



CENTER FOR
PUBLIC JUSTICE

Faith in Child Care Settings:

From Faith Affiliation to Everyday Practice



A Survey of
Georgia and Massachusetts
Child Care Providers

by Rachel Hope Anderson

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Acknowledgements

Conducting research into faith-based child care in the states of Massachusetts and Georgia has been an enlightening journey. We extend our sincerest gratitude to the numerous individuals and organizations who contributed to the completion of this project.

First and foremost, we acknowledge the support and cooperation of all the individuals and organizations within the faith-based child care ecosystem of Massachusetts and Georgia who graciously participated in our study. Without their willingness to share their insights and experiences, including through qualitative interviews, this research would not have been possible.

We express our deep appreciation to Rachel Hope Anderson, CPJ's senior consultant on this project. Rachel embodies decades of commitment to shape better understanding of family-supportive policies and ecosystems, both in her scholarship and in her work as a practitioner.

We also extend our thanks to Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion, including William Wubbenhorst and Alfreda Wubbenhorst, and its director, Byron Johnson, for their involvement in this project. Under Byron's leadership, Baylor ISR is well-known in the field for their research to understand the role that faith plays in society.

We are grateful for a number of project advisors whose subject-matter expertise is widely known: Mona Abo-Zena, Lisa Cummins, Rachel Fulcher-Dawson, Abby Foreman, Brad Fulton, Zachary Price, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Linda Smith. These leaders' contributions at the outset of the project helped shape the research agenda in ways that substantially enriched it.

We are thankful for the project support provided by the Fetzer Institute.

We wish to thank three other members of CPJ's team: Stanley Carlson-Thies, for his invaluable expertise on the role of faith-based organizations in society, and to Debora Haede and Ethan McBride, whose work supported the project through to completion.

We take full responsibility for the analyses and conclusions presented in this report. Any errors or omissions are solely ours.

It is our sincere hope that this research will contribute to a better understanding of faith in child care settings and help to inform public understanding, future policies, and practices in this field.


With gratitude,

Stephanie Summers, CEO
Center for Public Justice

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A Survey of Georgia and Massachusetts Child Care Providers

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Understanding the role of faith in the child care ecosystem requires a nuanced approach that goes beyond simplistic labels of faith-based or faith-affiliated programs.

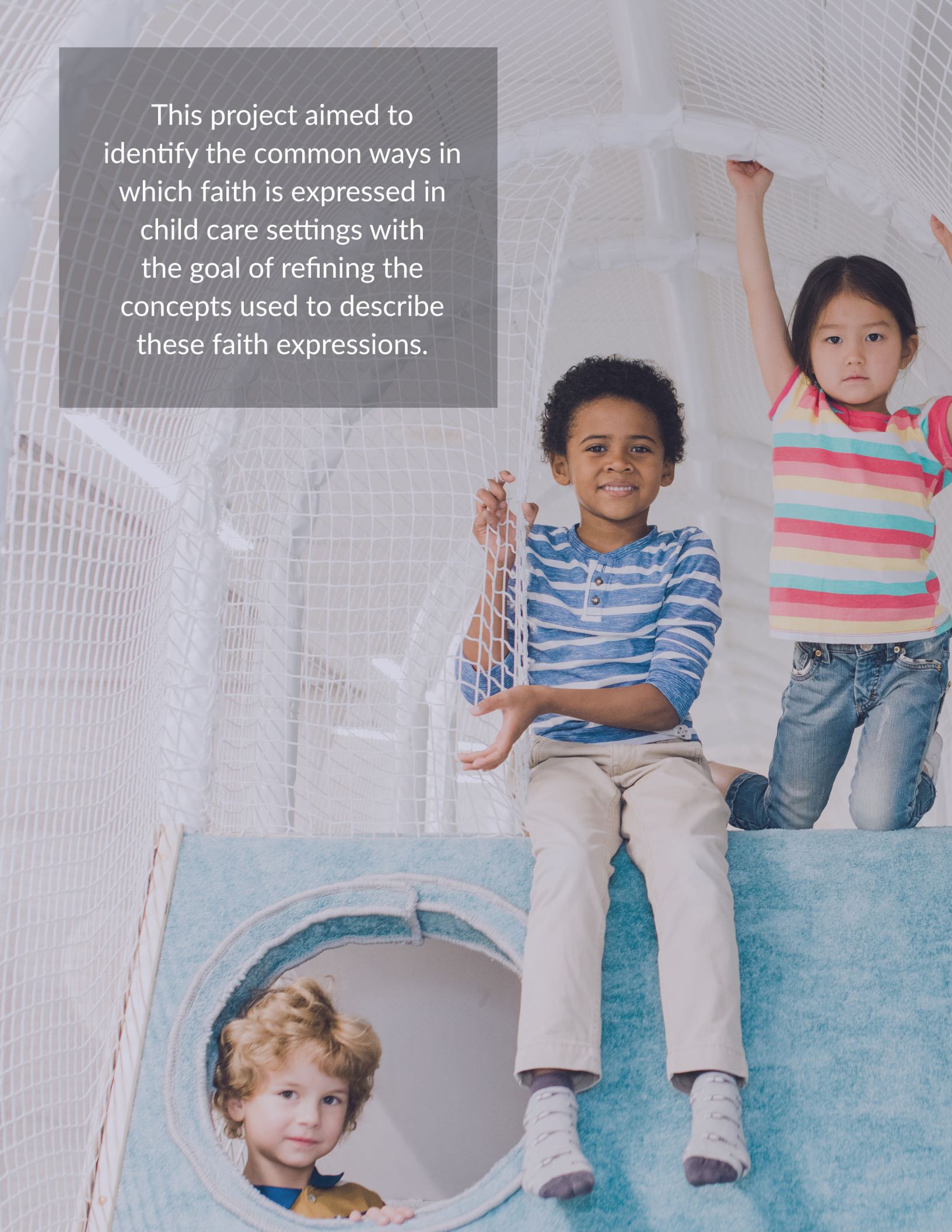
Executive Summary

Every year, millions of families select a child care provider. According to a survey conducted for the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), a faith-affiliated child care center was the preferred child care option for about 15 percent of American households.¹ Our objective was to understand the common ways in which faith is expressed in child care settings with the goal of refining the concepts used to study faith in child care.

A research team affiliated with the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion distributed surveys to child care providers in two states: Georgia and Massachusetts.² Their findings shed light on the nuanced relationship between faith and child care provision, emphasizing the multifaceted ways in which faith influences both the motivations and practices of child care providers. While only a small percentage (6 percent) of child care programs are directly affiliated with faith entities, a significant portion (20 percent) express motivation by faith and/or regularly incorporate religious practices. This motivation is often reflected in daily routines such as music, stories, or prayer. Family-based child care providers, in particular, demonstrate a strong connection between faith and their work, with 14 percent citing motivation by faith or values. Personal religious motivation is also prevalent, with 29 percent of family-based care providers identifying as such. Despite this, institutional religious support for child care programs is relatively rare, with only 7 percent receiving congregational support and 10 percent receiving clergy visits. Additionally, the use of religious buildings for child care purposes is limited, with only 17 percent of child care centers utilizing such facilities. The most common religious traditions among providers include Baptist, non-denominational, and Pentecostal Protestant, followed by Catholic, while mainline Protestant traditions are less represented.

Understanding the role of faith in the child care ecosystem requires a nuanced approach that goes beyond simplistic labels of faith-based or faith-affiliated programs. The findings of this survey underscore the need for more nuanced categories relating to faith. These types vary in how they express providers' faith values and traditions, as well as their intentions relative to children and families. Depending on families' preferences and backgrounds, different types of child care programs may be sought out. Attention to faith in the child care setting is crucial for assessing the available supply of child care, aligning it with parent preferences, and fostering a supportive ecosystem that respects the diverse needs of providers, families, and children.

This project aimed to identify the common ways in which faith is expressed in child care settings with the goal of refining the concepts used to describe these faith expressions.



1 Overview

The Center for Public Justice initiated a project titled “Mapping Faith-Based Child Care Providers to Advance Shared Flourishing,” in order to fill gaps in knowledge about faith and child care in the United States and to propose working descriptions of faith in child care settings. Previous surveys indicate that a meaningful portion of parents prefer to enroll their children in faith-based child care.³ In many communities, one might see a child care sign outside a church or religious community center. In other instances, parents know that their child care provider is a person with an active religious faith operating a program with a name with religious connotations such as “Kingdom Kids” or “Amazing Grace.”

Despite survey and anecdotal evidence of faith in child care settings, this phenomenon is not widely understood, much less counted. Is there just one type of “faith-based child care” or are there a variety of ways that faith, religion, and spirituality are expressed in child care settings? Is faith present in child care settings primarily because child care programs are housed in or affiliated with religious institutions, as an expression of child care providers’ personal faith, in response to children and family’s religious identities, or some combination of these factors? How might we measure the prevalence of various expressions of faith and religion in the child care sector and track changes over time?

This project aimed to identify the common ways in which faith is expressed in child care settings with the goal of refining the concepts used to describe these faith expressions. The project also sought to devise and test a method for counting faith and child care at the state level. The project proceeded in two parts:

1. a survey distributed to child care providers in two states, Massachusetts and Georgia;
2. qualitative interviews with child care providers in both states as well as with a select group of advisors and stakeholders.

A note on the language used in this report

The term “faith-based child care” is often used to describe various phenomena: being located in a religious building, being sponsored by or affiliated with a religious institution, teaching or practicing faith. It is difficult to pinpoint the meaning of “faith-based child care” in any given application. For this reason and because of provider-driven concerns described in this report’s findings, the report avoids the term “faith-based child care.” The findings and discussion section refers, broadly, to faith in child care settings. The report recommendations then propose several ways of talking and inquiring about faith in child care settings in future projects.

“Child care” and “early education” are two overlapping terms to describe non-parental care for young children. The term “early education” emphasizes the continuum between care for young children and the development of children’s cognitive, social, and behavioral capacities. For brevity, this report uses the term “child care” to describe organizations that provide non-parental care to children ages zero to five in a center or home setting. Infant and toddler care, prekindergarten, and other early education programs that operate with state authorization (either a license or a religious license exemption) are all part of this project’s definition of child care. Informal, unlicensed child care arrangements as well as after-school programs and occasional programs such as parents’ day off programs are not included in the project’s definition of child care. Preschool programs based in public schools were not included.

2 Describing faith in relation to child care

The relationship between a child care program and a religious entity is the starting point for most research on faith and child care. The 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) sought to identify the number of child care providers with faith sponsorship. In a situation where faith sponsorship is involved, a sponsoring organization such as a church, religious group, or private religious school provides funding, administrative oversight, or establishes reporting requirements for a child care center.⁴ Other studies have focused on faith affiliation, a term that carries a similar meaning to faith sponsorship but with less control or oversight from the religious organization. In 2020, the Bipartisan Policy Center asked families if they used a child care center “that was affiliated with a faith organization.”⁵ Finally, surveys have measured how many child care providers are located in a house of worship or a faith-based school, noting both an overlap and a distinction between the categories of faith-located and faith-sponsored. The NSECE found, for example, that many faith-located centers in their dataset were not faith-sponsored.

An exclusive focus on faith sponsorship and location may produce an incomplete picture of faith in the child care ecosystem. Child care programs may operate independently of a religious denomination, house of worship, or other religious institution but still possess a faith-based mission and purpose. Further, child care programs may express faith character in a variety of ways. To better understand faith and child care, we may want to know more about what happens in the child care setting, such as the following: Are religion and faith incorporated into daily or seasonal practices?⁶ Does the child care program have, as one of its goals, the spiritual or religious formation of children?

