



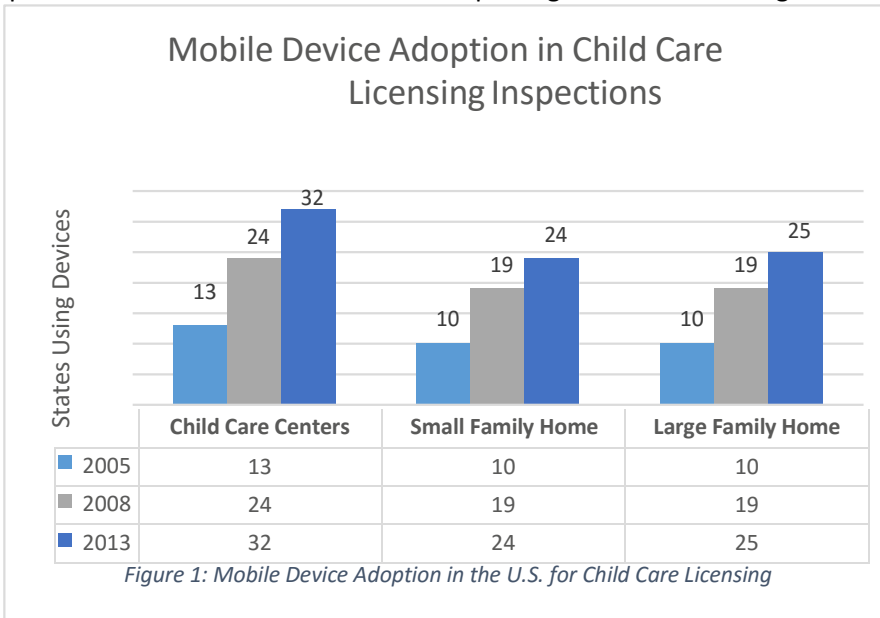
NARA Digital Brief: Mobility Strategy

Child care licensing agencies are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of children in child care through a state or jurisdiction’s early care and education system. Child care licensing agencies often require innovative solutions to balance the list of growing demands with limited resources. One approach to balancing some of these challenges is by leveraging technology. This brief will highlight some recent trends, benefits and recommendations for considering the use of mobile technology to support parental choice and information; provider’s access to information and streamlined services; and child care licensing agencies ensuring the health and safety of children.



Recent Trends

The National Association of Regulatory Administration’s (NARA) reviewed data from the 2005, 2008 and 2013 childcare licensing surveys to identify mobile technology trends. When the survey data was compared, it indicated an upward trend in the use in mobile devices such as portable laptops, smart phones and tablets with software for capturing information during licensing inspections. Nineteen



states shifted to using mobile devices from pen and paper between 2005 and 2013, which was the greatest increase in using mobile devices for any of the Child care facility types. However, that means only 68% of the states were using mobile devices for inspections of child care centers and only about half were using mobile devices for inspections in the two family home care facility types. While it is difficult

to tell from our data it does state that at least a third of those mobile licensing applications were designed and implemented over 10 years ago. This data suggests those devices and applications may be in need modernization or replacement all together to take advantage of more current technologies and their benefits.



Mobility has moved passed just an enterprise tool at work. Citizens and employees now have access to enterprise-like tools at home, on their phones and tablets with access to cloud based storage and access robust app marketplace to download software on demand. Leading this shift to mobility is the proliferation of mobile phones and smart devices. In October of 2014, the Pew Research Center reported that (Pew Research Center, 2014):

- 90% of Adult Americans own a cell phone
- 64% of Adult Americans own a smart phone up 35% from 2011
- 42% of Adult Americans own a tablet
- 60% of all cell phone owners use their phone to access the internet.
- 40% of smartphone users used their device to access government services.

As these findings indicated mobility provides tools and information to that could support parents and providers within a mobile strategy too. With the continued growth in people using mobile technology, child care licensing agencies must leverage this channel to engage its parents, providers and employees to improve services.

Benefits

The benefits of mobility can impact several stakeholders

Licensors using mobile devices can improve the quality of services through increased data quality; access to provider history in the field; always having up-to-date forms and data; and allowing licensors to spend more time providing technical assistance and support rather than returning to an office to complete data entry. There are also cost savings with associated with ordering paper, paper file storage, ordering or developing customized forms. With connected devices licensors have greater access to actionable data and tools to help them respond better to routine inspections, complaint investigations and technical assistance to ensure and improve the health and safety of child care environments.

- **Providers** benefit from mobility by allowing them access critical information such as training online, forms for licensing, registration and payments for associated licensing fees. Also these mobile services could allow providers to complete self-assessments and surveys to gain greater insight into the challenges and needs of providers. These type of digital services support providers by providing a more streamlined set of administrative services, the ability to access professional development information to improve the quality of their care.
- **Parents** will be able to search online from the mobile devices for child care providers by many criteria to review health and safety information as well as the quality of the program. Parents can also quickly find relevant information about how to choose child care and other developmentally appropriate materials. This anytime and anywhere approach allows parents who are balancing work and home the ability explore child care options and find other information, to support parental choice when choosing child care.



Developing a Mobility Strategy

While child care licensing agencies, providers and parents may understand the benefits that come with adopting mobile technologies, many child care licensing agencies are unsure what strategies and technologies would best help them achieve their mobility goals. Developing a mobility strategy or roadmap will help a licensing agency consider how to best address the type of benefits and outcomes for anytime, anywhere access.

Here are some considerations when developing your mobile strategy:

- What services should consider a mobility initiative how will we measure their success?
- What kind of apps do we need to engage our providers, parents, and employees to improve access to information and productivity?
- What type of devices should we use and how will we manage cost and security? Does a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy make sense?
- Should we develop native mobile apps in iOS, Android, or Windows, mobile web apps that require responsive web design, or cross platform (hybrid) apps that work on any device?
- How can our infrastructure be scaled to support secure delivery of mobile services internally and externally?
- How will we provide a quality user experience for mobile devices for employees, parents and providers?
- How will you handle lost or stolen devices and implement the proper security protocols? How will you support a mobile focused rather than office focused work environment?

Investing in developing a mobility strategy that aligns with your agency goals not only increases productivity, employee satisfaction, it can increase provider and parent services while improving their experience.



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