

With new day-care inspection system, high caseloads and shorter visits

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Over the past year, the state has launched a new day-care inspection system that requires more frequent visits to each facility, giving operators no notice at least once a year, the better to assess the true quality of each center.

But it has come at a cost: The inspectors, who were already monitoring two to four times the caseloads specialists recommend, now spend far less time at most sites.

State regulators and some providers say the system, which began in late 2017, will raise safety standards. But federal government officials acknowledge there is little research on how this revolution in oversight could affect the health and safety of the roughly 200,000 children in day care in Massachusetts, and millions more in other states that have adopted the abbreviated inspections.

“It scares me,” said Richard Fiene, a retired Pennsylvania State University professor who studies early education.