Scholarship on faith in social service settings provides a starting point for defining and describing faith in the child care system. The study of faith-based social services proliferated in the 2000s in the context of policies intended to reform the nation’s welfare system. Federal legislation and regulations grouped under the heading “Charitable Choice” as well as a newly launched federal faith-based initiative all contemplated public funds flowing to faith-based programs.⁷ Scholars set out to understand the faith-based organizations that might serve low-income and other vulnerable populations. Scholars proposed different categories to describe faith-based social services. In an analysis of welfare-to-work services, political scientist Stephen V. Monsma described two types of faith-affiliated service programs: “faith-based/segmented” and “faith-based/integrated.” The integrated programs tended to incorporate religiously rooted practices, values, or motivations into their services, whereas segmented programs tended to separate religion from their services.⁸ Some scholars concluded that religiosity within organizations does not fit neatly on a simple spectrum from religious to secular; rather, religiosity manifests in several overlapping types. Service religiosity, which involves the incorporation of religious themes or values in interaction with clients, is distinct from staff religiosity or formal organizational religiosity.⁹

Informed by scholarship on faith-based social services, this project sought information on religious practices and motivations within a social service setting, such as child care. We also anticipated that faith might be expressed in overlapping but distinct ways in the child care setting.


This project also acknowledges the contrast between welfare-related services and the child care ecosystem. Child care is a service that connects families, children, and care providers on an almost daily basis. The selection of a child care provider is a major decision for families. At the same time, child care is a widely sought out service, utilized by families across the income spectrum. It is increasingly seen as part of the fabric of public life, supported by public funding and facilitated by public licensing, training, and communication infrastructures.

Our understanding of faith in child care settings and, ultimately, the categories used to study and describe this phenomenon should help families and advance public purposes around child care. Parental choice and agency depend upon the quality of information about the child care programs available to them - including about the faith character of a program parents might choose. From the perspective of public administrators and researchers, defining faith in child care settings should make it easier to measure and monitor various types of child care services. Administrators and other stakeholders may also want to monitor changes in the supply of certain types of child care services over time in relation to policy and regulatory change, demographic change, and philanthropic efforts. Finally, understanding faith in child care settings could inform future inquiry into links between faith and child outcomes. For example, are there particular faith expressions or practices that correspond with positive development in young children - social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive?

All of these purposes are served by supplementing the predominant emphasis on faith sponsorship and affiliation with more information about faith character and practices in the child care setting. A few surveys have attempted to address the character and practice features of child care programs. A typology developed in 2008 by Urban Institute-based researchers included a category called “faith-infused.” Faith-infused child care, according to the Urban Institute, was marked by the provision of religious instruction or organized prayers for worship services.¹⁰ In 2021, qualitative interviews conducted by the Center for Public Justice (CPJ) together with DataWise Consulting solicited descriptions of faith-based child care from a sample of Michigan child care providers. Some providers highlighted ties to religious institutions and receipt of material resources from faith communities such as a church-affiliated food pantry. Other Michigan respondents emphasized attention to the whole child, the character of providers’ interactions with children, and particular routines and rituals as expressions of their faith identity.¹¹

This project builds upon the study of Michigan child care with a survey of child care providers in Georgia and Massachusetts, utilizing a methodology described in more detail below. The surveys aimed

to gather information about various aspects of faith in child care, including the use of religious buildings for child care, providers' program descriptions relative to faith, and specific program practices that might express faith character. The responses along with follow-up interviews, informed observations presented in this report about faith and child care.

A group of diverse young children are sitting together, smiling and waving their hands. In the foreground, a young girl with dark hair, wearing a colorful rainbow-striped t-shirt, looks towards the camera with a gentle smile. Behind her, a young boy with curly blonde hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt with yellow and blue accents on the sleeves, also smiles. In the background, another child is partially visible, wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The children appear to be in a bright, indoor setting, possibly a classroom or playroom, with a light blue wall and a grey carpet visible. The overall atmosphere is warm and joyful.

The child care system in the United States is not a single institution but rather an ecosystem of public and private entities.

3 Georgia and Massachusetts Child Care Systems

The child care system in the United States is not a single institution but rather an ecosystem of public and private entities. Public agencies at the state level provide oversight and coordination of child care services, setting standards and distributing state and federal funds.

In Georgia, the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), a cabinet-level agency, oversees child care and early learning programs. In 1992, Georgia became the first state to establish a universal-access prekindergarten (pre-K) program. Georgia's pre-K program serves approximately 60 percent of the state's four-year-olds.¹² The program is free to families. All four-year-old children who are Georgia residents are eligible for enrollment, though seats are not guaranteed to all applicants. Participating child care providers receive dedicated funding from the Georgia Lottery.¹³ A wide variety of providers are eligible to participate. These include public schools as well as "large corporate child care" chains, small "mom and pop" businesses, religious institutions, and non-profit community-based organizations.¹⁴

Georgia families can apply for child care subsidies based on income eligibility. Approximately 63,000 children under the age of five receive scholarships associated with Childcare and Parents Services (CAPS) - a program that combines federal and state funds to cover a portion of the cost of private child care for low-income households.¹⁵ More than 20,000 children in Georgia under the age of five participate in federally-funded Head Start or Early Head Start.

Over 4,000 Georgia child care centers and family-based care providers are DECAL-licensed. Approximately 6,500 child care programs in Georgia are license-exempt.¹⁶ Among these, seventy-eight operate on the basis of a statutory exemption for religious providers (see [Appendix Note. Religious Licensing Exemptions by State](#)). The remaining unlicensed child care providers consist of public schools participating in the state's pre-K program, programs receiving specialized exemptions (most of which apply to less than full-day care), or individuals offering informal child care without a license¹⁷ (see [Table A1. Child Care Provider Population by State](#)).

In Massachusetts, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), which is part of the state's Executive Office of Education, oversees licensing, coordination, and subsidy payments for child care providers. Over 6,500 licensed providers serve children ages five and under. In Massachusetts, a child care provider is exempt from licensing if it is part of a "private organized educational system." Approximately 260 religious schools that offer child care services receive this exemption from licensing¹⁸ (see [Appendix Note. Religious Licensing Exemptions by State](#)). Fifty thousand children benefit from income-based child

care subsidies through EEC, a number that does not include the specialized pre-K programs described below.¹⁹ Approximately 10,000 children are enrolled in Head Start in Massachusetts.

In contrast to Georgia's statewide, universal-access prekindergarten program, Massachusetts has expanded pre-K access on a community-by-community basis. EEC administers a mixed-delivery pre-K program serving approximately 8,000 children.²⁰ Providers apply for per pupil pre-K funding through a competitive grant program. Nearly a dozen cities are offering pre-K programs with state funding. In many of these communities, pre-K is offered in partnership with public school districts. Finally, the city of Boston operates its own flagship universal pre-K program with a combination of municipal, state, and federal funds. The well-studied program, operated by the Boston Public School District, is available to all children residing in Boston and serves approximately half of Boston's four-year-olds in pre-K programs based in public schools and any community-based sites that meet program criteria.²¹

4 Methodology

This project gathered data from child care providers in Georgia and Massachusetts through two pathways: a survey distributed to child care providers in both states and semi-structured interviews with a subset of respondents. Altogether, 813 surveys were collected and analyzed; ten interviews were completed. Analysis of survey data provided a broad account of child care program descriptions with respect to faith as well as faith practices in child care settings. The themes raised by providers in semi-structured interviews informed the interpretation of survey responses. These interviews, along with answers provided to open-response fields in the survey, guided the project's recommendations for future research on faith and child care.

Survey development and distribution were led by the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion, which was contracted by the Center for Public Justice. Survey responses were subsequently analyzed by a research advisor with subject-matter expertise in child care and early education.

4.1 Survey and Sample Development

A research team associated with the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion (hereinafter "Baylor ISR") designed a survey instrument and method to collect data about child care providers in two states. To cover different regions of the country, Massachusetts and Georgia were selected as the focus states.

Baylor ISR obtained public datasets of licensed child care providers from Georgia DECAL and Massachusetts EEC.²² The datasets included programs licensed as child care centers as well as those operating in family or small group settings (hereinafter "family-based care") (see [Table 1. Defining Center and Family-Based Child Care](#)). The datasets include all licensed providers participating in each state's public pre-K programs as well as state-licensed programs that also serve as Head Start programs. Datasets of religious programs operating with an exemption from licensing, as described above, were also secured.²³ Public schools participating in each state's pre-K program are not licensed by DECAL or EEC and were not included in the survey's core dataset. Because the focus of this survey was on programs offering year-round, full-day child care, various programs were excluded from the dataset such as programs offering occasional or short-term care, summer day camps, before and after school programs, and any program serving only school-age children.

Baylor ISR developed a survey with questions covering faith affiliation, religious practices, and faith-based character. The survey also posed questions about child care facilities (including use of religious facilities for child care), public subsidies, and providers’ opinions about various components of their state’s child care system. Different versions of the survey for each state and for licensed and license-exempt providers were distributed.

Baylor ISR also tailored different versions of the survey for child care centers and family-based care. For further explanation of these categories and how they are defined in each state’s licensing system (see [Table 1. Defining Center and Family-Based Child Care](#)).

TABLE 1. Defining Center and Family-Based Child Care

| State | Child Care Center | Family-Based Care |
|---------------|---|---|
| Georgia | Programs providing care for seven or more children in any setting (a community facility, a school-like setting, or day care home). These programs are licensed as “Child Care Learning Centers” (CLCC). ²⁴ | Programs providing care for at least three children and up to six children in a professional caregivers’ home. These programs are licensed as “Family Child Care Learning Homes” (FCCLH). ²⁵ |
| Massachusetts | Programs providing care for ten or more children under seven years of age. These programs are licensed as “Large Group Centers.” ²⁶ | Programs providing care for up to six children under seven years of age in a private residence. These are licensed as “Family Child Care Homes.” Programs serving up to ten children in a community-based setting. These are licensed as “Small Group Centers.” ²⁷ |

4.2 Survey Distribution

Baylor ISR distributed the survey online between January and March of 2023, utilizing an email with a link and QR code in Georgia and Massachusetts. The survey concluded on May 31, 2023. Surveys were distributed to all providers in the dataset described above, yielding a response rate of 12 percent in



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Georgia and 5 percent in Massachusetts. A total of 475 Georgia surveys and 338 Massachusetts surveys were analyzed. (For additional details on survey methodology see [Appendix. Methodology, Table A2. Survey Sample](#), and [Table A3. Responses by State and Provider Type](#))

TABLE 2. Responses by State

| State | Total Surveys Analyzed | Child Care Center | | Family-Based Care | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| | | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| Georgia | 475 | 62 | 294 | 38 | 181 |
| Massachusetts | 338 | 34 | 115 | 66 | 223 ²⁸ |

5 Findings

5.1 How child care providers describe their programs in relation to faith

The survey gathered data from all respondents about faith in the child care setting. Providers could select from various program descriptions in relation to faith: affiliation with a faith entity, motivated by faith, regularly or occasionally incorporating faith practices, or none of those characteristics. They could choose as many of these descriptors as they thought were relevant, and many chose more than one. Those who said their program was faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, or incorporated faith practices, were provided additional questions about the faith character of their program. Family-based care providers received an additional option indicating personal faith motivation or identity without programmatic expression (“I personally have religious motivation or identity, but do not incorporate any explicit religious or faith components into our activities and curricula.”) These respondents did not receive follow-up questions about the faith character of their program.

