

Research Brief

A Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings (SCOPE) in 2019: Understanding Coaching Structures and Processes

I. Introduction

Coaching is a common approach to professional development and support for quality in early care and education (ECE) settings. Coaching is an especially important part of professional development because it can be tailored to meet teachers' and family child care (FCC) providers' needs and can positively affect instructional practices, the quality of the setting, and children's outcomes (Aikens and Akers 2011; Isner et al. 2011). Its use as a tool for professional development has grown as quality initiatives in early childhood have proliferated, particularly with Continuous Quality Improvement Systems; Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRISs; Build Initiative 2019) and state-level preschool development grants.

The ECE field has not established evidence for what features of coaching are essential to the success of ECE professional development efforts (Isner et al. 2011) and what features could or should vary based on staff and setting characteristics. Given the lack of evidence, it is challenging for ECE programs to select and use the most effective coaching practices for their settings and staff (Artman-Meeker et al. 2015). Therefore, coaching features—or the components of the coaching structure and the strategies used in coaching—are thought to vary by programs, by coach, or by the coaching approaches or models.

Definition

What are the features of ECE coaching?

In this report, we focus on the coaching features—or components—that were reported by the SCOPE sample. We describe both structural and process features. *Structural features* are the parameters placed on the coaching process, such as the coach's caseload, format of coaching (e.g., in person or remote), or coaching model used. *Process features* focus on the coach-teacher or coach-FCC provider interactions during the coaching process, including coach-teacher or coach-FCC provider relationship building and coaching activities.

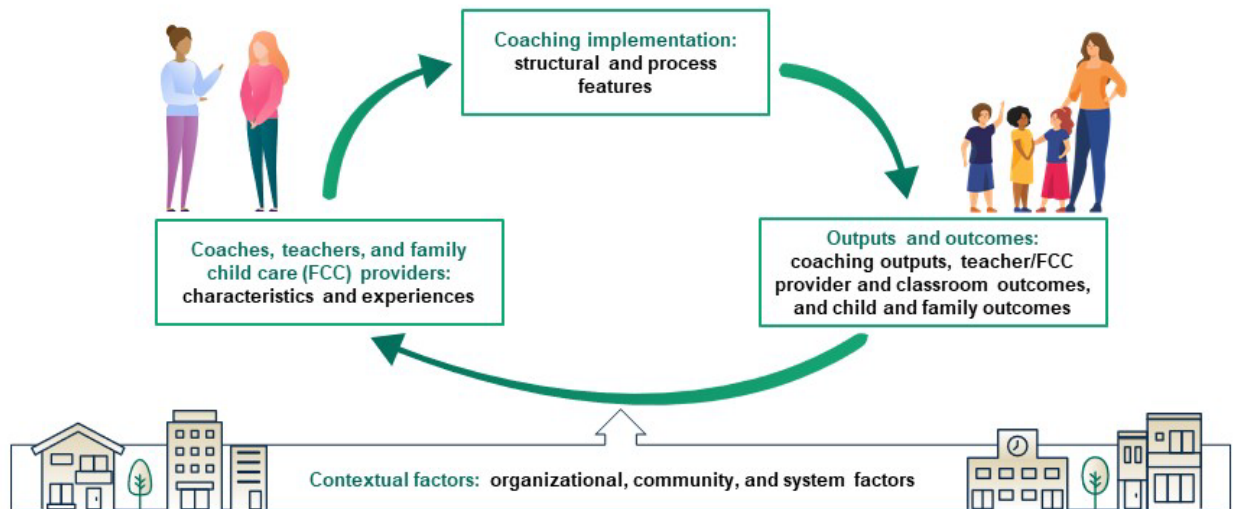
A. The Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings (SCOPE): 2019 surveys

Box I.2 contains information about SCOPE 2019 and the surveys. To help inform the development of the survey topics and guide analysis, the SCOPE team created a draft conceptual model drawn from a literature review (Aikens et al. 2017) and expert input. A high-level version of the components of the conceptual model

are shown in Exhibit I.1. This model serves as a roadmap for the SCOPE 2019 topics and findings highlighted in this report. Consistent with the model, coaches and teachers/FCC providers interact through the process features of coaching, and structural features, in turn, influence these interactions. This process occurs within (and is influenced by) organizational (Head Start, center, or FCC program), community, and systemic contextual factors. The characteristics and experiences of the coaches and teachers/FCC providers also shape the process and structural features of coaching. All these elements of coaching, in turn, produce outputs (such as progress toward coaching goals) and targeted outcomes (including classroom, program, and child and family outcomes).

This report includes findings in four areas highlighted in the model: characteristics of coaches and teachers or FCC providers, process and structural features of coaching, contextual factors, and outputs.

Exhibit I.1. Conceptual model



Overview

Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings

Overview of the study

SCOPE was funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation of the Administration for Children and Families. This project was conducted by Mathematica in partnership with Child Trends, consultant Chrishana Lloyd, and the Children’s Learning Institute at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. For a more detailed description of the study design, see [Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#).

SCOPE goals

Our primary goal in the SCOPE project was to learn more about the ways coaching is implemented to improve instructional practice in early care and education (ECE). SCOPE focused on coaching in center-based classrooms and family child care (FCC) homes that served preschool-age children from families with low incomes. SCOPE also explored the programmatic and systems-level factors associated with coaching.

Data collection and respondents. From February through July 2019, SCOPE 2019 conducted web-based surveys with coaches, center directors, center-based teachers, and FCC providers. The centers and FCC homes included in SCOPE mostly received funding through a Head Start grant or Child Care and Development Fund subsidies, but some settings received other

types of funding to serve children with families from a low income. We aimed to include a wide variety of coaching in SCOPE and the findings are not representative of any coaching model or approach. The surveys covered the following topics: coach training and supervision; the characteristics of coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers; structural and process features of coaching; perceptions of the coach–teacher or coach–FCC provider relationship; challenges to coaching; center director involvement and support for coaching; and overall center and FCC home context.

In this report, we focus on survey findings from coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers (see Exhibit I.2). The centers and FCC homes in SCOPE 2019 served children from families with low incomes primarily through a Head Start grant and/or with Child Care and Development Fund subsidies (many settings had other sources of revenue as well). Coaches may have worked across these types of settings, but when responding to the survey, they were asked to focus on one type of setting, and accordingly throughout our reports, their data is linked with that setting. (See [Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#).) If teachers or FCC providers were working with more than one coach, they were asked to focus on the coach who was also recruited for SCOPE 2019.

Exhibit I.2. SCOPE 2019 study sample



	Head Start-funded centers	Centers not funded by Head Start	FCCs
SCOPE 2019 study sample sizes			
Coaches	42	28	30
Teachers/FCC providers	80	50	38

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey; SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: FCC = family child care.

B. SCOPE 2019: Coaching Structures and Practices

This report focuses on the characteristics of coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers; structural and process features of coaching; and perceptions of the coach–teacher or coach–FCC provider relationship from SCOPE 2019. It answers the following questions, using SCOPE 2019 data:

1. What are the characteristics of coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers?
2. How are meetings between coaches and center teachers or FCC providers structured, and how often do they communicate between meetings?
3. What kinds of approaches or models, resources, and strategies do coaches use in the coaching process?
4. How big are coach caseloads, and what do coach–teacher and coach–FCC provider relationship building and collaboration look like?
5. What challenges do coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers face?

These five questions set the stage for understanding the SCOPE 2019 respondents and what is involved in coaching in the ECE field. This report can help the field understand the variations and similarities in coaching structure and activities across center-based classrooms and FCC homes. Although some of these aspects of coaching are included in models in the literature, many are unspecified (e.g., frequency, duration, etc.) and it is uncertain how they link to coaching success. By examining the features of coaching in ECE settings, we can learn how they are being consistently used and how they vary across settings. ECE directors and professional development staff may learn from these results, and this information will be valuable to refine study design and data collection for future ECE coaching studies.

