E
5. Utilize mentors and coaches to assist facilities in maintaining compliance, improving facility quality and training staff.	<p>In The Early Childhood Mentoring Curriculum: A Handbook for Mentors, the authors state that “the mentoring process links classroom learning with personal guidance and care giving practices.”⁵</p> <p>In the current study, it was found that more support from mentors and model licensing staff increased provider understanding of licensing regulations and use of resources</p>	X	X	X	X	X
6. Create a state level licensing advisory board to: 1) annually review rules and regulations; 2) serve as an external grievance committee to review challenges to the licensing regulations 3) serve as the adverse action committee.	<p>The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, in their Guide Caring for Our Children, clearly supports the development of a broad-based advisory body. “States should have an official broad-based child care advisory body to deal with a wide scope of both regulatory and policy child care related issues.”⁶</p> <p>In the current study, programs reported not knowing what they could do when disagreements with the licensing inspection process occurred.</p>		X	X	X	X
7. Increase the frequency of inspection visits provided by the licensing specialists.	<p>Research shows less frequent licensing inspections (less than annually) result in decreased compliance.⁷</p> <p>The current study found that increasing licensing and outreach visits resulted in providers’ better attitudes towards licensing.</p>	X	X	X	X	X

⁵ Bellm, D., & Whitebook, M., & Hnatiuk, P. (1997) *The Early Childhood Mentoring Curriculum: A Handbook for Mentors*. Washington D.C.: Center for Child Care Workforce: pp.15

⁶ National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Childcare. (2002) *Caring for Children*. Retrieved May 5, 2004 from World Wide Web: [http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/HTML Version/Chapter_9.html](http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/HTML%20Version/Chapter_9.html) pp. 11

⁷ Gormley, W. (1995). *Everybody’s Children: Children as a Public Problem*. Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution Press: pp. 113 –119

Table 16. Major Recommendations for Current Licensing System (S = State Licensing, DT = Denver/Triad, L = Larimer, EP = El Paso, E = Evaluator)						
RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	S	DT	L	EP	E
8. Publish licensing inspection reports on the State website, including founded complaint reports and the general facilities report.	<p>There is substantial evidence that placing child care provider inspections and complaint reports on the Internet, changes the behavior of child care inspectors and improves the quality of child care received by low-income children.⁸</p> <p>In the current study, parents reported that they want more information on licensing criteria and inspections.</p>	X	X	X		X
9. Purchase new electronic equipment such as Palm Pilots and other electronic devices to assist licensing staff with effective and efficient report filing in the field.	<p>There are many new technological advancements now available that are proving to increase the licensing specialists' accuracy and speed with which they complete a licensing inspection.</p> <p>There are six states currently using electronic hand held units during inspections.</p>	X	X	X		X
10. Lower the supervisor-to-licensing specialist ratio to improve the quality and consistency of the licensing inspection and subsequent report writing. Make sure supervisors are adequately trained using a standardize curriculum.	<p>The NARA curriculum recommends that supervisors provide sound orientation and ongoing training as well as solid interpretation material to guide consistent application of rules and sanctions.⁹</p> <p>Without effective supervision of the licensing specialist, significant inconsistencies in the quality of the licensing inspection and report will continue.</p>	X		X		X

⁸ Witte, A., & Queralt, A., (2003) *What Happen When Child Care Inspections and Complaints Are Made Available on the Internet?* Wellesley Mass: Wellesley College Department of Economics, pp.12

⁹National Association of Regulatory Agencies, (2000) *The 2000 Edition of the NARA Licensing Curriculum*, Newark, Delaware, pp. 66

Table 16. Major Recommendations for Current Licensing System (S = State Licensing, DT = Denver/Triad, L = Larimer, EP = El Paso, E = Evaluator)						
RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	S	DT	L	EP	E
11. Add separate licensing resource and support personnel to work collaboratively with licensing staff. Consider contracting the positions through the resource and referral agencies, or through a community based RFP process.	<p>In the report, <i>Be All That We Can Be: Lessons from the Military for Improving Our Nation's Child Care System</i>, the authors recommend placing training and curriculum specialists in resource and referral agencies as a less costly method than putting them in every agency.¹⁰</p> <p>Numerous providers in the model sites reported being more comfortable with model staff because they were not in an enforcement role.</p>			X	X	
12. Develop a statewide enforcement system to limit unlicensed, illegally operating child care programs.	<p>Child care programs find it increasingly difficult to compete with unlicensed providers. Parents and children are at risk using unlicensed care. The NAEYC states that, "The primary benefit from public regulation of the child care and early education market is its help ensuring children's rights to care settings that protect them from harm and promote their healthy development."¹¹</p>	X		X	X	

