

Show Notes

Episode 1:

- **Guest:** Fran Kipnis — Nearly 40 years in early childhood education research, beginning with work at [San Francisco State University's Public Research Institute](#) and later with the [California Child Care Resource & Referral Network](#).
- **Head Start's role:** [Launched in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty](#), [Head Start](#) was one of the first large-scale federal early childhood programs. In California, most child care funding before the mid-1970s supported **center-based programs** through contracts with **school districts, county offices of education, and Head Start programs**, leaving little support for family child care or FFN care until vouchers expanded parental choice.
- **Historical context in California:** After **World War II**, when most federally funded child care centers shut down, California became one of the few states to continue funding **state-subsidized childcare**. This created a long-standing tradition of state support that later led to innovations such as the [Alternative Payment Program \(APP\)](#) in the 1970s, which introduced [vouchers/certificates](#) and expanded access beyond center-based care.
- **Parental choice in legislation:** While both federal and state policies emphasized **parental choice**, systemic barriers in reimbursement rates and program rules often limited access to **Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care**.
- **Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care** is a type of child care that the state does not require to be licensed, sometimes called "license-exempt" or "unlicensed" child care. It is provided in a home by a family member, friend, or a neighbor. Click [here](#) to learn more about which kinds of child care need to be licensed.
- **Bias in research and policy:** FFN care was long undervalued due to quality measures designed for licensed centers, not for informal care. Research often reinforced a hierarchy of quality (center-based > family child care homes > FFN), ignoring the strengths of FFN care such as cultural continuity, trust, and flexible hours.
- **Reimbursement rate inequities:** FFN reimbursement rates were historically tied to a percentage of [family child care home \(FCCH\)](#) ceilings, dropping from ~90% in the 1970s–80s to as low as 60% in 2011–12, before recent reforms began raising them again. (Click [here](#) to learn more about the importance of home-based providers).
- **Unionization and reform efforts:** Recent years have seen a union for family child care providers (with FFN included) and new approaches to rate-setting—important steps toward equity in the subsidy system.
- **Immigrant workforce impact:** Nearly **40% of California's childcare workforce are immigrants** (per the [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment \(CSCCE\)](#)), and restrictive immigration policies disproportionately harm FFN providers, many of whom are immigrants serving immigrant families.