Key SCOPE 2019 findings presented in this brief

- Most coaches in SCOPE were well-educated and experienced.
- Most center teachers and FCC providers in SCOPE worked with their coach for at least a year; FCC providers reported longer tenures with their coaches than center teachers.
- Most coaches met one-on-one at least monthly with center teachers and FCC providers. Coaching meetings with FCC providers tended to be longer than meetings with teachers in centers. Both center teachers and FCC providers usually communicated with coaches a few times between coaching meetings, most often via email.
- Coaches used a variety of approaches or models, and coaches frequently reported using many types of resources in their work with center teachers and FCC providers.
- Almost all coaches worked with center teachers and FCC providers to set goals, using center teacher or FCC provider input.
- Coaches most often reported challenges with teacher and provider time and readiness to engage. Specifically, the top challenges were that center teachers and FCC providers (1) were reluctant to participate in coaching, (2) often worked under stress, and (3) did not have enough time for coaching. Center teachers and FCC providers reported fewer coaching challenges overall and said they had positive, respectful, and helpful relationships with coaches.

II. What Are the Characteristics of Coaches, Center Teachers, and FCC Providers?

A. Coach and teacher/FCC provider demographics in previous research

The SCOPE conceptual model acknowledges the background characteristics and experiences that coaches and teachers/FCC providers bring to their interactions. Beyond education (Artman-Meeker et al. 2015), the literature yields limited information about coaches' background and experience and how they relate to coaching processes and strategies, the coaching relationship, and coaching outcomes. It is hypothesized that knowledge and experience in early childhood development or teaching are important to successful coaching (Lloyd and Modlin 2012). This section of the report highlights SCOPE 2019 coach and teacher/FCC provider demographics, including race/ethnicity, education, and experience.

B. Findings from SCOPE 2019

In the SCOPE 2019 sample, coaches' race and ethnicity were similar to those of the center teachers and FCC providers they coached. Seventy-six percent of coaches who worked in Head Start-funded centers identified as White, as did 85 percent of those in centers not funded by Head Start and 80 percent of those who worked in FCC homes (Exhibit II.1). Only about one-fifth of the coaches in Head Start-funded centers and FCC homes identified as Hispanic or Latino/a, whereas almost half of the coaches in centers not funded by Head Start identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. This distribution was similar to that of the center teachers and FCC providers in the SCOPE 2019 sample (Exhibit II.1).

Exhibit II.1. ECE coaches and teachers/FCC providers shared similar racial and ethnic backgrounds

Coach report of their race and ethnicity	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 27)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
Race			
African American or Black	7%	7%	17%
Asian	10%	4%	3%
Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, or AI/AN	7%	4%	3%
White	76%	85%	80%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino/a	17%	44%	20%

Exhibit II.1. ECE coaches and teachers/FCC providers shared similar racial and ethnic backgrounds (continued)

Teacher/FCC provider report of their race and ethnicity	Teachers in Head Start-funded centers (n = 80)	Teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 49)	FCC providers (n = 38)
Race			
African American or Black	8%	6%	21%
Asian	11%	2%	0%
Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, or AI/AN	0%	6%	11%
White	84%	80%	71%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino/a	23%	44%	30%

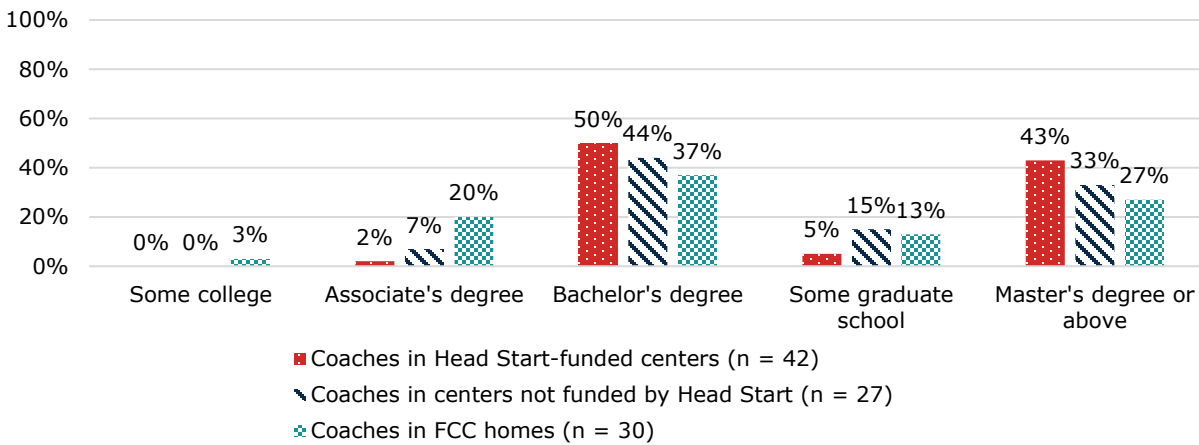
Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey and SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches and teachers/FCC providers were asked, “What is your ethnicity?” and “What is your race?” They could select all categories that apply for their race.

FCC = family child care; AI/AN = American Indian or Alaska Native.

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 varied in education and experience, but most had at least a bachelor’s degree and several years of experience as an ECE coach. Coaches who worked with FCC providers had slightly lower education levels than coaches working with center teachers (Exhibit II.2). About one-quarter (23 percent) of coaches in FCC settings had not earned a bachelor’s degree, compared with 2 percent of coaches in Head Start-funded centers and 7 percent in other center-based settings. Coaches across settings had an average of at least 15 years of experience working with preschoolers in ECE settings and at least 7 years of experience teaching and training adults (Exhibit II.3). They had less direct ECE coaching experience, with an average of 4 years for coaches in center-based settings and 6 years for coaches working with FCC providers.

Exhibit II.2. Most ECE coaches had at least a bachelor’s degree



Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, “What is the highest level of education you have completed?” Response categories included high school diploma/general education diploma or equivalent, some college but no degree, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, some graduate school, or master’s degree or above.

FCC = family child care.

Exhibit II.3. ECE coaches in all settings had similar experience levels, on average, including many years of work with preschoolers

	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 27–28)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
Years working with preschoolers (SD)	16.2 (9.73)	15.2 (9.73)	17.7 (10.05)
Years teaching and training adults (SD)	7.5 (7.47)	7.0 (9.73)	9.6 (6.01)
Years working as an ECE coach (SD)	4.1 (4.44)	4.2 (2.66)	6.5 (6.03)

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, “How many years of experience do you have working with preschoolers in early childhood education settings?”, “How many years of professional experience do you have with teaching and training adults?”, and “How many years have you been a coach, providing professional support to early care and education teachers/providers?”

FCC = family child care; SD = standard deviation.

Key findings about coach characteristics from SCOPE 2019

- Coaches and the teachers and providers they worked with shared similar racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Coaches indicated high levels of education and experience. These characteristics vary within and across settings.
 - On average, all coaches had multiple years of experience working with young children and teaching and training adults.
 - Fewer FCC coaches reported having a bachelor’s degree than coaches working with centers.

FCC coaches reported more years of experience with both training adults and working as a coach.