¹⁰ Campbell, N., & Applebaum, J., & Martinson, K., & Martin, E. (2000) *Be All That You Can Be: Lessons From the Military for Improving Our Nations Child Care System*, Washington, D.C., National Woman's Law Center, pp. 35

¹¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1997). *Licensing and Public Regulation of Early Childhood Programs Position Paper*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved March 25, 2004 from worldwide web: http://www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/pslicense pp. 13

Table 16. Major Recommendations for Current Licensing System (S = State Licensing, DT = Denver/Triad, L = Larimer, EP = El Paso, E = Evaluator)						
RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	S	DT	L	EP	E
13. Create and use a weighted licensing violation assessment tool to track violations.	<p>Not all violations are the same. There needs to be a system of monitoring that differentiates between serious and less serious violations.</p> <p>The NARA curriculum (2000) maintains that a licensing weighting system should be implemented when, 1) regular or full licenses are issued with less than 100% compliance with rules, 2) there is a large number of rules with a variation of degrees of associated risk, and 3) a standardized measurement system or inspection instrument is used to measure compliance with licensing rules. Colorado rules and regulations meet those three criteria.¹²</p>		X			X
14. Create clearly written policies and procedures to ensure that every level of the licensing inspection process is consistent, is of high quality and timely.	In working with violation data, it has become apparent that the current system is inconsistent in the way inspections are conducted, violations are determined and how inspection reports are written.			X		X
15. More effectively utilize the State system of enforcement for continual non-compliance by low performing facilities.	<p>NAEYC recommends that sanctions should be included in the regulatory system to give binding force to its requirements.¹³</p> <p>Imposing fines will stimulate compliance more quickly for low performing facilities.</p>	X	X	X	X	X
16. Reform the civil service hiring procedures to become more efficient and timely in dealing with staff vacancies.	The current hiring system can take six months to fill a vacancy. During this time, positions are left open, further burdening the licensing staffs who are left to cover the vacancy.	X	X			

¹² National Association of Regulatory Agencies (2000) *The 2000 Edition of the NARA Licensing Curriculum*, Newark Delaware, pp. 12

¹³ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1997) *Licensing and Public Regulation of Early Childhood Programs Position Paper*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved March 25, 2004 from worldwide web: http://www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/pslicense pp. 2

B. Lessons Learned

Program staff from the three licensing models and the Division of Child Care shared insights and lessons learned from participating in the Pilot. Lessons learned differ from recommendations because they may not require a change or consequence in the immediate future. Lessons learned serve as considerations or reflections on an initiative. The following section presents the lessons learned in two categories: 1) broad lessons about the Pilot and 2) specific lessons from each of the model sites. The evaluator condensed the broad lessons and related them to the overall Pilot. Specific lessons from the model sites are presented verbatim.