Of those who selected faith-related program description, the most common descriptions were “motivated by faith values or traditions” and “occasionally incorporates faith practices” (each accounting for 15 percent of all respondents), followed by those who said they regularly incorporated faith practices. Some providers chose more than one of these responses to describe their program structure. Relatively few – 6 percent - described themselves as faith-affiliated (see [Table 3. Program Description with Respect to Faith](#)).

As noted, family-based care providers received the same program description options as child care centers plus an additional one: “I personally have religious motivation or identity, but do not incorporate any explicitly religious or faith components into our activities and curricula.” This option was the most common response for family-based care providers (29 percent), followed by “motivated by faith values or traditions” (14 percent) and “occasionally incorporates religious practices” (14 percent). Seven percent of family-based care providers said they regularly incorporated religious practices (see [Table 4. Family-Based Care Description by State](#)).

TABLE 3. Program Description with Respect to Faith

| Descriptions ^a | Responses | |
|--|------------------|---------------|
| | Percent | Number |
| Faith-motivated ^b | 15 | 124 |
| Occasionally incorporates religious practices ^c | 15 | 122 |
| Regularly incorporates religious practices ^d | 9 | 75 |
| Faith-affiliated ^e | 6 | 50 |

Note: Select responses for those incorporating faith into their program, n=813.²⁹

^a Question: Please select from the following statements which best describes your daily child care structure: operations, curriculum, activities, and practices (select as many as are relevant to your program)."

^b "The program is motivated by faith values or traditions."

^c "The program occasionally incorporates religious practices - such as dietary guidelines, holidays, and religious teachings, and/or faith stories - into its activities and routines."

^d "The program regularly incorporates religious practices - such as dietary guidelines, holidays, and religious teachings, and/or faith stories - into its activities and routines."

^e "The program is affiliated with a faith entity (a church, synagogue, mosque, or other faith-based organization."

TABLE 4. Family-Based Care Description by State

| Descriptions | Total Family-Based Care | | GA Family-Based Care | | MA Family-Based Care | |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| Personal faith but not incorporated into program | 29 | 118 | 24 | 43 | 34 | 75 |
| Faith-motivated | 14 | 58 | 23 | 42 | 7 | 16 |
| Occasional religious practices | 14 | 55 | 17 | 31 | 11 | 24 |
| Regular religious practices | 7 | 30 | 10 | 18 | 5 | 12 |
| Faith-affiliated | 2 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| None³⁰ | 40 | 160 | 32 | 57 | 46 | 103 |

Note: n= 404, 181, 223 for Total Family-Based Care, GA Family-Based Care, and MA Family-Based Care respectively

Program description in relation to faith varied across provider types. Very few family-based care programs said they were affiliated with a faith entity (2 percent in each state). Child care centers were more likely to describe themselves as faith-affiliated (11 percent in Georgia; 10 percent in Massachusetts).

Although child care centers were more likely than family-based care providers to say they were affiliated with a faith entity, centers were also more likely to say none of the faith descriptions applied to their program. This trend was stronger in Massachusetts than in Georgia. In Georgia, 56 percent of child care centers selected none. In Massachusetts, 78 percent of child care centers in the survey said none of the faith descriptions applied to their program.³¹

Family-based care providers followed a different pattern. In both states, less than half said that none of the program descriptions in relation to faith applied to their program (in Georgia, 32 percent; in Massachusetts, 46 percent), leaving the majority to express some faith connection. In Georgia, nearly a quarter of all family-based care providers said their program was motivated by faith values or traditions. And in both states, family-based care providers availed themselves of the option of expressing a personal faith that was not incorporated in their program. In Georgia, 24 percent of family-based care providers selected this personal faith option; in Massachusetts 34 percent of providers said the same. (See [Tables A5 and A6. Program Description with Respect to Faith - Georgia; Program Description with Respect to Faith - Massachusetts](#). See also [Table A4. Program Description with Respect to Faith by Provider Type](#))

5.2 Child care located in religious buildings

One common metric for the role of faith in child care is the use of a religious building as the setting for child care. A National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) survey, for example, found that 17 percent of child care centers were faith-located.³² This survey found that 14 percent of Georgia centers surveyed and 23 percent of Massachusetts centers were located in a religious building. Within the whole sample - both states combined - 17 percent of centers were faith-located.

Less than one-third of all providers that used a religious building said they did not pay rent (see [Table A7. Faith-Located Child Care and Building Costs](#)). The survey did not inquire about any other faith-based support such as a reduction in rent, shared administrative services, or access to social supports provided by a religious group such as a food pantry or diaper bank.

Receiving rent-free operating space was more prevalent among faith-affiliated child care centers than any other program type. Of the forty-one faith-affiliated child care centers, 78 percent were located in a religious building. Forty-one percent of these programs did not pay rent.

TABLE 5. Faith-Located Child Care

| Location | Total Centers | | Georgia Centers | | Massachusetts Centers | |
|--|----------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| A community center, a rented or owned building or other location | 83 | 335 | 86 | 247 | 76 | 88 |
| A religious building | 17 | 68 | 14 | 41 | 23 | 27 |

Note: n = 409, 294, 115 for Total Centers, Georgia Centers, Massachusetts respectively. Responses from child care centers only.³³

5.3 How faith is expressed in child care settings

The survey asked respondents who chose some faith description to articulate how their program's faith-based character is expressed. Respondents could choose all from a list of practices.³⁴

- ▶ Daily routines (such as music, stories, or prayer)
- ▶ Food preparation
- ▶ Receive support from affiliated congregations
- ▶ Religious holidays
- ▶ Values approach
- ▶ Visits from clergy
- ▶ Curriculum
- ▶ Staff have some religious background, training, or agreement with a religious code of conduct

Respondents were also offered the choice: "program is not faith-based."

From these responses, we identified trends in the frequency and type of expressions of faith (heretofore referred to as "faith practices"). We also analyzed the relationship between program descriptions related to faith (faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, etc.) and faith practices.

➤ **Faith-affiliated providers engaged in the most faith practices; those who said they “occasionally incorporate religious practices” engaged in very few.**

Providers who described their program as “faith-affiliated” selected an average of more than three faith practices. Those describing their program as one that “regularly incorporates religious practices” or “faith-motivated” selected more than two practices on average. This pattern set both groups apart from those who described themselves as occasionally incorporating religious practices.

TABLE 6. Average Number of Faith Practices by Program Description

| Description | All Responses |
|---|----------------------|
| Faith-affiliated | 3.32 |
| Regularly incorporates religious practices | 2.94 |
| Faith-motivated | 2.25 |
| Occasionally incorporates religious practices | 1.39 |

Note: See also Table A8. Faith Practices by Program Description

For some of the findings and discussion that follows, the report examines only those responses gathered from providers who said their programs were faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, and/or regularly incorporated religious practices. This is a segment of respondents with a consistent enough faith expression to justify a more detailed analysis. We refer to this segment of respondents as those with “some faith,” indicating that there is some faith present in the child care setting without making claims about the intensity, origin, or intention associated with faith for these providers. Altogether, there were 185 providers in this segment. Their responses are reflected in the following illustration. Note that respondents were able to choose as many descriptions as apply so there is overlap between them (see [Figure 1. Overlapping Program Descriptions with Respect to Faith](#)).



FIGURE 1.
Overlapping Program Descriptions with Respect to Faith

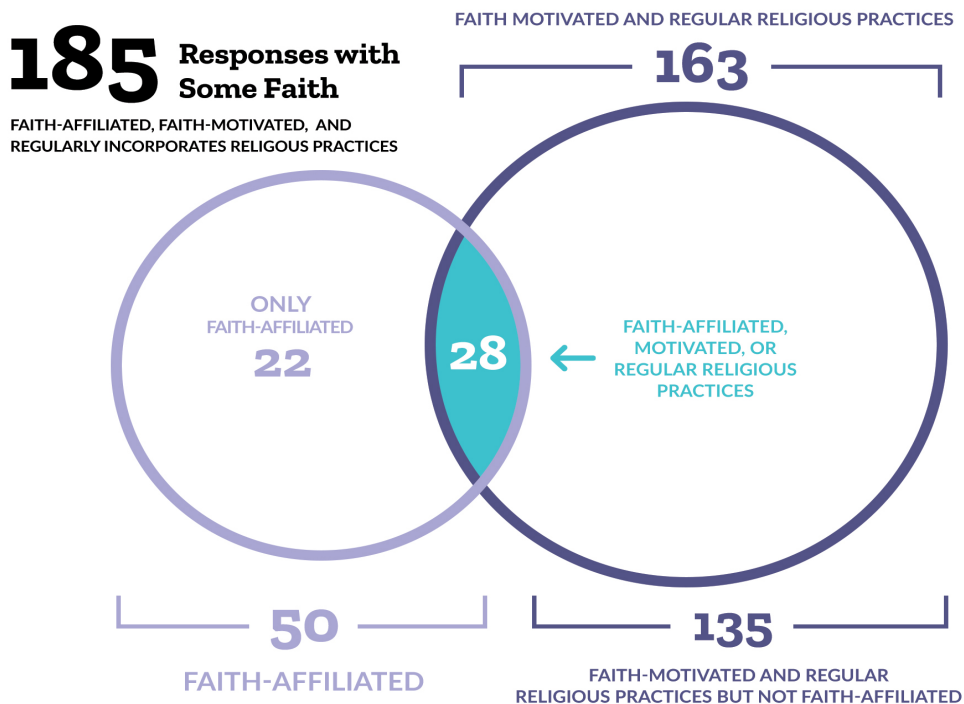
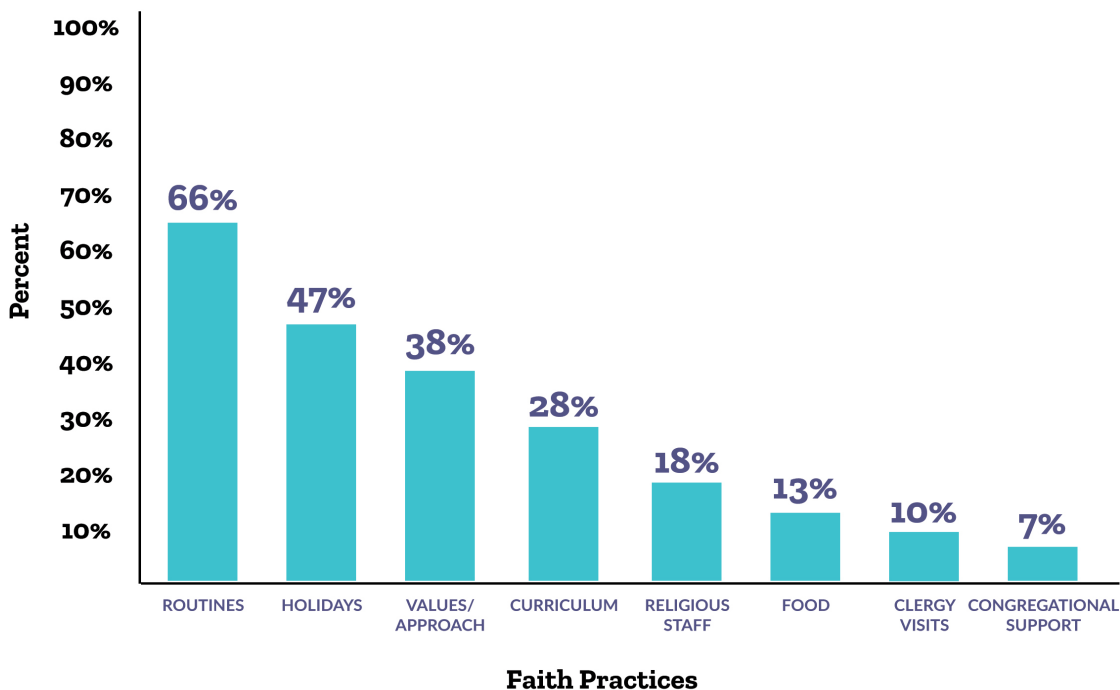


FIGURE 2.
Faith Practices in Programs Described as Faith-Affiliated, Faith-Motivated, and/or Regularly Incorporates Religious Practices ("Some Faith")



➤ **Daily routines, religious holidays, and values approaches were the most common faith practices in child care settings**

Daily routines such as music, stories, or prayer were the most common way in which the faith character of child care programs was expressed. This response was followed in frequency by incorporating religious holidays and exercising a values approach. The least frequent faith practices were having visits from clergy or receiving support from affiliated congregations.