III. How do Coaches Meet and Communicate with Center Teachers and FCC Providers?

A. Two structural features of coaching: Dosage and formats of communication in previous research

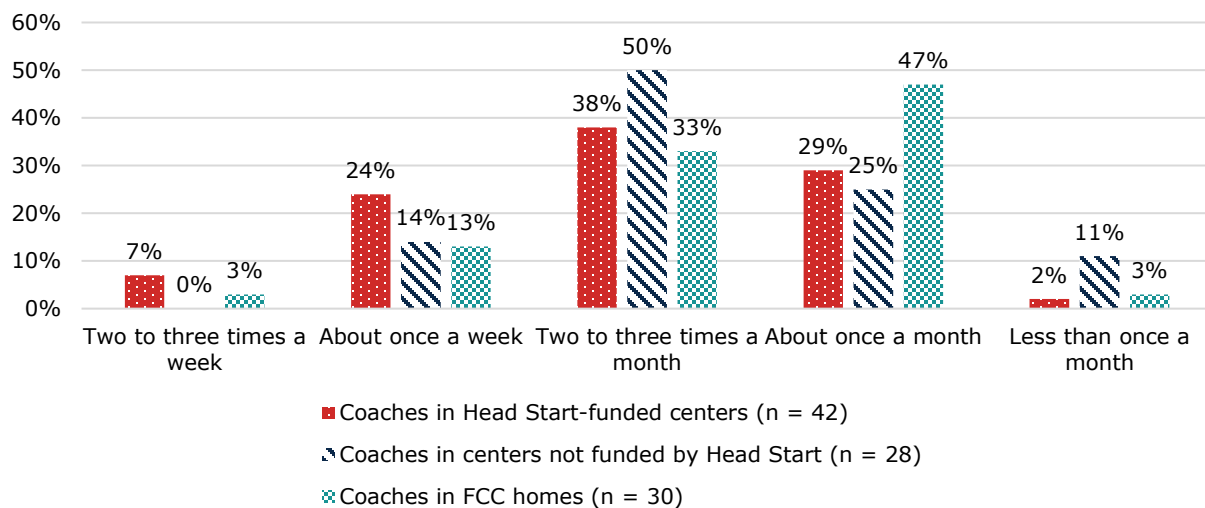
As highlighted in the conceptual model, structural features are a potentially important aspect of coaching. For example, the dosage (i.e., frequency, intensity, and duration) of coaching is likely important for influencing instructional practice and children’s outcomes (Aikens and Akers 2011; Dunst 2015). Coaching dosage varies in the professional development research literature, if it is mentioned at all (Aikens et al. 2017). Prior literature also notes the importance of coach–teacher or coach–FCC provider communication (Hobbs and Stovall 2015). These studies typically focus on the role of communication in relationship building but do not

specify frequency or mode or examine their impact (Aikens et al. 2017). How do dosage and format of coach-teacher and coach-FCC provider meetings and communication vary in the SCOPE 2019 sample?

B. Findings from SCOPE 2019

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 held regular meetings with center teachers and FCC providers. All coaches reported that at least a portion of their coaching was done in person, but there was variation in how often this was done. A majority of coaches reported that they met with center teachers at least two times a month (69 percent in Head Start-funded centers and 64 percent in centers not funded by Head Start), whereas only 49 percent of coaches working in FCCs reported the same. FCC providers most frequently reported that they met with their coach monthly (47 percent). (Exhibit III.1).

Exhibit III.1. ECE coaches held regular meetings with center teachers and FCC providers



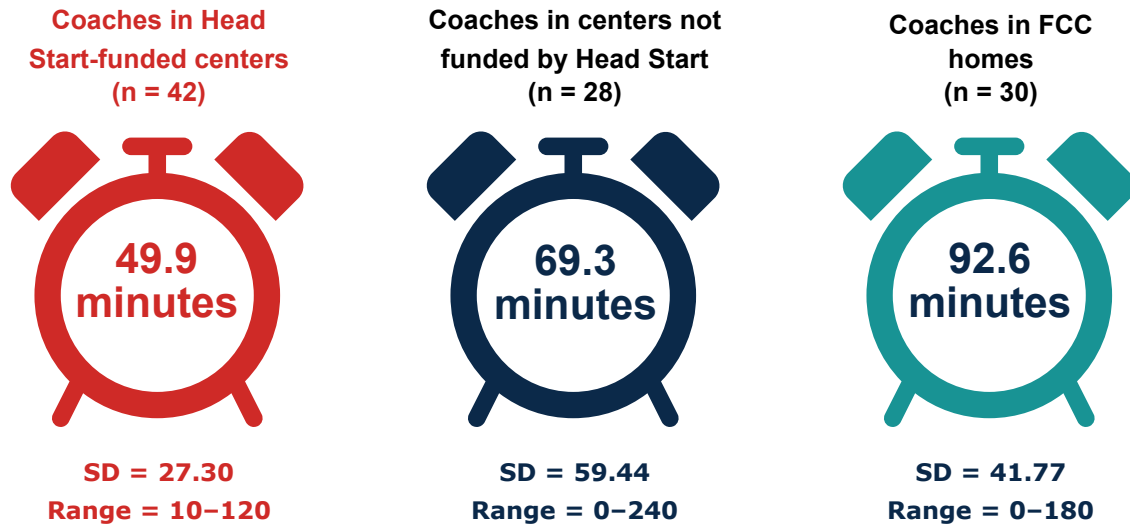
Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, “On average, how frequently do you have coaching meetings with an individual whom you coach?”

FCC = family child care.

Although coaches most often reported only monthly meetings with FCC providers, these meetings with FCC providers lasted longer—an average of about one and a half hours. In contrast, coach meetings were less than an hour for meetings with teachers in Head Start-funded centers and a little more than an hour for meetings with teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (Exhibit III.2). Why would coaches report longer but less frequent meetings with FCC providers? The nature of working with FCC providers might be part of the reason. For example, coaches for FCC providers need to travel to each FCC provider (as compared with those coaches who serve multiple teachers within a center), which may result in less frequent visits. In addition, FCC providers might not have coverage for watching the children when meeting with coaches, so completing coach meeting tasks might take longer.

Exhibit III.2. ECE coaches of FCC providers reported the longest coaching meetings, on average









Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked “On average, how much time do you spend in a typical coaching meeting interacting with an individual whom you coach?”

FCC = family child care; SD = standard deviation.

Coaching meetings in SCOPE 2019 were not always one-on-one, although more than three-quarters of center teachers and FCC providers did meet with their coach one-on-one some of the time (Exhibit III.3). The survey asked coaches who was involved in their coaching meetings, and they could select as many response options as were applicable. Their responses suggest that coaching is not always one-on-one; there is variation across settings in terms of who attends. Coaching meetings that included more than one teacher were common for center teachers (58 percent in Head Start-funded centers compared to 60 percent in centers not funded by Head start), but who attended the coaching meetings varied. Coaching meetings might include the center teacher’s director or supervisor (14 to 38 percent, respectively), staff from other ECE settings (6 to 16 percent, respectively), and other nonteaching staff from the center (6 to 14 percent, respectively). SCOPE 2019 specifically aimed to include coaching that occurred one-on-one or in small teaching teams, but even with this specific selection criteria, coaching meetings were used flexibly within ECE settings.

Exhibit III.3. Most ECE coaching sessions were one-on-one, with some group sessions also occurring

	Teachers in Head Start-funded centers (n = 80)	Teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 50)	FCC providers (n = 38)
 Met with coach alone (one-on-one)	81%	80%	87%
 Met with coach and teachers/providers from my setting (as a group) ^a	60%	58%	29%
 Met with coach and teachers from other classrooms in my center (as a group)	23%	36%	n.a.
 Met with coach and my supervisor or director (as a group)	14%	38%	n.a.
 Met with coach and teachers/providers from other centers/FCCs (as a group)	8%	6%	16%
 Met with coach and other types of staff from my center (as a group)	6%	14%	n.a.

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey.