1. Broad Lessons from the Pilot Process

1. Projects would have benefited from a clear set of written expectations that remained the same throughout the three-year pilot. Model pilots indicated that at various points in the process they were unsure what was expected of them or their projects. Sites appreciated the freedom to design a model that worked for their community but wanted a single set of expectations that remained consistent for the life of the project.
2. More long-range planning related to the project might have prevented some of the confusion providers experienced as projects shifted back to using the old set of licensing rules and regulations. As the project ended, numerous issues surfaced regarding how to transition providers using revised regulations back to using the original regulations. There was the chance some model providers would be found out of compliance with the state regulations because of transitioning too slowly.
3. Establishing clearer roles and responsibilities for the administrative and support team would have helped models know who to call with questions about the Pilot. It was unclear sometimes who had the final say in decisions related to the Pilot. The Department of Education, the Department of Human Services and the National Child Care Information Center all provided staff support to the Pilots but “but too many cooks in the kitchen” added some confusion for the sites regarding how decisions were made and who to call for definitive answers.
4. Providing more administrative staff to coordinate and manage the Licensing Model at a statewide level would have enhanced the success of the models. From the very beginning of the Pilots, staff at both the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services had very limited time to dedicate to managing the Licensing Models. This was not the fault of one individual but simply a miscalculation on an administrative level.
5. Early meetings would have enhanced the evaluation if representatives from the three sites and state officials had met to establish a common shared vision for the pilot and a common set of outcome measures to be used by all of the models. While planners eventually developed common evaluation outcomes for the project, it would have been much easier for the sites and the evaluation team if more time had been spent establishing the desired outcomes before the teams began to design their models and strategies.
6. Due to the diverse orientations of each of the models, the hiring of a professional facilitator for the planning meetings would have better assisted the group in resolving differences and moving forward with the effort. Throughout the planning and implementation phase of the project, representatives from the models and the state had differing opinions about child care licensing and how the Pilots should proceed. It might have been helpful to hire a professional facilitator, with no ties to the child care world, to ensure an effective and neutral process during the group meetings.

2. Lessons Learned from the Pilot Models

Table 17. Lessons Learned - LARIMER

SITUATION WHERE LEARNING OCCURRED	LESSON LEARNED
<p>1. In our attempts to address unlicensed care, we learned that this issue needs to have dedicated resources; staff and authority (possibly even legal authority such as that given a police officer). The challenges of identifying and addressing unlicensed care are many, and when they are part of a position that includes other job duties, it is difficult to continuously work on them. Existing licensing staff often takes on issues related to unlicensed care because it is the right thing to do, without funded time, training and resources to do so.</p>	<p>Dedicate resources to address issues of unlicensed care, including parent education, identification and outreach to support providers in attaining a license; ensure timely investigations and responses to unlicensed care situations that put children at risk of harm. Investigate moving unlicensed care out of civil law and into criminal law, to provide stronger authority in situations that put children at risk.</p>
<p>2. The relationship between licensing specialists, Education Resource specialists and providers is dependent on good communication. During the second year, we established written communication expectations for the staff. This helps clarify how information is shared, how often and with whom.</p>	<p>Clear communication procedures and expectations are an important part of a licensing system. Communication, and the relationships it builds, is the foundation of a system that can be responsive and accountable. When communication did not happen effectively, the entire system became more difficult and challenging.</p>
<p>3. Licensing model work and issues that can or cannot be addressed via licensing.</p>	<p>In working with licensing for the past three years and participating in the many discussions with other projects, we have learned that licensing cannot impact all issues in ECE. Staff retention is most directly impacted by wages, organizational climate and community issues, and are not directly impacted by licensing. In our community, two large multi-site programs were combined, and then separated, when a lease-to-buy agreement did not work out. This created significant upheaval in the programs and for the staff, resulting in significant turnover in these programs. This is an example of what can impact turnover negatively, but could not be impacted or mediated via the licensing system. Education resource staff can help programs identify and utilize community resources effectively. Sites in Larimer reported greater numbers of children leaving programs due to behavior challenges; anecdotal evidence shows us that this is related to greater connections to the resources available in the community. Often, a child left a program to move to another that was better able to meet their needs. Programs were able to identify and access this resource due to the ERS support.</p>

Table 17. Lessons Learned - LARIMER

SITUATION WHERE LEARNING OCCURRED	LESSON LEARNED
4. Shifting the paradigm from catching programs making mistakes and having violations to supporting programs to achieve compliance.	This shift clearly paved the way for more open and supportive relationships with providers. Providers used the self-assessment to identify areas needing work to achieve compliance. This process sent a message that licensing wanted to help providers do it right and achieve compliance. It also made it possible for the resource staff to help providers establish in-house systems that made licensing inspections more efficient, such as helping programs set up well-organized staff file systems.
5. Use of the self-assessment	We learned that self-assessment does support providers in identification of issues, raised their awareness of licensing regulations, helped them become more conscientious in monitoring their regulatory compliance and gave them a tool to look at their programs critically which established a step forward towards quality. Interviews and surveys for this portion of the Larimer Pilot indicate the value of the tool.