An interview with the leader of a family-based program in Massachusetts illustrates how daily routines might incorporate faith. This provider believed that faith practices incorporated in daily routines provide children with stability.



"It's there every day. We don't skip it. We do grace every day. And we have a verse that we say in circle every morning. Which references God and an angel taking care for me...so I do that with the kids just because I have children who come and I just think they feel comforted." (Massachusetts, family child care)³⁵

Other interviewees talked about incorporating religious stories and music into their daily routines and teaching.



[using a cement surface and chalk to draw out stories] "... we'd do hopscotch, and it was the Magi having to get to Bethlehem... For Passover, you had to cross the Red Sea without the Egyptians getting you and go through the ten plagues and all of that." (Massachusetts, family child care)³⁶

"We say a morning prayer with the kids that they all know. We say our grace; we'll talk about Bible stories; we have pictures around the school... We talk a lot about being kind and loving to our friends... Anytime we have a child out that's not feeling well at circle time we'll say a prayer for them." (Massachusetts, child care center)³⁷

✦ **Faith practices and curriculum**

Curriculum was less frequently chosen than several other faith practices such as daily routines, religious holidays, and values approach. Fifty-seven providers indicated that curriculum was one of the ways that the faith-based character of their program was expressed (see [Table A8. Faith Practices by Program Description](#)).

In a separate survey question about curriculum, respondents mentioned designing their own curriculum. Some respondents reported using Mother Goose and Abeka, both of which have faith elements. A few noted that curricula were not affordable. One faith-affiliated child care center in Massachusetts commented that they “wanted to choose a faith-based curriculum” but said she was advised to select a different curriculum commonly used in prekindergarten settings.³⁸ Beyond this, the survey results did not reveal significant trends related to curriculum by either state or program type.³⁹

✦ **Common faith practices in faith-affiliated child care providers**

Faith-affiliated providers reported more faith practices than any other group (see [Table 6. Average Number of Faith Practices by Program Description](#)). The most common practices for faith-affiliated respondents were daily routines (76 percent), religious holidays (52 percent), and a values approach (50 percent). Faith-affiliated providers were more likely than any others to say that they expressed the faith character of their program through curriculum (36 percent). One-third of faith-affiliated providers (34 percent) said that “staff have some religious background, training or agreement with a religious code of conduct.” Faith-affiliated providers were also the most likely of all respondents to say they had visits from clergy (26 percent) or received support from affiliated congregations (18 percent) (see [Table A8. Faith Practices by Program Description](#)).

✦ **Faith practices in non-faith-affiliated child care providers**

Fifty child care providers described their programs as affiliated with a faith entity. Three times as many providers - 163 - said their program was “motivated by faith values or traditions” and/or “regularly incorporates religious practices.”

More than two-thirds of faith-motivated providers (67 percent) and those regularly incorporating religious practices (71 percent) said the faith character of their program was expressed through daily routines such as music, stories, or prayer. This response was followed in frequency by religious holidays (44 percent and 60 percent, respectively), values approach (38 percent and 44 percent), and curriculum (26 percent and 36 percent). The prevalence of these practices in child care programs that are not necessarily

faith-affiliated is worth attention. Faith-motivated providers and those that regularly incorporate religious practices are less likely than faith-affiliated providers to have staff requirements related to religion (4 percent versus 25 percent), visits from clergy (4 percent versus 15 percent), or congregational support (4 percent versus 9 percent). Nevertheless, a significant portion of these providers selected specific faith-related practices. It suggests there are ways of incorporating faith in child care programs that are not related to or originated by an external religious authority. Providers themselves choose to incorporate faith in the child care setting through a variety of practices (see [Table A8. Faith Practices by Program Description](#)).

5.4 Child care providers' religious identity

The religious identity of child care providers in our survey largely tracked the religious demography of the region in which they operated. Our analysis of providers' religious identity focuses on the characteristics of programs with some faith – those described as faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, or regularly incorporating religious practices.

The large majority of providers who identified with a faith tradition were Protestant Christian. In Georgia, one denomination - Baptist - made up more than one-third of all Protestant Christian responses, with the rest of this group consisting of nondenominational Christian, Pentecostal, and others. In Massachusetts, traditions associated with Protestant Christianity were most commonly named but were not nearly as large a majority and more closely matched in number by Catholic providers. Six respondents answered the question but selected 'Other' and did not provide additional information (see [Table A10. Child Care Providers' Religious Family by State](#)).

It is common for studies of religion in the United States to apply a religious typology that combines religious family and racial and ethnic identity. Christian Protestantism is often divided into three groups: evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Black Protestant.⁴⁰ This approach to religious typology recognizes the distinctiveness of historically Black denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal denomination and the National Baptist Convention. It also allows researchers to attend to other distinctives in Black Protestantism, such as views about civil society, the role of the government, and a sense of religion's importance.⁴¹

This survey offered providers several religious family choices followed by a question about the predominant race or ethnic group in their faith tradition and/or congregation. These responses make visible the prevalence of child care providers associated with Black Protestantism. One in four Protestant providers indicated that they were part of a predominantly Black/African American tradition or congregation. The vast majority of these were located in Georgia, a finding consistent with regional demography⁴² (see [Table A10. Child Care Providers' Religious Family by State](#)).

➤ Families served by programs with some faith (faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, regularly incorporates religious practices)

In Georgia, nearly all programs with some faith served young children of all ages: infants and toddlers (ages zero to two) as well as preschool children (ages three to five). In Massachusetts, there were slightly more programs serving preschool-age children than infants and toddlers.

TABLE 7. Ages Served by Programs - Some Faith

| <i>Ages Served</i> | All Programs 'Some-Faith' | | Georgia Programs 'Some-Faith' | | Massachusetts Programs 'Some-Faith' | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> |
| Zero to two | 87 | 160 | 92 | 128 | 70 | 32 |
| Three to five | 95 | 175 | 96 | 133 | 91 | 42 |

Note: 'Some-faith' refers to all providers that are faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, and/or regularly incorporate religious practices. N= 185, 139, 46 for all some-faith providers, Georgia, and Massachusetts respectively.

Just under half of all programs with some faith indicated that they received public subsidy payments for qualifying children. The percentage receiving subsidy varied slightly by state with Massachusetts programs being more likely to receive subsidy. Given the small number of responses, we cannot determine if this variation relates to differences in state administration, program differences across states, or anomalies in the data.

TABLE 8. Percentage of Programs with Some Faith Receiving Public Subsidy

| | All Programs 'Some-Faith' | | Georgia Programs 'Some-Faith' | | Massachusetts Programs 'Some-Faith' | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> |
| Reports subsidy for one or more children | 48 | 88 | 44 | 61 | 59 | 27 |
| Did not report subsidy receipt | 52 | 97 | 56 | 78 | 41 | 19 |

Note: 'Some-faith' refers to all providers that are faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, and/or regularly incorporate religious practices. N = 185, 139, 46 all some-faith providers, Georgia, and Massachusetts respectively.

6 Discussion

6.1 Various approaches to faith are present within the child care system

The connection between faith and child care in the United States is long-standing. Those motivated by spiritual and religious ideals about human development were early proponents of infant schools and kindergartens. As women entered the paid workforce in greater numbers throughout the 20th century, religious congregations and community centers became common sites for child care programs. By the 1980s, between 20 and 33 percent of all child care in the United States was provided by congregations and other religiously-affiliated organizations.⁴³

The findings from this project indicate that faith continues to be present in the child care ecosystem in a variety of ways. Although faith affiliation is the most documented relationship between faith and child care, other approaches were more prevalent in this survey. Twenty percent of providers described themselves as motivated by faith or regularly incorporating religious practices. Child care programs that are affiliated with faith entities make up a small portion of the overall child care ecosystem (6 percent).⁴⁴ Altogether, programs with some faith – faith affiliation, faith-motivation and/or regularly incorporated religious practices - made up 23 percent of all survey respondents.

TABLE 9. Overview of Program Description with Respect to Faith

| | Percent | Number |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Faith-motivated and/or regularly incorporates religious practices | 20 | 163 |
| Faith-affiliated | 6 | 50 |
| Faith-affiliated, motivated and/or regularly incorporates religious practices ("some faith") | 23 | 185 |

Note: n=813

The prevalence of program descriptions followed some regional patterns. In Georgia, 29 percent of child care providers said they were faith-affiliated, faith-motivated and/or regularly incorporated religious practices. In Massachusetts, 14 percent of the respondents said the same (see [Tables A5 and A6. Program Description with Respect to Faith - Georgia](#); [Program Description with Respect to Faith - Massachusetts](#)).

TABLE 10. Prevalence of Programs with Some Faith by State

| | All Providers | | Georgia | | Massachusetts | |
|------------|---------------|--------|---------|--------|---------------|--------|
| | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| Some Faith | 23 | 185 | 29 | 139 | 14 | 46 |

Note: n = 813, 475, 338 for All, Georgia, Massachusetts respectively

By comparison, analysis of Michigan child care providers in 2022 suggested the prevalence of providers with some faith in between that of Georgia and Massachusetts. Using a different methodology, researchers determined that 15 percent of the state's child care providers had at least one faith-based indicator.⁴⁵

6.2 Faith expression in child care settings can arise not only from institutional affiliation but also from providers' own choices and cultures

Despite the lack of affiliation with an external religious entity, child care providers reported forms of faith expression that confirmed that their programs had some faith component. A large majority reported expressing faith through daily routines such as stories, music, or prayer. About half (44 percent of faith-motivated and 60 percent of those regularly incorporating religious practices) reported celebrating religious holidays. Several said their curriculum reflected their faith expression (26 percent of faith-motivated and 36 percent of those regularly incorporating religious practices). Yet fewer reported clergy visits (4 percent and 15 percent) or congregational support (4 percent and 9 percent). This suggests a type of faith expression in child care programs that is not directly related to an external religious institution. Write-in responses and follow-up interviews from the survey illustrate how faith plays a role in child care due to providers' own callings, choices, and cultures.

3X

Three times as many programs had faith motivation and/or regular incorporation of religious practices compared to those that identified as faith-affiliated.