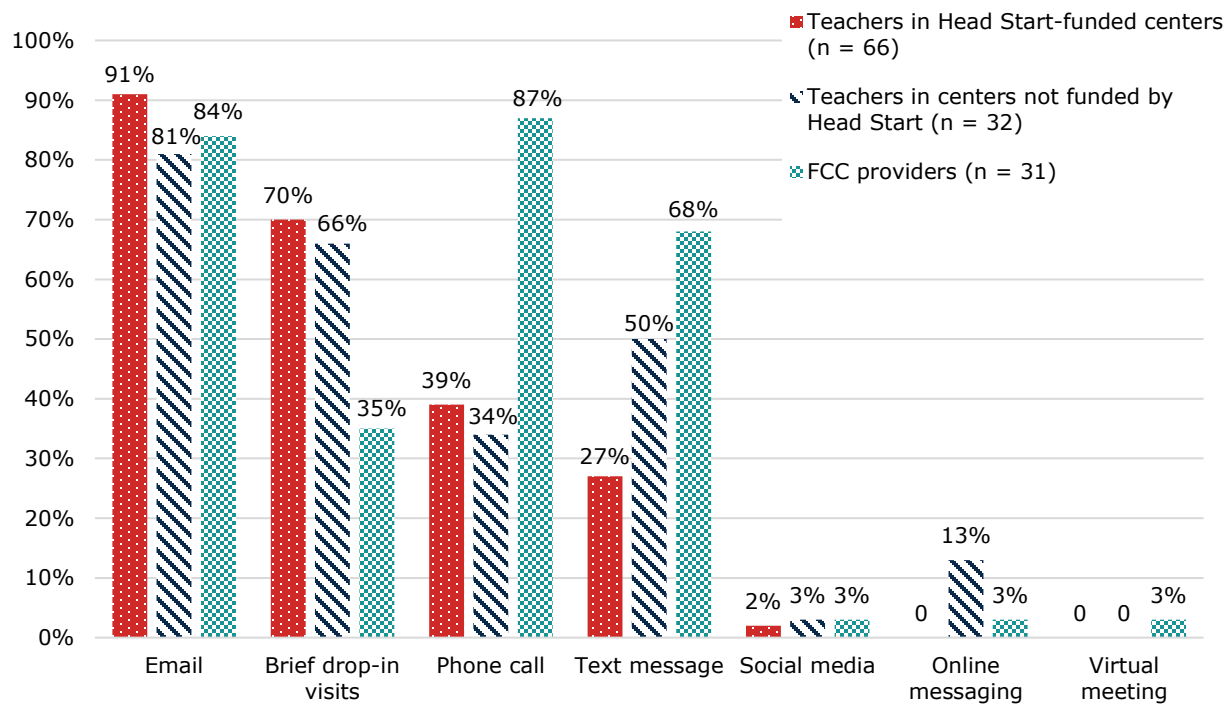
Note: Teachers and FCC providers were asked, “During in-person coaching meetings, do you meet with [coach name] alone or with other teachers or staff too?” Respondents could select all options that apply.

^a Among the 38 FCC providers, 26 reported that other adults were usually in the FCC home with them.

FCC = family child care; n.a. = not applicable, as this response option was only presented to teachers in centers.

Center teachers and FCC providers in SCOPE 2019 communicated with coaches between scheduled coaching meetings. Across settings, center teachers and FCC providers said they communicated with their coach about two times, on average, between scheduled meetings. We asked about how these communications took place. More than three-quarters of the communication between scheduled meetings was via email, regardless of ECE setting (Exhibit III.4). Brief drop-in visits between meetings took place for about two-thirds of teachers in both types of center-based settings, whereas only about one-third of FCC providers reported these sorts of visits. FCC providers very commonly reported receiving phone calls (87 percent) or text messages (68 percent) from their coach between meetings. Meanwhile, less than half of center teachers reported having phone calls with coaches between meetings.

Exhibit III.4. Email, drop-in visits, and phone calls were the most common forms of communication between scheduled ECE coaching meetings



Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey.

Note: Teachers and FCC providers were asked, “What methods of communication do you and/or [coach name] use between coaching meetings?” Respondents could select all methods that apply.

FCC = family child care.

Key findings about communication between coaches and teachers or providers

Though coaches, teachers, and FCC providers reported meeting regularly with one another, there was variation in frequency, participants, and duration. All coaches who participated in SCOPE 2019 reported that they had coaching meetings with teachers or FCC providers; at least half of the coaches reported meeting more often than once a month. Most teachers and FCC providers (82 percent) reported that when they met in person with their coach, they did so one-on-one at least some of the time. About half (52 percent) also sometimes met with their coach with other teachers or providers from their setting. About 20 percent of center teachers met with their coach along with other teachers from other classrooms and 18 percent met with their coach and a supervisor or director. Less than 10 percent met with other types of staff along with their coach.

Coaching meetings with FCC providers tended to be longer than meetings with teachers in centers. Regardless of setting, center teachers and FCC providers communicated with coaches an average of two times between coaching meetings, most often via email.

IV. What Kinds of Approaches or Models, Resources, and Strategies Do Coaches Use?

A. Coaching approaches or models, resources, and strategies in previous research

Coaching approaches or models are also important *structural features* of coaching. Coaching might use a particular model or combination of models that determines the features and process included in the coaching. Such models or approaches might provide guidance that standardizes the coaching approach, both in structural and process features (Aikens et al. 2017).

Process features include activities that occur as part of coaching. A variety of strategies are considered key aspects of ECE coaching (e.g., observation, feedback, practice) although their differential contributions to outcomes are rarely (if ever) studied in rigorous evaluations (Aikens et al. 2017). This section examines the prevalence of coaching strategies, and the approaches or models coaches used during their work.

B. Findings from SCOPE 2019

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 used a variety of approaches or models in their work with center teachers and FCC providers. There are multiple approaches or models for coaching in the ECE field, and we asked the coaches to identify if they used one or more of these approaches to shape part or all of their coaching (Exhibit IV.1). Coaches acknowledged using more than one model or approach, on average. Those working with center teachers reported using about two models or approaches (average of 1.8 and 1.9 in Head Start-funded centers and centers not funded by Head Start, respectively); those working with FCC providers reported using more than two models or approaches (average of 2.5). About four in five coaches (86 percent) who worked with teachers in Head Start-funded centers reported using the Practice-Based Coaching model, which was used by considerably fewer coaches working with teachers in centers not funded by Head Start or with FCC providers (29 percent and 33 percent, respectively).¹ Given that the Office of Head Start has provided multiple trainings on Practice-Based Coaching, its prevalence in Head Start-funded centers is perhaps unsurprising. Across settings, at least half of those who reported using Practice-Based Coaching attended a training institute or webinar (97 percent to 50 percent).²

Relationship-based coaching was the most reported approach for FCC providers and centers not funded by Head Start. Almost half of coaches working with teachers in centers not funded by Head Start and two-thirds of coaches working with FCC providers reported using relationship-based coaching, whereas less than one-quarter of coaches in Head Start-funded centers reported using this approach. Relationship-based coaching describes multiple coaching approaches that emphasize a strong relationship between the coach and staff as important for motivating change (Connors 2016). Notably, about a third of coaches who worked with non-Head Start funded centers (31 percent) and FCC providers (37 percent) reported that their coaching was locally designed, while only a small portion of coaches who worked with Head Start funded centers (7 percent) reported that their coaching was locally designed.

¹ According to the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, Practice-Based Coaching is a cyclical process of planning goals and action steps, engaging in focused observation, and reflecting on and sharing feedback about teaching practices. See more information at: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/practice-based-coaching-pbc>.