Table 18. Lessons Learned – DENVER/TRIAD

SITUATION WHERE LEARNING OCCURRED	LESSON LEARNED
1. Better game plan from beginning of the project.	Pilots are difficult, because that is what they are - pilots to learn new things. We wish the National Advisors would have brought to the table some of the research we brought to their attention. All Pilots could have benefited from the information at the onset of the project, not the end.
2. The regulation changes are key; it would be very discouraging to see regulations put into a STATE code/format when we have tons of testimonials and providers, parents and professionals stating how much more user-friendly Denver/Triad regulations are.	All this good work could be lost if regulations chosen have to be put in the old system.
3. Writing new regulations	Level of difficulty meeting all needs (legal, business, best practice).
4. Implementing new regulations Some worked well and some did not	Some worked well and some did not.
5. Visits completed with model staff and contract/state staff.	Lack of consistency remains a big problem.

Table 18. Lessons Learned – DENVER/TRIAD

SITUATION WHERE LEARNING OCCURRED	LESSON LEARNED
6. The Triad LDS provided licensing regulations training, ongoing technical assistance, regulation resources, professional development resources, mental health resources and links to the local resource and referral agency. The Triad mentor spent more one-on-one time to help providers develop and implement plans to meet minimum requirements, and to assist providers wishing to go above and beyond required standards, to do so.	<p>Having mentors assigned to each site enables the licensing development specialist (LDS) to follow up on violations by forwarding specific information to the site/provider mentor, with requests for specific assistance on compliance issues.</p> <p>Separating the role of regulator and mentor allowed providers to open up without fear of more violations being added to their permanent record. It did not detract from the relationship the LDS had with the provider. Rather, it allowed the LDS to focus specifically on regulatory enforcement and support. It is a well-balanced system.</p>

Table 19. Lessons Learned – EL PASO

SITUATION WHERE LEARNING OCCURRED	LESSON LEARNED
1. All sites - Each site involved in the licensing model was provided quality improvement dollars based on director qualifications, director experience, staff qualifications, accreditation and environmental rating scale scores.	In order for sites to make significant improvements in their quality it was necessary to provide improvement dollars to assist them. We learned that each site involved in the licensing model were eager to improve the quality of their programming and would have done it prior to the advent of the licensing model but did not have the money to do it.
2. All sites – We expected staff turnover to improve with additional support.	Teacher turnover was actually higher in the licensing model sites. Many professionals received additional education and moved on to higher paying positions. Some teachers could not meet the expectations of the model and were dismissed. We live in a highly transient military community and we believe this impacted turnover. Certain programs change teachers on an annual basis. We could not affect this policy.
3. In certain programs we experienced multiple directors over the course of the model. Director turnover is even more damaging than teacher turnover to a site.	Many directors who left were not considered by the state to be Director qualified. Having a director leave throws the program into chaos and makes it harder to improve the quality of the program. The lesson is that director stability is a key indicator for ongoing quality improvement.
4. All participating sites had a quality improvement program that was framed to increase their scores on the environmental rating scale and the EDUCARE Star Rating.	Quality improvement plans work and provide a framework for ongoing focus with sites and staff.

Table 19. Lessons Learned – EL PASO

SITUATION WHERE LEARNING OCCURRED	LESSON LEARNED
5. Parent meetings, ongoing surveys, focus groups and newsletters.	More focus on parent education and awareness would be more beneficial. These efforts made it obvious that families need consistent ongoing communication about the role of licensing, what quality is and looks like and how monitoring occurs. They are very interested in this process but need continuous information. We learned that parents are not as informed as we think they should be in choosing child care.
6. Child care sites who participated in the model expressed appreciation and a stronger relationship with licensing when visits occur more frequently	When the licensing specialist visits more frequently, stronger relationships with sites develop and licensing rules and regulations have a higher priority for the sites. We also learned that sites develop a more open communication and relationship with their licensing specialist.
7. Child care resource and referral agency.	When licensing specialists' work with Resource and Referral we are able to support each other to make the needed improvements in child care sites and begin to develop a system of licensing that works for all programs. When child care resource and referral agency see a trend developing they communicate this to the licensing specialist and develop a plan to address it. Additionally, as we noticed trends the CCR&R focused specifically on developing training opportunities to address the issues.
8. All child care sites involved in the licensing model expressed a higher level of attention to quality.	When teachers are rated with the environmental rating scale they strive to improve the quality of their program. They expressed a desire to improve their ratings and to increase the quality of their program. A higher score gave them a feeling of satisfaction and an eagerness to continue to improve

