Building For the Future:
Our Children, Our Community



A Countywide Plan for Child Care and Development Services

Sonoma County 2010 – 2015

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Planning Process

Child Care Plan Development 2003 - 2010

2003
- First Child Care Plan planning session

2004
- Community meetings
- Focus groups

2005
- Public Hearing
- Plan to Board of Supervisors, Office of Ed & CDE-CDD
- Printed and distributed
- CCPC Retreat

2006
- Community meeting: implementation & data collection
- First PowerPoint & database
- Work groups on goals

2007
- Present to local businesses
- "Is it Good for the Children?" community event
- Community focus groups

2008
- Second printing
- Business Insert
- Online progress survey

2009
- Celebration of 2005-2010 with guest Dion Aroner
- Final Report of Accomplishments
- Online survey

2010
- Planning for the 2010-2015 Plan begins



. . . to unite the community in a common vision for the future . . . resulting in a countywide plan that truly mirrors the needs and values of families in Sonoma County. . .

Developing the Child Care Plan

The Purpose: A community process that would result in a countywide plan for child care and development services that represents the needs and values of families in Sonoma County.

The Hope: A united community with a common vision; active participation by all constituents; community ownership of the plan's goals and strategies

2005 - 2010 Child Care Plan Process

June 2003	Child Care Planning Council (CCPC) held its first planning session to develop a comprehensive child care plan for the county.
January 2004	The first community meeting was attended by 150 participants, led by professional facilitators. A cross-section of diverse perspectives resulted in a rich visioning experience and the identification of broad goal areas for Sonoma County.
February 2004	Focus groups were held on Quality of Programs, Accessibility, Affordability, System Integration and Community Ownership. Participants included public policymakers, educators, parents, providers, health & mental health workers, social service workers, those working with children with special needs, bilingual/monolingual providers, and business leaders.
March 2004	The second community meeting was held to review draft goals. Groups based on areas of expertise worked on specific strategies and implementation ideas. Needs assessment data was added to produce the first Comprehensive Child Care Plan.
January 2005	A Public Hearing was held; the final report was submitted to Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, Sonoma County Office of Education and the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.
May 2005	The first printing of *"For the Children: A Comprehensive Plan for Child Care and Learning Programs, Sonoma County, 2005-2010"*
2005-2010	CCPC developed a database of community partners; including activities related to the plan. Outreach materials including an Executive Summary, Business Summary, and PowerPoint presentation for businesses were developed to promote the use of the Plan. Annual tracking of progress included convening small groups to work on strategies and annual community meetings for partners titled "Building for the Future, Our Children, Our Community".

2010 - 2015 Child Care Plan Process

January-March 2010	From January through March, CCPC conducted informal surveys of community members on emerging trends affecting children, families and child care. Trends identified were: Effects of Economic Downturn; Increase in Number of Children with Special Needs; Changing Societal & Environmental Conditions; State & Federal Recognition and Support of Child Care and Development.
April 2010	A Final Report and a media presentation on Community Accomplishments for 2005-2010 were shared at a forum attended by over 100 community members. This meeting brought closure to the 2005-2010 plan and launched the visioning process for 2010-2015 plan. Participants focused on strategies related to the emerging trends and child care plan goals.
May 2010	CCPC held an all-day retreat that further developed the feedback on trends, goals and strategies.
July-August 2010	Parents and providers were surveyed, and community input gathered to expand strategies and review the draft of the 2010-2015 plan.

CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL BACKGROUND

Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County

The Mission *of the Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County is to convene and inspire the community through collaboration, leadership and advocacy to promote and plan for quality child care and development for the benefit of all children (birth to 18), their families and Sonoma County.*

The Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County (CCPC) was established in 1991 in accordance with state law AB 2141 to provide a forum for the identification of local priorities for child care; and to develop policies to meet the needs identified within these priorities. The Council received increased funding and expanded mandates in 1998 during the implementation of CalWORKS and AB 1542. Current mandates include:

- Conducting a local Child Care Needs Assessment at least once every five years.
- Submitting a comprehensive countywide child care plan to the California Department of Education and the County Board of Supervisors.
- Establishing and reviewing local priorities for child care funding, according to State policy and guidance.
- Collaborating with all interested parties to foster partnerships designed to meet local child care needs.
- Linking part-day programs such as Head Start and State Preschool programs with full-day child care programs.
- Coordinating efforts to transfer funds as needed between subsidized programs according to California Department of Education guidelines.

CCPC membership and reports are authorized by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools, and the Council is governed by State mandates, Council bylaws and the Brown Act. Council members represent a cross section of the community including parents, child care providers, agencies serving children and families, public officials and community members. CCPC meetings are held once per month and are open to the public. Standing committees include an Executive Committee, Membership Committee and Finance Committee; ad hoc committees are formed based on the Council's annual goals and objectives. CCPC endeavors to convene all those concerned with child care issues in community forums and meetings in order to improve and sustain valuable, quality programs and opportunities for families.

CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL BACKGROUND

Vision, Values & Priorities of the Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County

The Vision of the Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County (CCPC) is that all Sonoma County children (birth to 18 years of age) in child care and development programs, (including family child care homes, school based child care and center based care), will be cared for in programs that are safe and healthy, nurturing, stimulating, interactive, culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of all children.

CCPC Values

- ✧ CCPC supports nationally and locally defined standards of quality in the care of children, including best practices in child development and education environments. The Council also recognizes the challenges to accessible, affordable care and education, and the need for a variety of settings to respond to unique barriers and family demographics.
- ✧ The concepts of diversity and cultural responsiveness are important elements in the composition of CCPC membership, goals, meeting agendas, outreach efforts, community events and in child care and development settings.
- ✧ CCPC serves to represent a broad constituency – all those concerned with the care of children and youth, birth to 18 years of age. We represent many diverse viewpoints in identifying the best interests of children and their families, and advocate at the state and local level for programs, best practices and funding.

CCPC Strategic Priorities for 2009-2012

Leadership CCPC provides leadership, acts as an important stakeholder and develops resources in the areas of:

- Early Learning (birth to 5) and Child Care and Development (birth to 18)
- Best Practices in Child Care and Development workforce development and quality improvement activities
- Best interests and needs of children (birth to 18)

Advocacy CCPC Increases community and local/state government awareness and mobilizes action regarding:

- Issues in Child Care and Development
- Opportunities/threats to field of Child Care and Development
- Value/importance of Child Care and Development to children's and families' well-being
- Connection of the well-being of children and youth with the viability of the community and local economy.

Diversity CCPC develops and supports responsiveness and inclusion (of diverse cultures, perspectives, ages, etc.) in the Council and throughout the Child Care and Development field in Sonoma County.

Diversity in Child Care

The Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County has developed a diversity statement that is used as a reference in setting goals and strategies for Council work as well as activities related to this Child Care Plan.

Understanding Cultural Diversity

We understand and believe that culture includes race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, immigration status, gender identity, age, socio-economic status, religion, etc. We want to emphasize that quality early care and education and cultural responsiveness are directly connected.

Culturally Responsive Early Care and Education (ECE)

We believe that a strong foundation in child development, combined with a disposition toward flexible thinking, acceptance and openness, and respect for meeting a child's individual needs, prepares early childhood professionals to create culturally responsive programs.

We believe that culturally responsive practices require more than the presence of children from different backgrounds; practices must focus on the full and active participation of all children and their families in community activities, services, and programs. Although a family's preferences may at times seem to conflict with the needs of the group or best practices within ECE, we believe that sincere dialogue can help uncover areas of agreement and ways in which caregivers and families can work together to support the child and family.

Intentional focus on the following professional development concepts and program policies will prepare ECE professionals to successfully meet these goals.









Quality early care and education and cultural responsiveness are directly connected.