² The Office of Head Start (OHS) supported the use of Practice-Based Coaching, with OHS's National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning providing resources and training to programs on its use. Models of Practice-Based Coaching meet Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Exhibit IV.1. ECE coaches used a variety of approaches or models^a

Coaching approaches or models	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 28)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
Practice-Based Coaching	86%	29%	33%
Specific curriculum coaching	50%	36%	47%
Relationship-based coaching model	21%	46%	63%
Entirely individualized	12%	25%	43%
Locally designed	7%	31%	37%
MyTeachingPartner™	2%	14%	13%
Number of coaching approaches or models	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Average number of coaching approaches or models reported by coaches	1.8 (0.93)	1.9 (0.87)	2.5 (1.15)

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, “Is your coaching approach based on one or more of the following?” Respondents could select all response options that apply.

^a There might be conceptual overlap across the approaches or models included in the exhibit. For example, Practice-Based Coaching and MyTeachingPartner™ share process features with other unbranded approaches that coaches might have reported using.

FCC = family child care; SD=standard deviation.

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 drew on materials from the center or program and from the broader field to support their coaching. Coaches reported using a variety of resource materials often/almost always (Exhibit IV.2). The most commonly used resources were logs or other instruments to record coaching practices. For coaches reporting on their work with FCC providers, many (70 percent) also used QRIS ratings/administrative data. Fewer coaches reported using information from the National Center on Development, Teaching, and Learning—a national technical assistance center supported by the Office of Head Start—to inform coaching; 39 percent of coaches working with teachers in Head Start-funded centers used these materials often/almost always, and 11 percent of coaches of teachers in centers not funded by Head Start and 7 percent of coaches of FCC providers used them often/almost always. Most coaches (70 percent) who worked with FCC providers reported using administrative data from the QRIS to support their coaching. Less than half of coaches working with Head Start-funded centers (45 percent) and centers not funded by Head Start (46 percent) used QRIS administrative data.

Exhibit IV.2. ECE coaches drew on a variety of resources, typically logs or formal assessments

Resources coaches drew on often or almost always	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 28)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
Logs or other instruments to record coaching practices	86%	79%	70%
Forms for action planning	81%	68%	43%
Formal assessments or other tools used to record individual progress	71%	75%	60%
Program's curricula	69%	54%	30%
Information from other professional development opportunities that are provided to teachers/FCCs	62%	50%	37%
Program guide, manual, or set of written materials that explain how to deliver coaching	62%	43%	40%
State's early learning standards or guidelines for coaching	52%	50%	63%
Resources found online	52%	50%	60%
Child assessment or child progress monitoring information	45%	54%	40%
Administrative data such as QRIS ratings or evaluations	45%	46%	70%
Information from the National Center on Development, Teaching, and Learning to inform coaching	39%	11%	7%

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, "How often do you use the following resources to inform your coaching?" Response options include never, rarely, sometimes, often, and almost always. The exhibit presents the percentage of coaches who often or almost always draw upon the resource.

FCC = family child care; QRIS = Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 used a variety of coaching strategies with center teachers and FCC providers.

ECE coaches often/almost always used several modeling, feedback, and reflection strategies. Across settings, the most common strategies were *providing verbal feedback on the strengths* and *identifying areas for growth* of center teachers and FCC providers (Exhibit IV.3). More than three-quarters of the coaches reported often/almost always *discussing how the center teacher or FCC provider implemented practices* in the classroom. At least two-thirds said they often/almost always *demonstrated or modeled skills and strategies*

with children, conducted observations, and provided written feedback to center teachers and FCC providers. Other strategies were used less commonly across settings. For example, fewer coaches reported demonstrating or modeling skills using video exemplars (50 percent or less across settings), discussing observations of other providers' or teachers' work with children (less than 33 percent), and asking center teachers or FCC providers to video record their practice (less than 25 percent).

Exhibit IV.3. Feedback strategies were most common in ECE coaching, with observation and reflection strategies also frequent

Strategy used <u>often or almost always</u> with a typical teacher or FCC provider	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 28)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
Feedback			
Provided verbal feedback on strengths	93%	96%	97%
Provided verbal feedback on areas for growth	88%	89%	90%
Discussed how teacher/provider implemented the observed practice	86%	79%	90%
Provided written feedback	74%	68%	83%
Conducted observation of teacher/provider live or via video	88%	68%	77%
Asked teacher/provider to reflect on their practice	83%	75%	80%
Modeled/demonstrated skills with children	74%	93%	70%
Demonstrated/modeled strategies through video exemplars	43%	50%	23%
Discussed observations of other providers' or teachers' work with children	27%	32%	23%
Asked teacher/provider to video record their practice	24%	21%	17%

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, "When coaching a typical teacher/FCC provider, how often do you use the following observation/reflection and feedback strategies?" Response options include never, rarely, sometimes, often, and almost always. The exhibit presents the percentage of coaches who often or almost always used each strategy with teachers/FCC providers. Only a subset of items is presented in the exhibit.

FCC = family child care.

Key findings about approaches and models, resources, and strategies coaches used in SCOPE 2019

- Coaches reported that they regularly use a variety of process features in their coaching. In centers and FCCs, coaches reported that they frequently used strategies such as modeling, observation, feedback, and reflection.
- Coaches consistently reported using coaching logs to document coaching activities. A variety of other resources are used (from activity templates to QRIS administrative data), but not consistently across settings.
- The models that coaches used varied, with many reports of combining models (average of 1.8 to 2.5 models per setting). However, coaches in Head Start-funded centers overwhelmingly reported using Practice-Based Coaching (alone or in combination with other models) while about one-third of coaches working with non-Head Start teachers or FCC providers used this model.

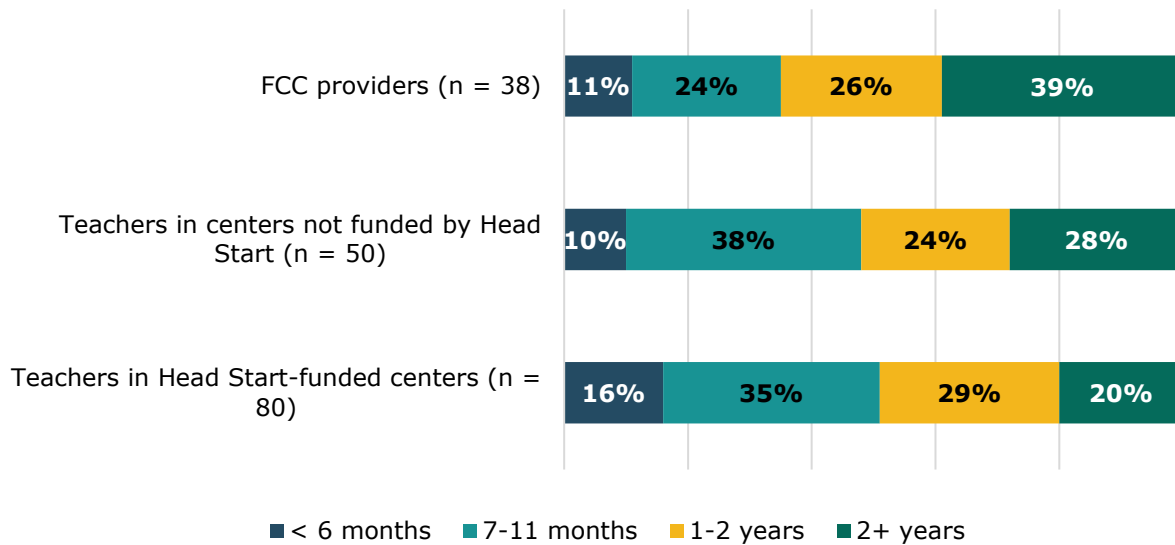
V. What do coach–teacher and coach–FCC provider relationship building and collaboration look like?

