

"No child's died yet, so they stay open."

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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In case you missed it last week, when the breaking-news kind of media kept dominating our attention: [Jonathan Cohn's cover story on home-based child care](#) is pretty startling. Here's an excerpt:

Like most states, Texas inspects child care centers at least once a year, but only has the manpower to visit home day cares every two. Even egregious violations don't always lead to shutdowns. Sometimes, that's because parents, lacking alternatives, fight to keep notorious places open. An inspector named Carol McGinnis told me she'd recently visited a center in "total disarray," with "feces smeared on the walls." Nevertheless, if the agency closed it, McGinnis expected some parents would resist, because it was one of the few places offering care on weekends.

On other occasions, the process of closing a day care can be torturous. Lahmeyer recalled one place that racked up repeated violations over two years before a judge would shut it down. "I can tell you there's a fair number [of cases] that we lost because the judge decided, *No child's died yet, so they stay open,*" Lahmeyer says.

All too often, it takes an incident to force a closure.

[Cohn's conversation with Dylan Matthews](#) is also worth a read:

DM: It's interesting that you note the military has among the best programs in this area [child care, since VA health care is among the best in the country, as Philip Longman has pointed out. I don't know if this calls for speculation, but is there something about the institutional structure of the military that lets it run social programs more effectively?

JC: I've wondered about that. Institutional structure might explain it. My other theory is that the military can get away with big government because, well, it's the military - and that inoculates it from attacks on the right. Military personnel

value these services, which means - among other things - that you have military leaders testifying on Capitol Hill about their virtues. If you're a member of Congress, even a very conservative one, do you seriously want to call that general sitting in front of you a "socialist"? Probably not.