Appendices

**Community Site Visit
Colorado Licensing Model
Focus Group**

Date: _____

Community: _____

Present at Focus Group: _____

Review purpose of evaluation and major activities of evaluation. Hand out evaluation plan and timeline.

- 1. What was your group's basic vision for a licensing model when you undertook this project?**

- 2. Can you highlight the core changes you have made to licensing model and why you made them?**

- 3. Were there unique conditions in the community that influenced the way you designed your model?**

- 4. If you could pick three components of the model that you believe have made the most significant difference for providers in the community, what would they be?**

- 5. How do you know the model is making a difference? (Instruments, Data or Antidotal)**

- 6. If there was no money available from the State to extend the licensing model work in your community, what components of the model do you think would be most valuable to continue?**
- 7. How has your model made it easier for providers to understand and comply with the regulations?**
- 8. If I were to go out to a group of providers in the model and ask them what has changed for them as a result of participating in the model, what would they tell me?**
- 9. How have the changes brought on through the licensing model improved what parents experience at their childcare center/home?**
- 10. Do you have any data that would indicate that the numbers of licensing infractions have either gone up or down as a result of the improved model. If so, explain.**
- 11. If you had the chance to start the licensing model project over again in your community, what would you do differently?**
- 12. What would another community need to have in place to replicate your licensing model?**
- 13. The evaluation team will be revamping the child care provider survey for use with providers in the model as well as a control group outside of the model. What questions do you think are most important to ask providers to determine the impacts of the licensing model?**

**Colorado Childcare Licensing Models
Parent Perspectives on Licensing
February 2004**

This is an informal inquiry into what parents think of childcare licensing. Please ask a group of parents who are currently using childcare in your community the following questions. Record the responses and either mail or email me them back to me. Feel free to capture other comments the group might have related to licensing. Let's set a goal of March 1, 2004 to have some feedback. GOOD LUCK

Model Community:

Type of Parent Group:

Numbers in Group:

- 1. What types of things do you look for when you select a childcare provider for your children?**

- 2. Please describe the level of knowledge that you have of childcare licensing? (Who does it? What do they look for?)**

- 3. What do you think is the most important thing childcare licensing should be doing?**

- 4. How many of you have ever talked with your provider about licensing? (Show of hands) What did you talk about?**

- 5. Is there anything that you think should be done differently related to childcare licensing?**

Questions for Dana Andrews – Licensing Administrator
April 13, 2004

1. Can you provide me with a general overview of how the state licensing is currently set up? (Who, what, where, numbers, staff etc.)
2. Do you have written goals and objectives for the licensing division?
3. What are the core strategies to achieve the goals?
4. How do you as a department plan for the future?
5. How difficult is it to create change in the department? Can you give me examples of where you have instituted successful innovations?
6. What is working really well for the division? What are you proud of?
7. What is not working in the current system?
8. How does the current staff educate, train and provide resources to childcare providers? Is it working?
9. If you could make three changes to how the current system is designed what would those changes be?
10. Of the licensing model strategies what do you think has the most potential of working
11. Is there anything else that you think it is important for me to understand about the state licensing system?

Colorado Childcare Licensing Pilot Evaluation
Scope of Work Questionnaire
March 12, 2004

One of the goals in this evaluation is to clearly understand exactly what the state licensing staff do in their day to day jobs and determine if staff funded by the childcare licensing pilot have responsibilities significantly different than those of their state counterparts. I am aware that you may already have been asked to fill out other evaluation materials related to this project so I have attempted to keep my questions brief and focused. Thank you for your time and energy.