One interviewee explained how she started in child care:

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“I worked in a big company for eighteen years and worked in accounting and engineering. One day I was going to work and...I was almost involved in a wreck. I just decided that if God would get me through that, I was going to find something different in life. The very next day I went to a friend’s house [who operates an in-home daycare and] started asking her about it. [I decided that] I’m quitting my job and I’m gonna open a daycare. Everybody thought I was crazy, but I promised God I [would do] something else with my life. I’m going to do something where I’m going to make a difference in kids. That’s where I’ve been ever since.” (Georgia, family child care)⁴⁶

In the case of family-based care, another factor may be the everyday nature of child care that takes place in providers’ homes. Several providers spoke about their religious practices as occurring organically in the home setting. Several described religious music and prayers as part of the flow of a family-based care providers’ own daily life.

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“We worship. We dance our dance time. [We have] prayer at lunch time.” (Georgia, family child care)⁴⁷

“They will hear me play gospel music from time to time.” (Georgia, family child care)⁴⁸

Another explained that religious artifacts were part of the setting of her home.

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“Now that I’m working out of my house, the children and their families see obviously the signs of my faith. I have a blessing over the door. It’s an Irish blessing about keeping the children safe from danger... They’ll see the Christmas tree. They’ll see the Advent wreath. They’ll see the Easter eggs, the Ukrainian eggs. They saw my palms for Palm Sunday and were very curious and wanted to make things with them.” (Massachusetts, family child care)⁴⁹

For some providers, their own faith lens on the world affects the way they invite children to see.

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“It’s not a lesson, but all through the day. [You’re] outside just seeing who created this animal... what’s going on with the sky.” (Georgia, family child care)⁵⁰

Sixty percent of family-based child care providers affirmed some faith characteristic from faith-affiliated to a personal religious motivation not incorporated in their program. Only 40 percent of family-based care providers said that no faith characteristics applied to them (see [Table 4. Family-Based Care Description by State](#)). Because these providers are very rarely affiliated with a religious entity, they may incorporate faith in ways that differ from institutionally-driven approaches. This possibility is explored in subsequent sections about the reluctance around the term “faith-based” as well as providers’ approaches to religious diversity and child spirituality.

6.3 Reluctance around the term “faith-based” and other framing concerns

Just as the United States is home to a wide variety of faith traditions, there is diversity in how faith is discussed and in the level of comfort with the topic. One trend in survey responses was a reluctance to use the term “faith-based.”

The term faith-based appeared in only one question and only to those who described their program as faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, regularly or occasionally incorporating religious practices. These respondents were asked “How is the faith-based character of your program expressed?” followed by a list of faith practices and the option “Program is not faith-based.” Twenty percent of those who received the question said their program was not faith-based. This included four providers who reported their programs were faith-affiliated, six whose programs regularly incorporated religious practices, and eleven whose programs were faith-motivated (see [Table A8. Faith Practices by Program Description](#)).

Several write-in comments and interviews shed light on how the term “faith-based” is perceived and why providers might reject it.



“I am not a faith-based program, but as a woman of faith, I incorporate faith into our day through conversations, blessings during meal time, and any other opportunity that allows faith to be shared.”⁵¹

“We are not faith-based but we do acknowledge and incorporate faith in our program; however, children are not required to participate during that time.”⁵²

“We are not faith-based but celebrate any faith and holiday the students and families bring to the school.”⁵³

A provider who described her program as motivated by faith explained that she doesn't consider her program faith-based because, "to me, it's hard to do that without discriminating." (Georgia, family child care)⁵⁴

For some providers, the term "faith-based" connotes an approach different than their own. "Faith-based" may signify being part of a religious institution, focusing on only one faith tradition, or, potentially, exercising bias.

Some providers avoided the proposed faith labels while still expressing some faith character. For example, several providers who declined to identify themselves as faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, or regularly incorporating religious practices, nevertheless provided comments that suggest some incorporation of faith in the child care setting.



"I work with love for others, I speak of God's love for my children; I don't talk about church titles!" (Massachusetts, family child care)⁵⁵

"[At my] learning home, we pray every morning before we start." (Georgia, family child care)⁵⁶

"We have Christian values, so that reflects in our Day Care." (Georgia, family child care)⁵⁷

These responses may have several explanations. There may have been cues in the survey design that inhibited providers from fully acknowledging faith. The cover letter preceding the survey did not signal that the survey would be neutral with respect to faith, though it did offer confidentiality. The letter named state licensing and compensation as the purpose of the study. The first question about faith in the child care setting occurred after questions about children served, state subsidies, and curriculum options. The survey framing and question sequence may have primed respondents to think about public oversight of their program (see [Appendix. Methodology](#)).

The public context in which child care operates may also affect the way providers describe their relationship to faith. Providers who feel that faith is discouraged in child care programs – by state administrators, academic research teams, or others – may not have fully disclosed their faith identity or practices. Looking at differences in program descriptions across the two states may yield insight into the relationship between program description and context. In Massachusetts, for example, family-based care providers were the least likely of all groups to say that their program was faith-affiliated, faith-motivated,

and/or regularly incorporated religious practices. Nevertheless, less than half said that no religious characteristics applied to them. A larger portion of Massachusetts family-based care providers said they had a personal religious motivation or identity but did not incorporate faith into their program (34 percent) than in Georgia (24 percent). It is possible that provider responses reflected, in part, the type of faith description deemed acceptable in their context with personal faith more acceptable in Massachusetts and some programmatic expression more acceptable in Georgia.

A related possibility is that some providers did not see their own approach to faith reflected in the threshold question about program description. As is discussed in the following section, comments and follow-up interviews solicited accounts of religious diversity, pluralism, and child or family-centered spirituality that were not clearly offered in the survey.

6.4 Provider comments convey varied and nuanced approaches to religious diversity and child spirituality

Responses to open-ended questions in the survey and the qualitative interviews indicate that providers have varied and nuanced approaches to faith in the child care setting. In all the interviews conducted for this project, none of the providers described what might be called religious instruction in a single faith tradition. This may be a feature of the project's framing or the contextual constraints. However, it could also reflect providers' considered decisions about how to navigate their personal faith, the diverse backgrounds of the families they serve, and providers' working knowledge of child development and child spirituality.

6.4.1 Approaches to religious diversity

Providers expressed a variety of approaches to religious diversity, often describing this diversity as consistent with their personal faith and even the faith character of their child care program.

Some incorporated multiple religious traditions into the child care setting. This was remarked upon by providers with various descriptions with respect to faith. "My families come from different religious background(s). Therefore, we don't focus on one [religion]. We do share our religious differences and similarities during family nights." (Georgia, family child care)⁵⁸

One interviewee felt that her Christian motivation was compatible with cultivating a religiously diverse child care environment.

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“I really wanted to make it more of an inclusive thing where everybody felt safe and open... I never, never really intended for it to be a Christian daycare. But ... I did feel like this was something God had asked me to do and that I needed to live up to his standards rather than just the state standards.” (Massachusetts, family child care)⁵⁹

The same Massachusetts family-based provider credited her community as a reason to avoid operating a Christian daycare. She described her town as one with “a lot of different groups in it. My next-door neighbor, her Cub Scout troop had representatives from each of the major religions in the world in it... So, I knew that [opening a Christian childcare] wouldn’t work.”⁶⁰

A Muslim woman operating a family-based child care in Georgia situated herself this way: “I try to stay humble and peaceful... because at the end of the day, we’re here to serve children... Many of us come from a variety of backgrounds, and that’s okay... the common goal is to take care of the children and the families that we serve.”⁶¹

A child care provider who also holds a position in the community as a minister explained that she tries to teach children about “having respect for each other and just showing love because that’s the whole thing.” (Georgia, child care center)⁶²

Others said they would limit faith practices or faith-talk around children whose families did not share the providers’ faith. They avoided imposing religion on families or children. For example:

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“I don’t push religion because I have a family who is not into religion.” (Georgia, family child care)⁶³

“We are Christian, but we don’t impose religion on the daycare. We have Jewish families, African religion families, Catholic and Protestant families.” (Massachusetts, family child care)⁶⁴

“I can hold my own beliefs ... while still accepting other people’s beliefs and letting them believe what they would like. I would never force a child to pray or tell a child what they believe is wrong because it’s different than what I believe.” (Georgia, child care center)⁶⁵

Finally, some providers tailored their approach to the children and families with whom they work.



"If I had a student who on Bring Your Favorite Book Day brought a Christian book, I wouldn't say, "No, we can't read that." I mean, we'd read it just like any other book. I have students who all the time tell me about going to church, or getting baptized, or going to different types of churches. And people with different religions, like I have certain students who, based upon their religion, don't eat certain things and we accommodate that." (Georgia, child care center)⁶⁶

"I've had a number of Muslim kids.... And I tried to get the original stories from the parents as best I could so that they would understand where their traditions were coming from." (Massachusetts, family child care)⁶⁷

"Always responsive to dietary needs, welcome families to share traditions - religious or otherwise." (Massachusetts, child care center)⁶⁸

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's current statement on developmentally appropriate practices emphasizes the development of young children as individuals and as members of families and communities. Child development practices should be "culturally, linguistically, and ability-appropriate for each child."⁶⁹ Likewise, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recently introduced benchmarks that advise early childhood education providers to incorporate the religious and cultural food preferences of children into their meal planning.⁷⁰ Providers' comments about religious diversity convey attention to the family contexts of children in their care - be those religious or non-religious - as well as the community context in which child care programs operate. An understanding of child spirituality as something to be nurtured but not imposed may also guide some providers' approach to faith in the child care setting.⁷¹

6.4.2 Accounts of child spirituality

Consistent with the child care and early education field's emphasis on context and culture, some experts have drawn an explicit connection between developmentally appropriate practice and spirituality. Jennifer Mata-McMahon argues that developmentally appropriate approaches to early childhood education would be enhanced by including spirituality in understanding child development.⁷² She highlights child-centered and child-directed play as opportunities for children to experience spiritual moments such as wonder, awe, joy, inner peace. Mona Abo-Zena and Annette Midgette note that participation in religious and faith traditions can expose children to various emotions and behaviors, teaching them to "ascribe certain meanings and emotional responses to particular events."⁷³ Children may bring spiritual questions and images to their daily lives and explorations. Abo-Zena along with John Nimmo and Debbie LeeKeenan proposes that providers' welcoming spiritual questions and talking about spirituality is consistent with the

core components of anti-bias education: affirming identity, embracing diversity, seeking justice, and taking action.⁷⁴ Mata-McMahon highlights the role of spirituality in building connections, practicing virtues, and making meaning.⁷⁵

This study was not designed to solicit providers' approaches to child spirituality. Nevertheless, a handful of comments about this topic appeared in follow-up interviews. Several providers felt that spirituality had a role in helping children understand themselves and their place in the world.



[I teach] "there's something out there bigger than yourself and you are here to do something special in this world...I'm talking [to] three-year-olds, four-year-olds... we're not talking Harvard level theology here. Basically just getting across the point that there is a supreme being that that supreme being does care about each and every one of them. That they are unique and important and necessary in this world." (Massachusetts, family child care)⁷⁶

One provider expressed a belief in children's intrinsic spirituality.



