



Pennsylvania Child Care Association

2300 Vartan Way, Suite 103 – Harrisburg, PA 17110 – (717) 657-9000 – www.pacca.org

WHY CARE ABOUT CHILD CARE?

The Importance of Quality Child Care

Quality child care is not just a concern for parents. It affects everyone: our businesses, our communities, and our country's future. How?

- **You work with, or know someone who depends on child care.** According to the 2000 Census, 65 percent of mothers with children under six, and 78 percent of mothers with children ages six to 13 are in the labor force.¹ If your coworker, employee, friend, relative or business associate does not have reliable child care, he or she will likely miss work, meetings, turn to you for help, or leave the workforce entirely.
- **A child's mind develops most in the first five years of life.** Research has shown that the first five years of life are crucial in a child's emotional and intellectual development. "Daily interaction plays an important role in a child's emotional and mental development. While the brain is forming and 'learning' how to develop, consistent positive interaction is needed to ensure proper brain activity. Poor day care hinders a child's brain activity and impedes development by discouraging interaction and limiting environmental stimulation."²
- **Children that receive quality child care do better in school.** Several studies have shown that the benefits of quality child care follow an individual throughout their school careers. For example, The Abecedarian Project was a carefully controlled study in which 57 infants from low-income families were randomly assigned to receive early intervention in a high quality child care setting and 54 were in a non-treated control group. Results include:
 - Children who participated in the early intervention program had higher cognitive test scores from the toddler years to age 21.
 - Academic achievement in both reading and math was higher from the primary grades through young adulthood.
 - Intervention children completed more years of education and were more likely to attend a four-year college.
- **Quality child care saves communities money in the long term.** According to the Chicago Longitudinal Study of a Child-Parent Center in Chicago, every \$1 spent on high quality early education programs saves society \$7 in future costs in special education, delinquency, crime control, welfare, lost taxes and other areas.³

Where We Are Now

- **Many children are in some form of daily care.** In 2000, it is estimated that 859,550 of Pennsylvania's children, ages birth to 8, were in some form of daily care, with 299,659 children in regulated child care.⁴
- **Many families need subsidies to afford care.** Currently, about 1,000 children are on the waiting list for subsidies in Pennsylvania. Families that do not enter the child care system through the welfare system or do not have a child with special needs are most likely to be put on waiting lists. In addition, many eligible families are not aware of the financial assistance available and do not apply for subsidies.⁵
- **Turnover of child care staff is very high, while compensation is low.** A major obstacle that many child care programs face in providing quality child care is high turnover of staff due to inadequate compensation. Annual turnover ranges from 31 percent for teachers to 51 percent for aides.⁵ Because of high turnover, children may have as many as three new teachers or aides in a year, which disrupts their ability to learn and makes it difficult for them to develop bonds with those that care for them.
- **Low compensation impedes child care staff's ability to receive additional training.** It is well documented that better educated child-care staff translates into higher quality care for children. Wages for child-care staff are typically at the level of grocery store clerks and make it nearly impossible for them to afford higher education.

Just the facts...

- 64% of Pennsylvania's children under the age of 6 years are in some form of non-parental care
2002 Temple University Family Survey
- Average annual teacher salary in child care - \$16,556 (1999)
Legislative Budget & Finance Committee Report (June 1999)
- Average annual assistant teacher salary in child care - \$12,831 (1999)
Legislative Budget & Finance Committee Report (June 1999)
- Average annual aide salary in child care - \$11,427
Legislative Budget & Finance Committee Report (June 1999)
- Nearly 300,000 children in Pennsylvania spend part or all of their day in regulated child care facilities
PA Department of Welfare

What We Can Do To Improve Child Care in Pennsylvania

- **Increase compensation for child care staff.** A child care worker does his/her job because of a love for children. Many child care staff make less than a grocery store clerk and receive no insurance. In order to reduce turnover and provide better quality care for our children, compensation of child care staff needs to reach a level that reflects their responsibility.
- **Make training and education available to child care staff.** Studies have shown a direct correlation between the level of education and training of child care teachers and the quality of child care. In order to increase the quality of child care in Pennsylvania, staff needs to be able to receive training in early childhood education.
- **Develop quality standards by which child care providers can be evaluated.** Because of the diversity of child care programs, the quality can vary greatly from program to program. A common set of standards can help parents evaluate programs and give programs concrete ways to increase their quality.
- **Educate ourselves and our communities.** Because of the critical development period a child experiences during the years she will be in child care, child care needs to be more than babysitting. Individuals, businesses, and community leaders should begin to raise the bar for child care to be early childhood education and be willing to devote the resources necessary to make this goal a reality.

PACCA's Efforts: PACCA is a partner in the Q.U.E.S.T. (Quality Education through Salaries and Training) initiative to improve outcomes for children in Pennsylvania through recruitment and retention of qualified early educators.

PACCA's Efforts: PACCA is the licensed administrator of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project in Pennsylvania. This program is a partnership between child care staff, providers, the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship, and colleges across the state to provide funding and assistance to child care staff to obtain their CDA credential or Associate's degree. Funds come from public and private donors.

PACCA's Efforts: PACCA is the watchdog organization for the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare's (DPW) Keystone STARS program. STARS is tiered quality performance standards built on current DPW licensing regulations.

PACCA's Efforts: Through the quarterly newsletter, biweekly E-News and Action Alerts, PACCA keeps its members up-to-date on legislative, regulatory and other issues affecting child care in Pennsylvania.

For more information on the state of child care in Pennsylvania and how to promote quality child care, contact PACCA at info@pacca.org or (717) 657-9000.

Endnotes

1 A. Bachu and M. O'Connell (September, 2000) Fertility of American Women (Current Population Reports P20-526), Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

2 Burchinal, Lee & Ramey, 1989; Cost, Quality & Child Outcome team, et.al., 1995

3 "Experts Say Early Education Pays Off," (August 2003) National Institute for Early Education Research, <http://nieer.org/news/print.php?newsID=640>

4 Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, "From Building Blocks to Books: Learning from Birth through 8 in Pennsylvania," , June 2002.

5 U.S. Department of Public Welfare statistics.

6 Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, "Salary Levels and Their Impact on Quality of Care for Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Day Care Programs," June 1999.