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## Staffed Family Child Care Networks Can Navigate a New World Order

*By Louise Stoney*

Small child care settings in homes and community locations are positioned to play a unique role in leading our nation through the coronavirus threat, due to their capacity to quickly respond to the child care needs of essential workers and provide care in many small locations on a flexible schedule. But, even under normal circumstances, these small home- and community-based programs are among the most economically fragile businesses in our economy.

The National Women's Law Center (NWLC) recently released an excellent [fact sheet](#) that identifies key steps that should be taken to improve financial security for home-based providers during the crisis. These recommendations are on point and should be funded. However, they will be extremely difficult to administer with the tens of thousands of small child care businesses nationally. Government systems are not positioned to financially support (which means, at

minimum, contract with, make payments to, or collect data from) these small, independent, and often low-tech businesses in an efficient, effective or timely manner. If, however, we embrace this challenge as an opportunity to build sustainable provider-based systems, rescue efforts could have a lasting impact in years to come.

[Opportunities Exchange](#) is focused on building capacity for sustainable, high-quality early care and education via an approach we call [Shared Services](#) which is essentially 'system-building at the provider level'. Our work has led us to a deep understanding that sustainability requires both business leadership and pedagogical leadership. Staffed Family Child Care Networks are a form of Shared Services however to date most networks focus primarily on pedagogical leadership and have had little success building the administrative and fiscal supports needed to shore up this isolated and fragile sector of the industry.

A Shared Services framework offers opportunities to re-imagine what is possible and, in this time of deep crisis, consider responses that both address immediate needs and look to the future. A new [Issue Brief](#) explores the recent NWLCC recommendations through the lens of Shared Services and considers ways that a Staffed Family Child Care Network could enable implementation of these ideas.

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[Click here to read the issue brief.](#)



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