"I just think children are far more imaginative and even spiritual just in their own spontaneous beings than people give them credit for a lot of times." (Massachusetts, family child care)⁷⁷

The family-based care provider who introduced chalk drawings and hopscotch as children acted out the religious story of the Passover manifested another approach to spirituality and learning: play. Play is considered central to developmentally appropriate practice in child care. NAEYC principles recognize, for example, that play enables joyful learning as well as self-regulation, language, cognitive, and social competencies. Other research efforts have highlighted the connection between spirituality and play suggesting that allowing children to inhabit different stories connects them to other children and the wider community.⁷⁸

6.4.3 This methodology did not generate information about the prevalence of religious instruction in child care settings

Faith in the child care setting is sometimes associated with religious instruction, a process whereby educators introduce learners to the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, and roles associated with a particular religion. Federal rules implementing the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act address faith in the context of "sectarian purposes and activities" and define these as "any religious purpose or activity, including but

not limited to religious worship or instruction."⁷⁹ Some faith communities undertake "religious formation," which is similar to religious instruction. Religious formation describes the process of shaping a person's religious or spiritual character through the introduction of religious practices, rituals, reflections, or texts.

This project did not generate extensive information about the prevalence of religious instruction or religious formation in child care settings. The closest proxy to religious instruction would be measuring the use of curriculum as a way of expressing faith character. Approximately one-third of faith-affiliated providers and providers who said they regularly incorporate religious practices said their faith character was expressed through curriculum. One-quarter of faith-motivated providers said the same. Although some providers named the curriculum in use in their program, many did not. Several mentioned creating their own curriculum. The survey did not ask if curricula or any other practice were used with the intention of religious instruction or religious formation. In none of the voluntary comments or interviews did providers indicate that they saw themselves as responsible for instructing children in a specific religious tradition.

Different questions and methodology would be necessary to determine the prevalence of religious instruction in child care settings. Future surveys might include questions about providers' intentions about faith, the nature of curriculum used, or engagement in religious instruction. Research on religious instruction should also pay special attention to child care providers who are exempt from state licensing for a religious reason. In both Georgia and Massachusetts, such an exemption applies to providers associated with a private, religious school serving school-age children as well as young children. These providers may be more likely than licensed providers to offer religious instruction. A low survey response rate from these providers - nine in Massachusetts and one in Georgia - limited this project's ability to measure religious instruction in child care settings.

7 Recommendations for researchers

The initial scope of this project aimed at developing a protocol for mapping faith-based child care on a state-by-state level. Recommendations for future mapping projects are described below as well as suggestions for future study.

7.1 Mapping and counting faith and child care programs

The findings from this survey provide a sense of the scale and diverse approaches to faith in child care settings.

Faith-affiliated child care makes up a relatively small portion of the child care ecosystem. A protocol for mapping this type of child care would involve population-wide or sample surveys of a state's licensed child care population as well as gathering state administrative data about programs that are license-exempt for religious reasons. Additional work should be done to compare religious license-exempt providers with licensed providers who describe themselves as "faith-affiliated" and determine if they are similar enough to be considered as a single group for mapping and counting purposes.

Phenomena such as faith motivation and regularly incorporating religious practices in child care settings should be examined on their own terms, apart from faith affiliation. Child care providers' own account of their work as it relates to faith should guide future surveys, framing, and analysis. The responses to this survey provide some directions for the future.

- ▶ Examine the application of the term "faith-based" with respect to child care and, potentially, discontinue its use. "Faith-based" is less precise than the term "faith-affiliated" which describes programs with connection to a religious institution. For providers who are not "faith-affiliated," the term "faith-based" does not seem to add anything and, instead, seems to conflict with providers' self-understanding.
- ▶ Future surveys should supplement the category "faith-affiliated" with several options that describe what happens in the child care setting and why providers might incorporate faith.
 - ▶▶ faith-motivated - the program is motivated by the providers' faith traditions or values
 - ▶▶ faith-practicing - the program regularly incorporates religious practices
 - ▶▶ faith-responsive - the program incorporates religious practices that are responsive to children's family contexts and the community in which the program operates
 - ▶▶ faith-formative - the program incorporates faith practices and faith teachings in order to introduce children to a particular religious tradition and shape their character

Future research should also use methods of inquiry that allow for nuanced, narrative descriptions. Focus groups with child care providers could yield information about how providers combine personal faith with service to diverse populations. Providers might also be willing, in focus group settings, to describe their experience with state oversight systems. Surveys should provide scaled questions or open-ended questions that invite more nuanced responses. Methods that allow providers the opportunity to express multiple motivations for their child care program - ranging from faith-related reasons to getting kids ready for school to enjoying the work itself - should also be considered. Researchers might also assemble a representative panel of child care providers across different states, program types, faith approaches, and religious traditions to provide observations over a period of time. Any inquiry into the nuanced role of faith in child care settings should be conducted in a manner that builds trust and enables candor about the topic.

7.2 Examining the role of faith in child care

More questions about faith and child care remain. These are touched on broadly here in relation to previous scholarship and topics that emerged in this project.

7.2.1 How do religious institutions relate to child care?

Although relatively few providers described themselves as faith-affiliated, religious institutions may still play a role in child care. Those who provide child care services may be shaped by their religious tradition, congregation, or religious community. How child care providers make connections between their child care work and their religious community would require a separate study. Such research could draw on scholarship on the relationship between faith and work more broadly, discerning whether and how child care workers receive spiritual support, encouragement, or other faith-integrative tools from their faith community.⁸⁰

7.2.2 How does a provider's faith inform their approach to religious diversity and child spirituality?

Providers' nuanced approaches to faith and religious diversity raise questions about the proactive role that faith may play in promoting certain postures toward child spirituality and religious diversity. Providing child care because of a faith motivation may enable sensitivity to the spirituality and religious contexts of children in their care. Researchers might ask whether such sensitivity exists among faith-motivated providers and whether it extends to faiths different than their own.

7.2.3 Are providers supported in addressing religious diversity and child spirituality?

Many of the providers interviewed had developed a working approach to religious diversity in the child care setting. Future work could examine whether and from where providers receive support in navigating religious diversity. Do providers feel supported in bringing their authentic identity into their work in appropriate ways? Is there a need for resources to address potential bias and prejudice around faith traditions in the child care setting? Are providers offered models regarding how to communicate with families about family religious traditions and families' expectations of providers with respect to faith and spirituality?

7.2.4 Does faith character affect the quality of care?

This project's survey did not generate information on this topic, but the findings do point to several areas of exploration connecting faith character and child care quality.

➤ **Quality of provider relationships with children**

The work of Robert Pianta and others demonstrates the impact of positive teacher-child relationships in preschool on student learning in elementary school. How might providers' faith, the faith character of their program, and views about child spirituality affect the closeness of teacher-child relationships? Might certain approaches to spirituality help reduce conflict in the child care setting, thus enhancing child outcomes?

Faith may also affect provider well-being which, in turn, affects the quality of care. One provider in this survey described faith as a source of personal strength.



"I think, honestly, personally for the center I work at, [faith] plays a big role. I think you honestly have to have... I mean, no matter what religion you are, some sort of higher power to especially rely on sometimes, because it can get very exhausting physically, mentally, emotionally. Between us being mandated reporters, and dealing with foster children, and children with behavioral issues, and parents who may not be the most loving, you have to have that to fall back on, I feel like, to support yourself." (Georgia, child care center)⁸¹

This provider, a director of education at a child care center with no faith affiliation, said that she regularly prayed for workers and families at her center. With previous studies finding a link between daily spiritual experience and reduced depression among Head Start staff, there is reason to explore faith as a protective factor relative to mental health in the child care workforce.⁸² The quality of providers' mental health, in turn, enables positive provider-child relationships.

✦ **Quality of provider relationships with families**

Future research can examine how a provider's approach to religious diversity affects the quality of family-provider relationships. Practices such as respect, commitment, openness to change, communication, sensitivity, and flexibility have been identified as components of positive family-provider relationships.⁸³ One recent teaching guide for early educators highlighted the practice of cultural humility relative to religious and cultural practices as a way to better involve parents in their children's education.⁸⁴ How might providers' faith resource religious sensitivity and cultural humility relative to families?

8 Conclusion

This project's survey of Georgia and Massachusetts-based child care providers surfaced a variety of manifestations of faith in child care. Approximately half of all providers expressed some relationship to faith - from personal faith to faith affiliation or to operating a program with faith practices.

Different manifestations of faith may each play a role in a diverse child care ecosystem. Programs affiliated with a faith entity, though a small portion of the ecosystem, may be well-positioned to offer a particular kind of care. Faith-affiliated programs incorporated more child care practices into their programs and were more likely to express faith through daily routines, staffing choices, and resources from congregations. For these reasons, faith-affiliated child care may be a desirable option for some families offering "thick" communities that connect children and families to particular religious traditions and enduring institutions.

Faith also plays a role in child care settings that are not tied to religious institutions. Twenty percent of respondents said that their child care program was motivated by faith or regularly incorporated religious practices such as dietary guidelines, holidays, religious teachings, and/or faith stories into their activities and routines.

This survey provided only partial information about the faith character, approach, and goals of these non-affiliated providers. We know that faith may manifest in the everyday practices of a program. Our interviews suggest that providers make considered choices about how to balance their personal faith, the religious diversity in the communities they serve, and the needs of children in their care. Family-based care programs add into this mix their own family or home culture. Parents may choose these programs for a variety of reasons such as the warmth of teacher-child relationships, the program's reputation in the community, and the potential to expose children to faith practices that are consistent with or different from their own families.

Future research could improve understanding of child care settings by allowing providers to explain their nuanced approaches to faith. This research should also inquire and distinguish between different goals relative to child spirituality and religious instruction. With better descriptions, researchers could connect specific faith approaches and practices to the elements of quality child care and to parent preferences. Do daily routines with religious practices facilitate or inhibit - experiences of belongingness and safety? How does faith affect the quality of relationships between providers, families, and children as mediated through providers' attitudes toward children as well as their own well-being? What connection

might faith practices have to providers' sensitivity to children's family and community context? Are parents' preferences for their children with respect to faith and spirituality being met?

The child care system in the United States consists of and serves a wide diversity of providers and families. It will be important to continue to listen to the ways faith and spirituality play a role in child care settings. Likewise, it is important to account for the nuanced approaches to faith that child care providers have developed in the course of their daily work. Many are practicing a connection to faith that is not strictly private but also not institutional. Turning attention to these provider-generated practices as well as those in faith-affiliated settings will generate a more accurate and textured understanding of the child care system.

9 Appendix

TABLE A1. Child Care Provider Population by State

| State | Licensed Providers Serving Children Five and Under | Religious License Exempt Providers | Number of Authorized Providers Surveyd |
|---------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Georgia | 4,118 | 79 | 4,179 |
| Massachusetts | 6,562 ⁸⁵ | 261 ⁸⁶ | 6,823 |

Appendix Note: Religious Licensing Exemptions by State

Georgia: Georgia’s early education statute creates a license exemption and alternate oversight path for child care learning centers that are “operated as part of a local church ministry or a nonprofit religious school or a charitable organization.”⁸⁷ Private religious schools that provide pre-K programs may participate in the state’s pre-K program as long as they are accredited by an accepted private association.⁸⁸

Massachusetts: In Massachusetts, a child care provider is exempt from licensing if it is part of a “private organized educational system.” Thus, pre-K or child care programs affiliated with private religious schools may apply for a licensing exemption from child care licensing if the majority of their school population is school-age (age 6 or older).⁸⁹ These schools may accept subsidies in the form of EEC-provided vouchers for income-eligible children.⁹⁰

In both states, the number of religious providers seeking licensing exemptions and securing alternate oversight is a very small portion – less than 4 percent – of each state’s population of authorized child care providers.

Appendix Note: Methodology

The Baylor ISR research team applied for and obtained an exemption from Baylor University’s Institutional Review Board in November of 2022.