Photos courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

DIVERSITY IN CHILD CARE

Professional Development

To prepare ECE professionals to both create and sustain culturally responsive settings, coursework and training opportunities must include:

- Information, activities and time to practice building a disposition toward lifelong learning and self-reflection that increases awareness of one's own biases, privileges and power;
- Information on children's development of (1) identity, (2) awareness of differences, and (3) awareness of and participation in prejudice and bias (racial, ethnic, gender, ability, etc.);
- Curriculum and activities that support children's identity development within their own cultural community and within the broader community of Sonoma County and California;
- Information about anti-bias education with opportunities for mentor- and peer-support through onsite practical experience;
- Information on and practice with handling difficult conversations about bias and prejudice with children, families and co-workers;
- Opportunities to learn about a community and its strengths and forming community partnerships;
- Opportunities to learn about specific cultural groups (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning [LGBTQ], dual language, mixed race families) and to explore teaching practices that support children who live within these groups;
- Information on how culturally responsive care is provided in a mono-cultural community;
- Opportunities to collaborate and network with other professionals to support the commitment to culturally responsive care.

Program Policies

To institutionalize the practices needed to provide culturally responsive ECE, programs must incorporate the following into their existing processes and policies: 1.) Program policies that specifically reference a commitment to family-educator partnerships; 2.) Opportunities for ongoing dialogue with families about their child care preferences and cultural practices; 3.) Multicultural materials and curriculum that are authentic reflections of the staff*, children and families within the program and the broader community of Sonoma County and California; 4.) Expectations that representatives from staff*, families, and program administrators*/board members participate in regularly scheduled diversity training as well as the presence of books, videos, etc. to support ongoing development related to providing culturally responsive care; 5.)Regularly scheduled family/educator meetings to discuss classroom practices, parent/caregiver questions and diversity topics; and 6.) Ongoing staff and program evaluation to ensure that practices are in line with the goal of providing culturally responsive ECE.

***Note:** The terms "staff" and "program administrators" include family child care.

QUALITY IN CHILD CARE

High Quality Care Essential

Child care that meets working parents' needs must also meet the criteria for high quality child care and learning programs. Quality child care and learning programs are vital for optimal growth and development. Studies have shown that a child's experiences in his or her early years influence future mental development, social and emotional adaptation and well-being, school readiness, and academic performance [1].

All children need quality experiences in the early years, a period characterized by rapid brain development, in order to foster social, emotional, and cognitive development. Children need to be cared for in environments that allow them to grow and thrive. Quality programs for children include developmentally appropriate activities that are also responsive to the diverse cultural needs of each child. Providers of quality programs are engaged with children and families, and relate to children with caring and attention. Quality programs incorporate play-based learning, age appropriate materials and approaches, and opportunities for children to be exposed to reading and creative expression. When children receive these positive experiences, their brains have the best chances to develop optimally.

Quality child care is a good investment for older children as well. Many school-age children have no after-school supervision and spend large amounts of time alone. Studies have shown that after-school hours are when most violent activity takes place thus putting unsupervised children at risk for engaging in undesirable behaviors. (p.36)[2] As with younger children, after-school programs for school-age children must be of high quality to reap the biggest benefits for both children and society.



Quality programs incorporate play-based learning, age appropriate materials and approaches, and opportunities for children to be exposed to reading and creative expression.



QUALITY IN CHILD CARE

Hallmarks of Quality Care[3]

High quality child care and learning programs have a number of characteristics in common:

- ✧ The learning materials and teaching styles are appropriate for the age, developmental level, and cultural backgrounds of the children;
- ✧ The staff have specialized preparation and receive adequate compensation and support;
- ✧ The program follows healthy practices and maintains a safe environment;
- ✧ Staff turnover is low;
- ✧ The program provides small group sizes and has a small number of children per teacher;
- ✧ The program emphasizes parent involvement and strives to build close ties with families; and
- ✧ All children's needs are met by linking families with needed comprehensive services.