A. Selected process features of coaching: Coach–teacher and coach–FCC provider relationships in prior research

Another feature of coaching theorized to be essential for success is the coach–teacher or coach–FCC provider relationship (Hobbs and Stovall 2015). In the one-on-one interactions typical for ECE coaching, the relationship is hypothetically more impactful than with a trainer of a large group professional development training. The research to-date has not examined the isolated effects of the coach–practitioner relationship on coaching outcomes. However, the literature does emphasize that certain features of coaching may help to build the relationship, such as the length of time that coaches and teachers or providers have worked together, and aspects of collaboration in the coaching process (Aikens and Akers 2011).

Coach–FCC providers in SCOPE 2019 had longer tenures than coach–center teachers. Almost two-thirds of FCC providers worked with their coach for at least a year, whereas about half of all center teachers worked with their coach for this long (Exhibit V.1). Thirty-nine percent of FCC providers worked with their coach for more than 2 years.

Exhibit V.1. FCC providers reported longer tenures with their ECE coaches than center teachers did



Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey.

Note: Teachers and FCC providers were asked, “How long have you been working with [coach name]?” Response options included 4 months or less, 5 or 6 months, 7 months to 11 months, 1 to 2 years, and more than 2 years. The categories 4 months or less and 5 or 6 months were combined for reporting ease.

FCC = family child care.

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 provided emotional supports—and sometimes hands-on classroom help—to center teachers and FCC providers. We asked coaches about types of activities they did with teachers and FCC providers that might not directly support changes in practice but may contribute to relationship building and, indirectly, the effectiveness of coaching. (Exhibit V.2). The most common indirect strategies in coaching meetings included *actively building rapport*, *providing emotional support*, and *promoting opportunities for other professional development*. The least commonly used strategy was *problem-solving on personal issues* (although still reported as often/always used by 17 to 26 percent of the coaches). Almost two-thirds of those working with FCC providers reported often/almost always *working on stress reduction*, although only about half of center coaches reported using this strategy. In FCC and Head Start funded centers, many coaches reported frequently working as assistants or preparing classroom activities. Specifically, almost half of coaches working with FCC providers reported often/almost always *servicing as an assistant in the classroom*; while almost half of coaches working in Head Start-funded centers reported often/almost always *helping teachers prepare materials, lesson plans, and scheduling*.

Exhibit V.2. ECE coaches frequently provided emotional supports and actively built trust with teachers and FCC providers

Activities often or almost always used in coaching meetings	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 28)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
Actively developed rapport/trust	93%	86%	97%
Provided emotional support	60%	68%	67%
Facilitated opportunities for other professional development	59%	50%	47%
Helped with teacher’s or FCC provider’s preparation of materials, lesson plans, and scheduling	48%	36%	43%
Worked on stress reduction	45%	54%	63%
Worked as an assistant in classroom or child care room	31%	21%	47%
Problem-solved on personal issues	26%	18%	17%

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, “When coaching a typical teacher/provider, how often do you do the following activities?” Response options include never, rarely, sometimes, often, and almost always. The exhibit presents the percentage of coaches who often or almost always engage in the activity with teachers and FCC providers.

FCC = family child care.

Center teachers and FCC providers reported in SCOPE 2019 that they collaboratively determined the content of coaching meetings with their coaches. Very few FCC providers (11 percent) and teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (8 percent)—and none of the teachers in Head Start-funded centers—said that they alone decided the content of coaching meetings (Exhibit V.3). Instead, the majority worked with the coach to decide on content. For teachers from centers not funded by Head Start, 16 percent reported that the coach alone decided on activities, and 14 percent reported the center director or supervisor determined the content.

Exhibit V.3. ECE coaches collaborated on the content of coaching meetings with center teachers and FCC providers

Teacher and provider reports of who decided coaching meeting content	Teachers in Head Start-funded centers (n = 80)	Teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 50)	FCC providers (n = 38)
Teacher/FCC provider	0%	8%	11%
Coach	10%	16%	3%
Both the coach and the teacher/FCC provider	86%	56%	87%
Other teachers on the teaching team	1%	0%	n.a.
Teacher’s director or supervisor	3%	14%	n.a.

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey.

Note: Teachers and FCC providers were asked, “Who helps decide what you and [coach] do together during coaching meetings?” Respondents could choose only one option.

FCC = family child care; n.a. = not applicable, as this response option was only presented to teachers in centers.

Coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers reported in SCOPE 2019 that they collaborate to develop goals (at least 90 percent across settings) (Exhibit V.4). Most coaches described a collaborative approach to goal setting. Relatively few coaches (17 to 28 percent) reported setting the primary coaching goal themselves and then discussing subgoals with teachers. Very few coaches (5 percent or less) across settings reported that goals were set completely outside the coaching process without teacher or FCC provider input. Similarly, most center teachers and FCC providers reported that both they and their coach were involved in goal setting.

Some center teachers and FCC providers in SCOPE 2019 also reported other types of staff were involved in their goal setting for coaching. About one-quarter of teachers in Head Start-funded centers reported the involvement of center management in goal setting, as did about half of teachers in centers not funded by Head Start. A small portion of center teachers (16 to 22 percent) said they involved other teachers from their center when setting goals.

Key findings about relationship building and collaboration in SCOPE 2019

- There was a lot of variation in coaches’ reports of caseload. About half of the coaches in SCOPE 2019 worked with both center teachers and FCC providers.
- Coach–FCC provider pairs in SCOPE 2019 had longer tenures working together than coach–center teacher pairs. Thirty-nine percent of FCC providers had worked with their coach for more than 2 years.
- Coaches reported regularly collaborating with center teachers and FCC providers on the content of their meetings and focus of goals. They also provided emotional support and hands-on help in center classrooms and FCC homes.

Exhibit V.4. ECE coaches and teachers or FCC providers agreed they set goals together

Coach report of who is involved in goal setting ^a	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 28)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 30)
The teacher/FCC provider and I discussed strengths and challenges and determined together the next goal	90%	78%	79%
The teacher/FCC provider told me what he or she wanted to work on	61%	67%	66%
I presented different recommendations, and the teacher/FCC provider selected one or agreed to begin with one of them	44%	41%	52%
The teacher/FCC provider and I discussed their career goals and considered what the goals should be	41%	29%	34%
I told the teacher/FCC provider what the larger goal was, and we discussed how to break it up into small goals to work on	17%	22%	28%
All goals were determined outside of the coaching process without teacher/FCC provider input	5%	0%	3%
Teacher/FCC provider report of who was involved in goal setting ^b	Teachers in Head Start-funded centers (n = 74)	Teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 45)	FCC providers (n = 35)
Teacher/provider	95%	91%	100%
Coach	89%	71%	80%
Center/program management	23%	53%	n.a.
Other teachers in classroom	22%	16%	n.a.

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey and SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

^a Coaches were asked, "Which of the following statements most closely describe the role of a typical teacher/FCC provider in the goal-setting process?" Item only presented to respondents who indicated that their work always or sometimes involves setting goals. Respondents could select all categories that apply.

^b Teachers and FCC providers were asked, "Who is involved in setting or choosing your coaching goals?" Respondents could select all response categories that apply.

FCC = family child care; n.a. = not applicable, as this response option was only presented to teachers in centers.