Licensing supervisors should complete this form. If it is necessary to consult with the staff you supervise to get accurate information feel free to do so. You may use bullets or fragments instead of full sentences to capture your thoughts. Please return the questionnaire no later than March 22, 2004 to Gini Bradley at ginibradley@aol.com (Phone –970-668-1537)

Your Name: _____

Average Caseload of the Licensing Specialist You Supervise

Average Number of Annual Visits a Licensing Specialist Make to Providers:

1. Please describe what an average day on the job looks like for a licensing specialist?
2. Do you have a particular philosophy about how the licensing specialist should do their job? If so, please describe?
3. What activities or techniques do licensing specialist use that are most effective in helping providers have a positive licensing experience?
4. How do licensing specialists promote greater compliance within the providers they work with?
5. What resources does your licensing staff most commonly share with providers that relate to licensing? (book, handouts, manuals, trainings)
6. How would you describe the level of communication that licensing specialist have with providers? Do licensing specialist experience any barriers or frustrations related to communication? If so, what are they?
7. On a scale of 1- to 10, how user friendly would you rate the current licensing system for providers? (1 being not user friendly and 10 being very user friendly.) Please discuss the rationale for your score.
8. If you could pick three things to change about the current licensing system, what would those three items be and why?

PLEASE RETURN THE SURVEY ELECTRONICALLY TO ginibradley@aol.com by March 22, 2004.

Key Informant Interviews
Colorado Childcare Licensing Model Project
Providers in the Model

Model Community _____

Name of Provider _____

Type of Care _____

Years in Business _____

Describe the general purpose and scope of the evaluation. Explain that comments will be generalized and that no specific names will be referenced in the evaluation.

1. Can you describe your experience with the licensing system prior to becoming a part of the Licensing Pilot Project?
2. What has changed for you since becoming part of the Licensing Pilot Project?
3. How has the revised model assisted you in maintaining compliance?
4. What specific techniques/activities did the licensing (model) staff use that were most helpful to you in understanding and complying with the licensing regulations?
5. What techniques/activities were not as helpful?
6. How has your communication style with your licensing staff or model staff changed since being involved with the licensing pilot?

7. Do you feel that you have been able to make advancements in your level of professional development as a result of participating in the model? If so, how have you advanced?

8. What does a user friendly licensing model look like to you? Has the Licensing Pilot Project in your community become more user friendly for you?. If so, how?

9. What new professional resources have you been able to access as a result of being involved with the Licensing Pilot Project ?

10. Has anything changed for parents in your program since you have been a part of licensing model? If yes, describe what is different?

11. Can you give me some specific examples how you have improved your facility as a result of support, information, and resources from the Licensing Pilot Project?

Key Informant Interviews
Colorado Childcare Licensing Model Project
Providers Not in the Model

Model Community_____

Name of Provider_____

Type of Care _____

Years in Business_____

Describe the general purpose and scope of the evaluation. Explain that comments will be generalized and that no specific names will be referenced in the evaluation.

1. Can you describe your experience getting and maintaining your childcare licensing?

2. What has changed for you since becoming part of the Licensing Pilot Project?

3. How has the revised model assisted you in maintaining compliance?

4. What specific techniques/activities did the licensing (model) staff use that were most helpful to you in understanding and complying with the licensing regulations?

5. What techniques/activities were not as helpful?

6. How has your communication style with your licensing staff or model staff changed since being involved with the licensing pilot?

7. Do you feel that you have been able to make advancements in your level of professional development as a result of participating in the model? If so, how have you advanced?

8. What does a user friendly licensing model look like to you? Has the Licensing Pilot Project in your community become more user friendly for you?. If so, how?

9. What new professional resources have you been able to access as a result of being involved with the Licensing Pilot Project ?

10. Has anything changed for parents in your program since you have been a part of licensing model? If yes, describe what is different?

11. Can you give me some specific examples how you have improved your facility as a result of support, information, and resources from the Licensing Pilot Project?

Child Care Licensing Models Provider Survey

The Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education have been working to develop a user-friendly Child Care Licensing System that supports, monitors, and enhances early care and education for children in Colorado, birth to twelve years old. This survey is an attempt to determine the effectiveness of the Child Care Licensing System by asking providers their opinions and experiences.