Baylor ISR distributed the survey online between January and March of 2023, utilizing Qualtrics as the platform for the survey development and distribution. In Georgia, child care providers were sent an

email with a link to the survey using email addresses within the DECAL-provided dataset. Massachusetts providers received an invitation letter with a QR code in the mail followed by reminder postcards. The survey concluded on May 31, 2023.

Recipients were provided with a cover letter from the Baylor University Program on Prosocial Behavior, which described the assurance of confidentiality. The letter outlined the purpose of the survey, which aimed to understand child care providers' perceptions of state licensing and compensation. However, this aspect of the project was later excluded due to logistical challenges.

Survey respondents were entered into a lottery to win an incentive payment ranging from \$100 to \$250 if chosen by random selection. The survey was distributed in several waves to all licensed child care providers as well as the religiously exempt providers in both states. Several errors occurred in the course of survey distribution with at least two waves of recipients receiving surveys and/or questions that were not intended for them. As a result, for Massachusetts 126 of 354 surveys were marked as incomplete. As a result of inconsistent information about question choices and coding on certain survey questions, some survey questions were discarded in the analysis phase and are not reflected in this report's findings. Survey respondents who met a threshold of incorporating faith into their child care program were offered the option of a follow-up interview. Interviewees were selected from a randomized list of those who consented to be interviewed. Seven Georgia-based child care providers were interviewed; three Massachusetts child care providers were interviewed. All interviewees received a \$150 incentive payment. Each of these semi-structured interviews were recorded. Transcriptions for these interviews are on file with CPJ.

TABLE A2. Survey Sample

| State | Surveys Distributed | Surveys Returned | Response Rate (Percent) | Surveys in Analysis | Percent of Surveys Distributed in Analysis |
|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Georgia | 4,179 | 511 | 12.2 | 475 | 11.4 |
| Massachusetts | 6,824 | 354 ⁹¹ | 5.2 | 338 | 5.0 |

Note: Georgia had one license-exempt survey returned, the remaining were licensed. Massachusetts had nine license-exempt surveys returned, the remaining were licensed.

TABLE A3. Responses by State and Provider Type

| State | Child Care Center | | Family-Based Care | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | State Estimate (Percent) | Sample (Percent) | State Estimate (Percent) | Sample (Percent) |
| Georgia | 62 | 62 | 33 | 38 |
| Massachusetts | 26 | 34 | 74 | 66 |

Note: The sources for the state estimate percentages are the Child Care Aware of America, Georgia State Fact Sheet, Massachusetts State Fact Sheet, 2020.

TABLE A4. Program Description with Respect to Faith Provider Type

| Descriptions | All | | Child Care Center | | Family-Based Care | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| Faith-motivated | 15 | 124 | 16 | 66 | 14 | 58 |
| Occasional religious practices | 15 | 122 | 16 | 67 | 14 | 55 |
| Regular religious practices | 9 | 75 | 11 | 45 | 7 | 30 |
| Faith-affiliated | 6 | 50 | 10 | 41 | 2 | 9 |
| Personal faith, but not incorporated | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 29 | 118 |
| None | 51 | 414 | 62 | 254 | 40 | 16 |

Note: This table refers to all responses. N = 813, 409, and 404 for All, Child Care Center, and Family-Based Care respectively. Survey respondents answered the following question: Please select from the following statements that best describe your daily child care structure: operations, curriculum, activities, and practices (select as many as are relevant to your program).

TABLE A5. Program Description with Respect to Faith - Georgia

| <i>Response Options</i> | All GA Responses | | GA Child Care Center | | GA Family-Based Care | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> |
| Faith-motivated | 20 | 94 | 18 | 52 | 23 | 42 |
| Occasional religious practices | 19 | 88 | 19 | 57 | 17 | 31 |
| Regular religious practices | 11 | 53 | 12 | 35 | 10 | 18 |
| Faith-affiliated | 7 | 35 | 11 | 31 | 2 | 4 |
| Personal faith, but not incorporated | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 24 ⁹² | 43 |
| None | 47 | 221 | 56 | 164 | 32 | 57 |

TABLE A6. Program Description with Respect to Faith - Massachusetts

| <i>Response Options</i> | All MA Responses | | MA Child Care Center | | MA Family-Based Care | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Number</i> |
| Faith-motivated | 9 | 30 | 12 | 14 | 7 | 16 |
| Occasional religious practices | 10 | 34 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 24 |
| Regular religious practices | 7 | 22 | 9 | 10 | 5 | 12 |
| Faith-affiliated | 4 | 15 | 9 | 10 | 2 | 5 |
| Personal faith, but not incorporated | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 34 | 75 |
| None | 57 | 193 | 78 | 90 | 46 | 103 |

Note: N = 338, 115, 223 for All MA responses, MA Center Child Care, and MA Family-Based Care respectively.

TABLE A7. Faith-Located Child Care and Building Costs

| | Total Providers | | Georgia | | Massachusetts | |
|---|-----------------|--------|---------|--------|---------------|--------|
| | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| Located in a religious building and pay rent | 72 | 49 | 70 | 29 | 74 | 20 |
| Located in a religious building and do not pay rent | 28 | 19 | 30 | 12 | 26 | 7 |

Note: N = 68

TABLE A8. Faith Practices by Program Description

| | All Faith Types | Faith-affiliated, motivated and regular practice | Faith-affiliated | Faith-motivated | Regular practice | Occasional practice |
|--------------------------------|--|--|------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>Average Total Practices</i> | | | | | |
| Average Total Practices | 2.0 | 2.5 | 3.3 | 2.3 | 2.9 | 1.4 |
| | <i>Number of Respondents with Practice</i> | | | | | |
| Daily routines | 114 | 123 | 38 | 83 | 53 | 39 |
| Religious holidays | 119 | 87 | 26 | 54 | 45 | 44 |
| Values approach | 88 | 70 | 25 | 47 | 33 | 31 |
| Curriculum | 57 | 51 | 18 | 32 | 27 | 13 |
| Religious staff | 38 | 34 | 17 | 5 | 19 | 9 |
| Food | 33 | 24 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 10 |
| Clergy visits | 20 | 19 | 13 | 5 | 11 | 3 |
| Congregational support | 13 | 13 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 2 |
| Programs is not faith-based | 58 | 19 | 4 | 11 | 6 | 41 |

Note: n = 286, 185, 50, 124, 75, 122 for All faith types, Faith-affiliated, motivated, and regular practice, Faith-affiliated, Faith-motivated, Regular practice, Occasional practice respectively

TABLE A9. Practices Through Which Providers Expressed Their Faith Character by Percentage

| <i>Practices</i> | All Faith Types (Percent) | Faith-affiliated, motivated and regular practice (Percent) | Faith-affiliated (Percent) | Faith-motivated (Percent) | Regular practice (Percent) | Occasional practice (Percent) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Daily routines | 50 | 66 | 76 | 67 | 71 | 32 |
| Religious holidays | 42 | 47 | 52 | 44 | 60 | 36 |
| Values approach | 31 | 38 | 50 | 38 | 44 | 25 |
| Curriculum | 20 | 28 | 36 | 26 | 36 | 11 |
| Religious staff | 13 | 18 | 34 | 4 | 25 | 7 |
| Food | 12 | 13 | 16 | 8 | 12 | 8 |
| Clergy visits | 7 | 10 | 26 | 4 | 15 | 2 |
| Congregational support | 5 | 7 | 18 | 4 | 9 | 2 |
| Programs is not faith-based | 20 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 37 |

Note: n = 286, 185, 50, 124, 75, 122 for All faith types, Faith-affiliated, motivated, and regular practice, Faith-affiliated, Faith-motivated, Regular practice, Occasional practice respectively

TABLE A10. Child Care Providers Religious Family by State

| Religious Family | 'Some-faith' | | Georgia 'Some-faith' | | Massachusetts 'Some-faith' | |
|---|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number |
| Protestant Christian (Baptist, Pentecostal, non-denominational, Mainline) | 75 | 139 | 86 | 119 | 43 | 20 |
| Predominantly White Protestant | - | 57 | - | 49 | - | 8 |
| Predominantly Black Protestant | - | 34 | - | 33 | - | 1 |
| Predominantly Hispanic Protestant | - | 4 | - | 1 | - | 3 |
| Catholic | 8 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 28 | 11 |
| Predominantly White Catholic | - | 9 | - | 3 | - | 6 |
| Predominantly Black Catholic | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | 0 |
| Predominantly Hispanic Catholic | - | 2 | - | 0 | - | 2 |
| Jewish | 4 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 5 |
| Islam | 2 | 3 | - | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| Other | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | - | 1 |

Note: 'Some faith' refers to faith-affiliated, faith-motivated, regular religious practices. Religious family is indicated by order of prevalence. N = 168, 139, 46 for All faith-affiliated, motivated, or regular practice, Georgia, and Massachusetts respectively

This analysis is a composite of two survey questions. Because of low response rates to these questions, religious families were grouped into categories that were large enough to analyze. The category into which responses were grouped for analysis appears in parenthesis here. Survey respondents were not presented with the categories.

Q: With what religious family do you most closely identify? (Please mark only one box)

- | | |
|---|---|
| Roman Catholic (Catholic) | Baptist (Protestant Christian) |
| Episcopalian (Protestant Christian) | Methodist (Protestant Christian) |
| Pentecostal (Protestant Christian) | Presbyterian or Reformed (Protestant Christian) |
| Other mainline or liberal Protestant (Protestant Christian) | |
| Other conservative or evangelical Protestant (Protestant Christian) | |
| Other Christian (please specify) | |
| Judaism (Jewish) | |
| Islam (Islam) | |

Q: For child care programs that identify with a faith tradition and/or congregation, what is the predominant race or ethnic group in the tradition and/or congregation? (please check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| White | Black/African American |
| Hispanic | Asian/Pacific Islander |
| No majority race or ethnic group | |
| Please provide any additional information you can to specify ethnic or cultural transition (sic). | |

TABLE A11. Qualitative Interviews with Child Care Providers

| Interview Reference Initials | State | Center/Family | Interview Date | Program Description with Respect to Faith | Note |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| JB | GA | Center | 5/9/2023 | Occasional religious practice | Indicates in interview that program is part of a privately owned child care franchise |
| SE | MA | Family | 5/9/2023 | Faith-motivated | - |
| KS | MA | Family | 5/18/2023 | Faith-motivated; regular religious practice | - |
| GC | GA | Family | 5/11/2023 | Faith-affiliated; faith motivated; occasional religious practice | - |
| KH | MA | Center | 5/23/2023 | Occasional religious practice | Indicates in interview that center is based in a church |
| MS | GA | Family | 5/22/2023 | Occasional religious practice | - |
| SD | GA | Center | 5/25/2023 | Regular religious practice | - |
| WM | GA | Family | 5/10/2023 | Faith-motivated | |
| RP | GA | Family | 6/5/2023 | Faith-motivated; regular religious practice | - |
| AG | GA | Center | 6/5/2023 | Faith-affiliated | Interview via stakeholder outreach; part-time program |