VI. What Challenges Do Coaches, Center Teachers, and FCC Providers Face?

A. Coaching contextual challenges in the literature

Coaching contextual challenges can include logistics (e.g., time and space for coaching) as well as staff and leadership buy-in and attitudes toward professional development (Aikens et al. 2017; Howard et al. 2013). Readiness for change and responsiveness among teachers are also important for coaching success (LoCasale-Crouch et al. 2016). Barriers to coaching might differ by setting type and funding sources (Aikens et al. 2016), but few studies have examined these differences or their relationship with coaching effectiveness. This section explores coaches', teachers', and FCC providers' reports of challenges in coaching.

B. Findings from SCOPE 2019

Coaches in SCOPE 2019 reported similar coaching challenges across settings. The most common challenges, reported by at least three-quarters of coaches, included teacher and provider willingness to participate in coaching, teacher and provider crises or stress, and lack of time among both teachers/providers and coaches (Exhibit VI.1). Other common challenges among coaches of center teachers included teacher turnover and staff-to-coach ratios.³ Challenges with the level of support from the director, although less endorsed than some other challenges, were still reported as sometimes/often/always challenging by 89 percent of coaches in centers not funded by Head Start and by 58 percent of coaches in Head Start-funded centers.

Although less common, around 50 percent or more of coaches endorsed the following as sometimes/often/always challenging: communication challenges with teachers, including lack of resources in other languages (reported by 40 to 67 percent); lack of training or professional development for coaching (reported by 46 to 61 percent); travel challenges (reported by 53 to 57 percent); technology challenges (reported by 54 to 62 percent); and directors or supervisors who are gatekeepers controlling the coaching process (note: this is abbreviated to director or supervisor gatekeeping coaching in table) (reported by 55 to 72 percent).

Almost all the challenges included in the survey were reported as a challenge at least sometimes by more than half of coaches.

³ Coaches associated with FCC providers in the SCOPE 2019 study were not asked about teacher turnover or staff-to-coach ratio.

Exhibit VI.1. ECE coach-reported challenges included teacher or FCC provider resistance, lack of teacher release time, and teacher’s or FCC provider’s classroom management skills

Coach challenges	Coaches in Head Start-funded centers (n = 39–42)	Coaches in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 26–27)	Coaches in FCC homes (n = 28–29)
Teacher or provider resistance	95%	96%	93%
Lack of coach time	95%	85%	81%
Teacher or provider personal crises, stress, or mental health issue	86%	85%	90%
Lack of teacher release time	85%	89%	86%
Communication challenges with teachers or FCC providers (including lack of resources in other languages)	40%	67%	61%
Lack of training or professional development for coaching	50%	46%	61%
Travel challenges	53%	55%	57%
Technology challenges	62%	54%	56%
Teacher turnover	90%	100%	n.a.
Staff-to-coach ratio	79%	88%	n.a.
Level of support from director	58%	89%	n.a.
Director or supervisor gatekeeping coaching	55%	72%	n.a.

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Coach Survey.

Note: Coaches were asked, “To what extent are the following factors challenging to you as a coach?” Response categories included never/hardly ever challenging, sometimes challenging, often challenging, and always challenging. The exhibit presents the percentage of coaches who sometimes, often, or always found an issue challenging. Only a subset of items is presented in the exhibit.

FCC = family child care; n.a. = not applicable, as this response option was only presented to teachers in centers.

In contrast, center teachers and FCC providers in SCOPE 2019 rarely reported challenges related to coaching. About one-quarter to one-third of center teachers and FCC providers noted that classroom management and the availability of classroom coverage during coaching were often/always challenging. Finding space for coaching was often/always a challenge for only 6 percent of teachers in Head Start-funded centers and 8 percent of FCC providers, but 27 percent of teachers in centers not funded by Head Start said this was a challenge. Notably, while many coaches (85 percent to 89 percent) reported that teacher release time for coaching was often/always challenging, teachers and FCC providers did not equivalently endorse “time for coaching” as a challenge (23 percent of the teachers in Head Start-funded centers; 17 percent of the

teachers in centers not funded by Head Start; and 11 percent of the FCC providers). Similarly, most center teachers and FCC providers did not think that the coach availability to meet with them was often/always a challenge.

Exhibit VI.2. ECE teacher-reported and FCC provider-reported challenges included classroom management, availability of coverage, and space for meetings.

Teacher- and FCC provider-reported challenges	Teachers in Head Start-funded centers (n = 80)	Teachers in centers not funded by Head Start (n = 48–49)	FCC providers (n = 37–38)
Often/always challenging			
Classroom management	31%	20%	26%
Availability of classroom coverage during coaching	33%	30%	30%
Finding space for coaching	6%	27%	8%
Having enough time for coaching	23%	17%	11%
Coach availability	16%	21%	13%
Never/rarely challenging			
Communication with coach	94%	94%	92%
Level of trust with coach	94%	94%	92%

Source: SCOPE Spring 2019 Teacher and FCC Provider Survey.

Note: Teachers and FCC providers were asked, “How challenging or not challenging are each of the following for you when you receive coaching?” Response categories included never, rarely, often, and always. As indicated, for some issues the exhibit presents the percentage of teachers/FCC providers who often or always found an issue challenging, and for others presents the percentage of teachers/FCC providers who never or rarely found an issue challenging. Only a subset of items is presented in the exhibit.

FCC = family child care.

Key findings about coaching challenges in SCOPE 2019

- Coaches reported that they experienced an array of challenges in their work. Notably, some challenges related directly to structural aspects of coaching described in this report, such as caseloads and the time demands of coaching, as well as teacher and FCC provider stress and willingness to participate in coaching.
- Teachers and FCC providers, on the other hand, reported challenges in coaching less often. About one-third of teachers and providers said that the availability of classroom coverage during coaching interactions was often or always challenging. About one-quarter of teachers and providers said that classroom management was often or always challenging.
- Specific to their coaching interactions, teachers and providers reported that communication and trust with their coach was rarely or never challenging.

VII. Needs for Future Learning

This report described structural and process features of coaching across center-based classrooms and FCC homes, as well as the context in which coaching takes place. Understanding the range and variations in ECE coaching structure and process may be informative to programs currently developing or refining their coaching approaches.

Findings from SCOPE 2019 also offers important areas for future learning. In this section, we describe considerations for measuring aspects of coaching structure and process, and possible next steps in research. We conclude with the high-level lessons from SCOPE on moving toward a study of the impact of coaching features on classroom practice.

Further examination of coaching differences in centers and FCC homes

The SCOPE 2019 survey findings indicate a few key differences between center-based settings and FCC homes. It is important to remember that these differences are descriptive and based on a convenience sample; we did not conduct significance tests. Future research should attend to the type of setting in which coaching takes place. Learning more about differences in coaching in different ECE settings can help the field better support and improve coaching practices.

- Fewer FCC coaches reported having a bachelor's degree than coaches working with centers.
- Coaching meetings with FCC providers tended to be longer than meetings with teachers in centers. Regardless of setting, center teachers and FCC providers communicated with coaches an average of two times between coaching meetings, most often via email.
- Two-thirds of coaches working with FCC providers reported using relationship-based coaching. About 40 percent report using an entirely individualized approach and about the same number reported using a locally designed coaching approach (as compared to one-third of coaches in non-Head Start centers and 7 percent of coaches in Head Start).
- Coach-FCC provider pairs in SCOPE 2019 had longer tenures working together than coach-center teacher pairs. Thirty-nine percent of FCC providers had worked with their coach for more than 2 years.

A. Next steps for measurement and descriptive research

Meetings and communication. In the SCOPE 2019 surveys almost all coaches reported that they held regular meetings and communicated regularly between those meetings, though the length of the meetings and the methods of communication varied.