This survey should be completed by the person who is most familiar with the overall operation of your child care program and the relationship of the program to licensing regulations. Please frame your responses to experiences and perceptions over the last twelve months. Your participation will enhance the operation of Colorado's Child Care Licensing System. Your individual responses will not be reported but will be combined with those of other child care providers. .

Information about your program

1. County *(check only one)*
 a. El Paso ____ b. Denver/ Triad ____ c. Larimer ____
2. Type of Program *(check only one)*
 a. Child Care Home ____ b. Child Care Center ____ c. School Age Facility ____
3. Type of Structure *(check only one)*
 a. Private/ Not for Profit ____ b. Private/ For Profit ____ c. Public/Government ____
 d. Church Related ____
4. Number of Children Enrolled in Your Program in Each Age Range on an Average Day *(insert enrollments numbers)*
 ____ Infant ____ Toddler ____ Pre School ____ Kindergarten ____ School Age
5. Number of Staff Currently Employed by Your Program *(insert numbers)*
 ____ Classroom Staff ____ Administrative Staff ____ Support Staff ____ Home Provider

Attitudes toward licensing

Please respond to each statement below by checking one of four responses:

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	D	SD
1. I understand how licensing regulations relate to my facility/classroom and I apply them on a regular basis.				
2. Licensing regulations are sometimes confusing and ambiguous.				
3. I feel comfortable asking licensing questions.				
4. If I ask a licensing question, I am not certain that I will get a timely response.				
5. I have made specific changes in my program or facility as a result of licensing resources I received.				
6. I have difficulty explaining licensing regulations to staff and parents				
7. I refer to the licensing regulations in my daily work.				
8. Not all facilities that care for children need to be licensed.				

9. I often feel unprepared for a licensing inspection.				
10. I know how to maintain licensing compliance.				
11. Parents should be able to ask me questions about my license or licensing in general.				
12. I utilize various early childhood training opportunities in my community to maintain my license.				
13. It is difficult to access the resources necessary to maintain a licensed facility.				

Experiential information

16. Which of the following resources did you employ in the past 12 months to enable you to maintain a licensed facility? *(check as many as apply)*

- ☐ a. On site technical assistance with licensing staff
- ☐ b. On site mentoring
- ☐ c. Written materials and resources
- ☐ e. On Site group training
- ☐ f. Off Site group training
- ☐ g. Phone or email responses to questions
- ☐ h. Videos
- ☐ i. Peer to peer meetings and discussions
- ☐ k. Other *(please specify)* _____

17. How many staff persons left your program in the last 12 months? *(insert number, use 0 for no occurrence)* ___ Classroom Staff ___ Administrative Staff ___ Support Staff
___ Home Provider

18. How many children left your program because of behavioral problems in the last 12 months? _____
(insert number, use 0 for no occurrence)

19. How many injuries to children (requiring medical attention) occurred in the past 12 months? _____ *(insert number, use 0 for no occurrence)*

20. How many parent complaints to the State have you had in the past 12 months? _____ *(insert number, use 0 for no occurrence)*

21. How many licensing violations have you had in the past 12 months? _____ *(insert number, use 0 for no occurrence)*

Thank you for your assistance and candor. Your individual responses will not be reported but will be combined with those of other child care providers. If you wish, you will be sent a report on this survey.

Site Use Only: ___ M ___ C
RETURN BY JUNE 7, 2003

Colorado Child Care Licensing Models
Worksheet - Capturing Lessons Learned and Recommendations
May 2004

As mentioned during our last phone meeting, I would like to capture from each of the model sites what their recommendations are for overall changes to the current state licensing system. I also would like to include a brief rationale for why your group is making the recommendation. I have presented you a table in WORD if you would like to return your comments electronically.

In addition, I would like to capture any lessons learned from the implementation of your model. Lessons learned will be particularly important if a portion or your entire model is selected for statewide implementation.

Recommendations for State System:

Recommendations to State Licensing System	Rationale for Recommendation
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

Lessons Learned from Model:

Situation Where Learning Occurred	Lessoned Learned
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

QUESTIONS – Gini Bradley
 970-668-1537
ginibradley@aol.com