Endnotes

1. “Parent Child Care Preferences: Are They Changing?” Bipartisan Policy Center. Accessed May 1, 2024.
<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/event/parent-child-care-preferences-are-they-changing/>.
2. Surveys were distributed to licensed child care providers in each state (both child care providers and family-based child care) as well as child care providers who were exempt from licensing for a religious reason. Programs operating without a license for any other reason (such as operating a part-day or seasonal program, operating in a public school setting) were not included in this survey.
3. “National Tracking Poll,” Bipartisan Policy Center, accessed April 16, 2024,
<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Parent-Survey.Toplines.pdf>.
4. Joshua Borton, “NSECE Snapshot: The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Center-Based Child Care and Early Education,” accessed April 16, 2024,
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/2019_nsece_faith_based_snapshot_nov2022.pdf.
5. “National Tracking Poll,” Bipartisan Policy Center, accessed April 16, 2024,
<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Parent-Survey.Toplines.pdf>.
6. Brad Fulton, “Religious Organizations: Cross-Cutting the Nonprofit Sector,” in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 579-598.
7. Wolfgang Bielefeld and William Suhs Cleveland, “Defining Faith-Based Organizations and Understanding Them Through Research,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2013): 442-467.
8. Steven Monsma, *Putting Faith in Partnerships: Welfare-to-Work in Four Cities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 62.
9. Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Chafetz, and Paula F. Pipes, “Where’s the Faith in Faith-based Organizations? Measures and Correlates of Religiosity in Faith-based Social Service Coalitions,” *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2007): 2259–2272, accessed April 16, 2024,
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2006.0086>.
Ebaugh et al proposed three types: “service religiosity” (“the extent to which staff members incorporate religion into their interaction with clients”), “staff religiosity” (concerns “the role of religion in hiring and motivating staff and religious behavior among staff”), “formal organizational religiosity” (“the extent to which the ‘public face’ of the coalition is explicitly faith-based”).
10. [Monica H. Rohacek](#), [Gina Adams](#), and [Kathleen Snyder](#), “Child Care Centers, Child Care Vouchers, and Faith-Based Organizations,” Urban Institute, May 14, 2008,
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/child-care-centers-child-care-vouchers-and-faith-based-organizations>.
11. Rachel Anderson, Laura Luchies, and Rachel Venema, “Initial Findings From Michigan: Faith-Based Child Care Policy Brief,” Center for Public Justice, September 2022,
<https://cpjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Updated-MichiganChildCareBrief2022-1.pdf>.
This project consisted of an analysis of state data (providers could volunteer information about their being “faith-based” or having a religious affiliation) as well as 20 qualitative interviews.

12. "Georgia's Early Care and Education Landscape," Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, accessed April 17 2024, <http://geears.org/wp-content/uploads/GA-Early-Care-and-Education-Landscape-2021.pdf>.
13. Anthony Raden, "Universal Prekindergarten In Georgia: A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program," Foundation for Child Development, May 1999, <https://www.fcd-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Universal20PreK20in20Georgia.pdf>.
14. Anthony Raden, "Universal Prekindergarten In Georgia: A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program," Foundation for Child Development, May 1999, <https://www.fcd-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Universal20PreK20in20Georgia.pdf>.
15. "Georgia's Early Care and Education Landscape," GEEARS, accessed April 17 2024, <http://geears.org/wp-content/uploads/GA-Early-Care-and-Education-Landscape-2021.pdf>. Less than 15 percent of children who are income-eligible receive CAPS subsidies.
16. "About Child Care Services," Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.dec.al.gov/CCS/About.aspx>
17. "Exemption Unit Training," Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/ExemptionOverview.pdf>. See DECAL, Exemptions, for information about specialized exemptions. Many of these refer to programs operating in relation to a non-public school and/or those providing less than full-day, year-round care such as drop in programs or summer camps.
18. Dataset provided by Massachusetts EEC on file.
19. "Final Report - March 2022," Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-SjLTTCJ6WTbCMHhgLuVV3WkmVh1DZas/view>. p. 10
20. The term 'mixed-delivery' refers to a prekindergarten program model that involves the coordination and collaboration of various types of providers, such as public schools, private child care centers, Head Start programs, and community-based organizations. In a mixed-delivery system, pre-K services are offered through a combination of these different providers, allowing families to choose the setting that best meets their needs.
21. "\$15 Million Investment in Universal Pre-K to Guarantee Equitable Access to Free, High-Quality Pre-K for All Four Year Olds in Boston Announced by Mayor Walsh," City of Boston, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.boston.gov/news/15-million-investment-universal-pre-k-guarantee-equitable-access-free-high-quality-pre-k-all>.
22. The Baylor research team applied for, and obtained an exemption from Baylor University's Institutional Review Board in November of 2022.
23. These public datasets contain information provided by child care providers when applying for a license or a license exemption. The data may be updated by the provider or verified by the state during interactions such as licensing site visits, license application amendments, grant applications, or voluntary updates to the database by providers.
24. Georgia General Assembly, "Title 20 Education" (Georgia State Law, Atlanta, 2016), pg 846.
25. Georgia General Assembly, "Title 20 Education" (Georgia State Law, Atlanta, 2016), pg 846.
26. Massachusetts General Assembly, "606 CMR" (Massachusetts State Regulation, Boston), <https://www.mass.gov/doc/family-group-school-age-child-care-programs-606-cmr-7/download>.

27. Massachusetts General Assembly, "606 CMR" (Massachusetts State Regulation, Boston), <https://www.mass.gov/doc/family-group-school-age-child-care-programs-606-cmr-7/download>.
28. Per the definitions provided, Massachusetts family-based care responses consisted of 212 "family child care homes" and 11 "small group" programs.
29. Family-based care providers who selected the option "I personally have religious motivation or identity, but do not incorporate any explicit religious or faith components into our activities and curricula" are not included in this table.
30. A small number of respondents indicated "none" and one of the other responses. Those who indicated none ONLY (not one of the others) are as follows: 38 percent total (154); 32 percent GA (57), 44 percent MA (97)
31. Note that child care centers, unlike family-based child care respondents were not given a "personal faith" option ("I personally have religious motivation or identity, but do not incorporate any explicit religious or faith components into our activities and curricula")
32. Joshua Borton, "NSECE Snapshot: The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Center-Based Child Care and Early Education," accessed April 16, 2024, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/2019_nsece_faith_based_snapshot_nov2022.pdf.
33. Several responses left this question blank or offered write-variations that could not be coded.
34. Respondents were asked "How is the faith-based character of your program expressed (check all that apply)?" The options were offered as described above without elaboration.
35. SE, Interview, Transcript on file.
36. KS, Interview, Transcript on file.
37. KH, Interview, Transcript on file.
38. Free response comment. OWL (Opening the World of Learning) is a comprehensive pre-K curriculum used in several state and regional pre-K programs.
39. The full set of data collected by survey question dealing with curriculum was not usable for this report due to problems in the survey implementation and data recording. The observations here are based on a review of write-in comments to the question.
40. Brian Steensland et. al, "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art," Social Forces 79, no. 1 (2000): 291-318.
41. Besheer Mohamed et. al, "Faith Among Black Americans," Pew Research Center, February 16, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/>. See also Faith Communities Today, [Fact 2000 Survey](#), Interdenominational Theological Center (website visited 3/17/2024) as well as Ryan P. Burge, Paul A. Djupe, "What is a Black Protestant? Why are They Their Own Category?" Religion in Public blog, June 24, 2019. (website visited 3/17/2024) ; <https://religioninpublic.blog/2019/06/24/what-is-a-black-protestant-why-are-they-their-own-category/>
42. "Members of the Historically Black Protestant Tradition," Pew Research Center, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/historically-black-protestant/>.
43. Diane R. Garland, Michael E. Sherr, and Angela Dennison, "Who Cares for the Children," Baylor University School of Social Work, Accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/146796.pdf>.

44. The Georgia and Massachusetts surveys did not include pre-K programs in public school settings. These programs are not covered by state child care licensing regulations and therefore were not part of the child care providers studied. Their inclusion would likely have increased the total responses and decreased faith responses as a portion of all responses.

45. Laura Luchies, Rachel Venema, and Rachel Anderson, "Mapping Faith Involvement in Michigan Child Care," Center for Public Justice, accessed April 22, 2024,

<https://cpjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CSR1643-CPJ-faith-based-child-care-report-20220331-FINAL-1.pdf>.

The Michigan study did not have a survey component and relied upon provider name and various types of self-identification by providers when submitting information to the state's licensing and quality rating systems, producing a potential under-count of some providers (family-based child care licensed under the provider's personal name) and over-count of faith-located providers with a religious name but no other faith characteristics.

46. WM, Interview, Transcript on file.

47. WM, Interview, Transcript on file.

48. WM, Interview, Transcript on file.

49. SE, Interview, Transcript on file.

50. WM, Interview, Transcript on file.

51. Write in, Q20

52. Write in, Q20

53. Write in, Q20

54. WM, Interview, Transcript on file.

55. Write in Q6/13

56. Write in Q6/13

57. Write in Q6/13

58. Write in response, Q6

59. KS, Interview, Transcript on file.

60. KS, Interview, Transcript on file.

61. MS, Interview, Transcript on file.

62. SD, Interview, Transcript on file.

63. Write in response, Q20

64. Write in response, Q6&13

65. JB, Interview, Transcript on file.
66. JB, Interview, Transcript on file.
67. KS, Interview, Transcript on file.
68. Write in, Q13
69. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8* (DC: NAEYC, 2022), 5.
70. Anna Ayers Looby et. al, "State Regulations to Support Children's Cultural and Religious Food Preferences in Early Care and Education," *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 24, (2019): 1, accessed April 22, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-019-02833-1>.
71. "Toolkit," Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://childspiritualdevelopment.org/2022/11/17/toolkit/>.
72. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, "Finding Connections Between Spirituality and Play for Early Childhood Education," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 24, no. 1 (2019): 54.
73. Mona Abo-Zena and Allegra Midgette, "Developmental Implications of Children's Early Religious and Spiritual Experiences in Context: A Sociocultural Perspective" *Religions* 10, no. 11: 631. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10110631>
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84. Sinsery Gardner, Latifah Alremai, Marlene Walton, "Encouraging, Increasing, and Inviting Fathers from Different Cultural and Religious Practices in Early Childhood Education," *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership* 26, no. 4 (2023): 142-149, accessed April 22, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554589231200780>.

85. The EEC database cannot differentiate between child care providers based on the age of the children in family-based care programs. EEC estimates that 83.5 percent of family-based care providers serve children aged five and under.

86. In Massachusetts, 257 Religiously Exempt Private Schools serve Pre-K Kids. Of these providers, only 32 accept state subsidies. Per state officials, private schools that receive public funding for their child care slots appear on the "funded" tab on EEC spreadsheet linked [here](#) with a program type of "private school."

87. Georgia General Assembly, "Title 20 Education" (Georgia State Law, Atlanta, 2016), pg 846.

88. "Rules and Regulations: Child Care Learning Centers," Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/cclcrulesandregulations.pdf>. Section 591-1-1.46 (1)(b)(4). p88.

89. M.G.L. Ch 76 sets forth the criteria under which schools can be deemed a "private organized educational system" by a local school committee or school superintendent. A private program is exempt from EEC licensure if 50 percent or more of its students are past the age range for preschool or prekindergarten (age 6). See also The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), "Policy Statement: Criteria for Exemption from Licensing." <https://www.mass.gov/doc/criteria-for-exemption-from-licensing-0/download> Accessed October 2022. Executive Office of Education, "Information About EEC License Exempt Programs," (accessed 2/18/2023). Programs that offer care during religious services are also exempt.

90. EEC Data regarding private schools. See "funded" tab on EEC spreadsheet linked [here](#) with a program type of "private school."

91. 126 of the surveys returned from licensed providers in Massachusetts were marked incomplete due to a distribution error.

92. Percent reported is of family-based care responses only.

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