

**For Immediate Release Contact:** Karen Smith or Melinda Belcher

**March 8, 2012**

918-834-2273

Complete report available for download at [www.naccrra.org/node/2215](http://www.naccrra.org/node/2215)

## **Report: Oklahoma Earns Top Ranking**

**NACCRRRA's Updated Report Ranking States Based on Current Small Family Child Care Home Standards and Oversight Reveals Most States Fail to Protect Children. Oklahoma Earned the Highest Score at 80 Percent. Sixteen States Received a Score of Zero. Only Four States Received 70 Percent or Higher.**

**Arlington, VA** – The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) released its latest report today, ranking states on their current small family child care home standards and oversight policies. The report, entitled *Leaving Children to Chance: NACCRRRA's Ranking of State Standards and Oversight of Small Family Child Care Homes: 2012 Update* reveals that most states fail to protect the health, safety and well-being of children being cared for in small family child care homes. The report ranks every state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense (DoD) child care system, on 16 basic standards focused on ensuring the health, safety and well-being of children while in family child care homes serving six or fewer children. States were ranked based on a point system with states earning a maximum of 150 points.

According to the report, Oklahoma scored the highest in the nation at 80 percent. Oklahoma earned 120 points, moving up from number two in the previous report issued in 2010. Oklahoma's top ranking for 2012 was earned in part because the state currently requires all family child care homes caring for one or more unrelated children to be licensed. Since the last report, Oklahoma has also strengthened its policies requiring family child care providers to undergo criminal background checks. In most classrooms a score of 80 percent would earn a letter grade of B, so there remains room for improvement.

"Children and families deserve safe child care," said Karen Smith, Director of the Child Care Resource Center of Tulsa, a Program of Community Service Council. "We are proud of Oklahoma leaders who make sure that children are in a safe setting that promotes their healthy development." But Smith said now is not the time to relax. "We need to build on our strengths and address any weaknesses. The legislature is considering a bill to exempt certain child care programs from licensing. If this bill passes our ranking will certainly go down. We need to be proud to be number one in something as important as caring for our children and not allow us to go backwards." Said Smith.

This is NACCRRRA's sixth report reviewing state child care standards and oversight since 2007 and an update of NACCRRRA's 2010 review of state small family child care home standards. Standards reviewed include: basic health and safety requirements; inspections prior to licensing; number of annual inspections and policies with regard to complaint-related inspections; types of background checks for child care providers and people in the household of licensed providers who are required to have a background check; provider education; initial training and annual training requirements; toys and

materials required; learning activities required; group size limitations; and parent-provider communication requirements.

According to the report, the average state score (among states scoring points) was 69 (46 percent) of a possible score of 150 points. Sixteen states received a score of zero. About half the states do not conduct inspections at least annually. Only nine states (*Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington and Virginia*) require a comprehensive background check for child care providers (a fingerprint check against state and federal records, a check of the child abuse registry and a check of the sex offender registry). Only 15 states meet each of the 10 basic health and safety requirements needed to keep children safe and healthy in child care.

According to the report, the top 10 states scoring the most points included: Oklahoma (120), Washington (119), Kansas (111), Delaware (109), Department of Defense (107), Maryland (102), Alabama (97), the District of Columbia (96), Colorado (95) and Massachusetts (86).

Eight states scored zero because they issue a license without conducting an inspection prior to granting a license (*Iowa, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia*). Eight states scored zero because they allow more than six children in the home before requiring a license or do not license family child care homes (*Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and Virginia*).

To download a copy of the full report, including individual state score sheets, visit [www.naccrra.org/node/2215](http://www.naccrra.org/node/2215).

Child Care Resource Center is a program of Community Service Council, a Tulsa Area United Way Partner agency that helps parents find and choose child care and works to improve the quality of child care for Oklahoma families. We offer free child care referrals to families, comprehensive training and technical assistance to child care providers and advocate for child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families. To learn more about CCRC, visit us at [www.ccrctulsa.org](http://www.ccrctulsa.org).