- **Measurement implications:** Defining meetings and communication can be challenging. Future measurement efforts should clearly define how these terms are used by coaches and collect information about what happens during different types of interactions.
- **Next research steps:** Understanding more about the differences in meeting dosage between FCC and centers could be of value. FCC coaches meet longer but less frequently with providers: what are the drivers of these differences? Exploring in more detail what coaches are doing during their interactions with center teachers and FCC providers, as well as what differs in remote versus in-person interactions, could also provide more information about coaching dosage. In order to achieve results, what percentage of a coaching meeting needs to be focused on improving practice versus logistical or other aspects? Examining the reliability and validity of measurement of all aspects of coaching dosage could lay the foundation for a study that examines how dosage influences teacher, provider, classroom, or child outcomes.

Reminders about interpreting SCOPE findings

SCOPE 2019 participants were purposively selected, and the information learned from these surveys cannot be generalized to a specific ECE coaching approach or group of centers and FCC providers.

Information was gathered in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic likely impacted coaching processes, possibly in ways that will continue even after the pandemic ends. In 2021, SCOPE conducted surveys and interviews with some of the same coaches, center directors, and FCC providers to learn more about coaching in the context of COVID-19 ([see ACF 2022 About the Study](#)). Taken together, these two data collection efforts help to inform the field about what has changed in coaching and professional development and what might be important to understand for the future of coaching.

Approaches, resources, and strategies that coaches use. We asked coaches about both structural and process features of coaching in their work with a typical teacher or FCC provider. Overall, coaches reported regularly using an array of coaching approaches, and many structural and process features and resources.

- **Measurement implications:** One benefit of SCOPE is that it provides a picture of coaching on average, across different setting types and approaches to coaching. However, the trade-off is that these findings cannot tell us what coaches select to do when they are coaching individuals with different professional development needs. Future measurement efforts could focus on unpacking how and when features are used—for example, how coaches vary in their approaches and individualize their approach to meet particular teacher and provider needs. Do coaches mean the same thing when referencing the different strategies and approaches (e.g., how does “modeling” vary)? One approach to measuring this may be through the coaching logs that are reportedly used frequently by SCOPE 2019 coaches. Alternatively, to understand the extent to which coaches are using multiple coaching features and the different ways they may be using them, observations of coaching interactions could be a valuable addition to coaching log review or surveys about coaching.

- **Next research steps:** Future descriptive studies could be aimed at how coaching strategies are combined across the course of coaching (within a meeting and across a coach–provider working relationship and across different provider needs). For example, at what stages of the coaching process do coaches select from among possible features and strategies? What drives variation in how these approaches are used across settings, center teachers, and FCC providers? Learning more about how coaches balance the needs of center teachers and FCC providers and the multiple approaches, resources, and strategies in their toolbox could be helpful in thinking about the types of professional development or technical assistance that coaches need. To the extent that coaches use all these process features, future research should consider whether coaches can provide all these activities with the same level of quality and whether and how their training and professional development might align with the strategies they engage in.

Coach–teacher and coach–provider relationship building. Coaches, center teachers, and FCC providers described collaborative relationships. Aspects of coaching that might contribute to the nature and strength of those relationships include things like time spent working together and setting goals together. FCC providers tended to have had a longer relationship with their coach than center teachers. Activities that coaches engaged in that were supportive but not directly focused on improving classroom practice included things like helping teachers and providers prepare lessons, working on stress reduction, and providing emotional support.

- **Measurement implications:** It may be possible to examine existing measures of collaborative relationships with coaches to see whether they apply to the coach–teacher or coach–provider relationship. Teacher–student or counselor–client relationships have aspects collaboration, support, and development that may overlap. Further, gathering information from coaches and teachers or providers (including their goals, attitudes, and experiences) may help identify how coaches are matching the preferences of the teachers and providers they work with. This could be done through innovative approaches, such as having the coach and teacher, or coach and provider, view standardized videos of coaching interactions or provide their interpretation of a video of their own coaching session.
- **Next research steps:** Future research could use qualitative studies to understand when and why coaches engage in activities such as helping in the classroom or working with teachers and providers on stress reduction. Do coaches choose to engage in these activities when they feel they are needed? Or do they feel these activities are expected parts of their coaching role? Do these activities, combined with activities designed to support instructional practice, affect coaching outcomes? It is possible that working on stress reduction and providing emotional support could lead to a closer coach–teacher or coach–provider relationship, which may in turn improve uptake of the guidance provided by coaches.

Coaching challenges. Coaches noted a number of challenges to coaching such as teachers’ and providers’ stress and willingness to engage in coaching.

- **Measurement implications:** SCOPE aimed to assess the broad array of challenges that coaches face across their coaching work. As often true with a long list of challenges, it is difficult to gather information about both the perceived importance of the challenge and its frequency. It is difficult in survey data to understand what a challenge means to a coach or to a teacher or provider. More qualitative work to build this understanding would help identify how challenges might undermine coaching effectiveness. Further, to effectively support coaches (and settings) in addressing those challenges, a next step in measurement is to connect the different types of challenges to specific aspects of coaching work—for example, which challenges are barriers to activities like building relationships, planning for interactions with teachers and providers, or improving practice.

- **Next research steps:** Future research that explores details of challenges, and links to the ECE context and coaching effectiveness, could provide helpful information to reduce challenges and improve coaching. A key question is: what challenges are within coaches’ control, or the control of center directors or teachers and providers? A study design that employed a diary approach in which coaches took note of what challenges they had on particular days and how those challenges influenced their coaching could help identify what challenges arise in what situations and would help identify how challenges are influencing coaching interactions.

B. Lessons from SCOPE 2019 for understanding the impacts of coaching features

Overall, information shared by coaches, center directors, center teachers, and FCC providers in SCOPE 2019 highlighted high levels of variation in characteristics of coaching participants (e.g., structural features that shape coaching such as dosage), and resources coaches draw on in coaching. Conversely, coach reports about the strategies and activities they used in coaching were generally consistent: they reported regularly using an array of strategies and activities. This pattern—high levels of variation in the context and factors that structure coaching and consistent reports of strategies and activities—highlights several important questions about when and how coaching may impact teacher and FCC provider practice.

Establishing evidence for the impact of specific coaching features would require an experimental study that intentionally varies some features and hold others constant across teachers and providers. This would enable the field to learn about the relative effectiveness of features, or bundles of features. Alternatively, an experimental study could focus on individualization and test whether giving coaches a menu of coaching options to tailor to particular teachers or providers was more effective than a less flexible coaching model or group of features.

Improving measurement, definitions, and understanding of coaching structure, process, and context could lay the groundwork for selecting features to include in a future experimental study. Potentially important contributors to coaching impact would be coaches’ individualization of their approach, coach–provider interactions and strategies, and structural features such as dosage and challenges.

SCOPE 2019 aimed to learn from those engaged in coaching in a variety of contexts to inform the next steps in developing the evidence base for coaching. The ECE field has much to learn about these real-world coaching practices to improve teacher and FCC provider practice and, ultimately, children’s outcomes.

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Reminders about interpreting SCOPE findings

- SCOPE participants were purposively selected, and the information learned from these surveys cannot be generalized to a specific ECE coaching approach or group of centers and FCC providers.
- The SCOPE 2021 sample is small; the brief therefore describes patterns, highlighting areas important for further exploration.
- COVID-19 changed the practice of coaching in ways we do not yet fully understand, notably increasing the use of remote strategies. The surveys and qualitative interviews used in SCOPE 2021 were designed while those changes were happening. Therefore, questions likely did not fully capture coaches’ experiences in this changed coaching landscape, and coaches might have interpreted the questions about remote and in-person coaching in different ways.

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Visit the project page:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/study-coaching-practices-early-care-and-education-settings-2016-2021>

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SCOPE data

The SCOPE surveys and interview protocols as well as the study data are archived with the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), located here:

<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/pages/>

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