Barriers to Quality Care

Finding high-quality child care can be difficult for parents. Many parents have not been educated on the hallmarks of child care quality and therefore are not familiar with what to look for in a program. The cost of high-quality child care is prohibitive for many families causing them to select a less costly alternative which may be of poorer quality.

The biggest factors affecting the provision of high-quality child care are recruitment and retention of qualified child care teachers and providers. Recruiting and retaining child care professionals is difficult given the compensation structure which is too low to attract a highly trained workforce. However, a major hallmark of high quality child care is the level of professional development of the workforce. When individuals achieve levels of training indicative of a high quality program, they are attracted to the wages and security of the K-12 education field and often leave the child care field. Higher wages require funding sources well beyond parent fees, since a majority of families using child care and development services are already spending 10 to 30 percent of their income on child care.

Trends Impacting Children, Families & the Child Care Field

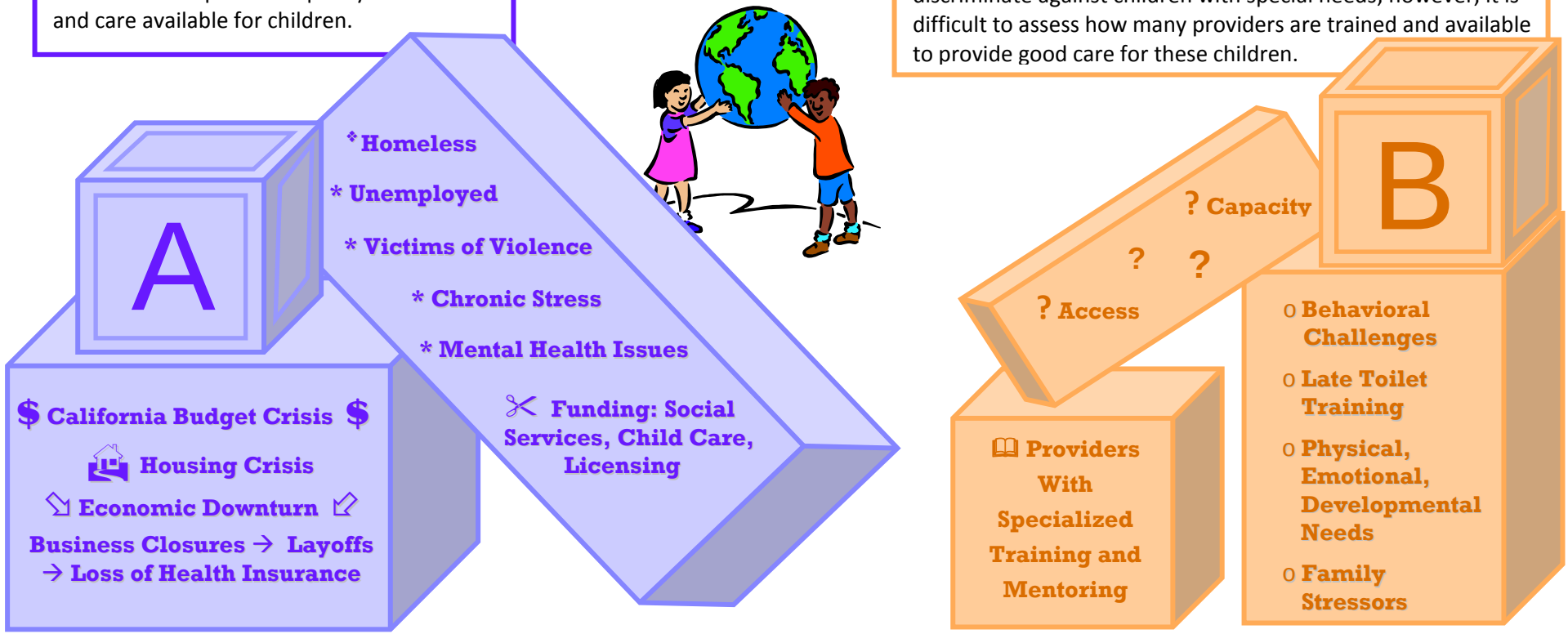
From January to March 2010, CCPC conducted informal interviews with parents, child care providers, human service professionals, educators and community members. The two questions asked of participants were: **"What concerns do you have for the future for your children and grandchildren?"** and **"Can you think of any trends in our local community or State that will affect the well-being of children and those who care for them?"** These four trends emerged:

Trend A
Economic Downturn

The economic downturn in California has impacted every facet of life, including the care of our children. Many parents have had to shift their focus toward basic survival needs which impacts the quality of attention and care available for children.

Trend B
Children with Special Needs

Programs are reporting that children and families are presenting with special needs more frequently now than previously experienced. In this context, "special needs" includes any physical, emotional, behavioral or developmental need that requires more than the usual attention, assessment and/or intervention by teachers and caregivers. It is illegal to discriminate against children with special needs; however, it is difficult to assess how many providers are trained and available to provide good care for these children.



Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies throughout this plan indicate a strategy that is related to one of these recent trends.

Trends Impacting Children, Families & the Child Care Field

C

Environmental Concerns

- Natural Resources
- Climate Change
- Food Production
- Pollutants

Exposure

- Violence
- Disaster
- War

Fast-Paced American Lifestyle

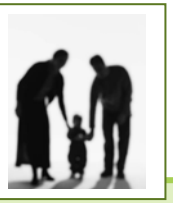
- Nutrition, Exercise
- Health
- Social Interactions
- Child's Needs and Development

Increase in Health Risks

- Childhood Obesity
- Childhood Diabetes
- Drug & Alcohol Use

Trend C
Societal & Environmental Conditions

There is a growing dialogue among parents, providers and community members about the societal & environmental issues listed above. Questions about the impact of these issues include:
1. Are these societal and environmental factors impacting normal child development in a negative way (e.g., language development, brain development, social interactions, behavioral health, etc.)?
2. How can we assure clean air, water, food, natural and manmade environments for children in child care and development programs?
3. How can we best access expertise on these topics and provide parenting guidance based on that knowledge?

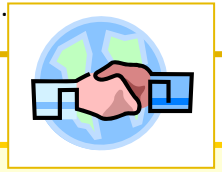


Technology

- Impact on Children & Family Life
- Affect on Child's Brain and Development

Trend D
Recognition of the Importance of Child Care and Development

There has been a favorable shift in attention toward children and their development with the growing scientific knowledge about brain development, the impact of environments and relationships on early childhood development, and the economic value to society of investing in children.



D

New Collaborations Across Fields, Including Child Care and Development

New Recognition by State and Federal leaders who value childhood education and are willing to invest for the benefit of children and families

New opportunities for the child care and development field to work with government policy-makers and business leaders to improve the quality of care for children

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies throughout this plan indicate a strategy that is related to one of these recent trends.

COMPREHENSIVE COUNTYWIDE CHILD CARE PLAN

Purpose and Use of the Plan

This comprehensive Countywide Child Care Plan explores current trends affecting children, families and service providers; identifies five goals with corresponding indicators; recommends strategies; and identifies potential partners.
The purpose and use of this plan include:

- Increasing awareness of the importance of quality child care and learning experiences for all children, families and communities;
- Providing all stakeholders with a common frame of reference for future action;
- Expanding partnerships to implement strategies;
- Providing a platform that will lead to coordinated planning, integrated action and advocacy for specific policy changes;
- Mobilizing public and private resources to address identified needs; and
- Recommending priority areas for development of programs and funding.

The Role of the Child Care Planning Council and Next Steps

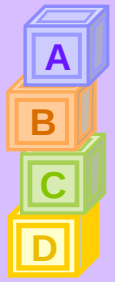
The community has created this instrument that places the welfare of Sonoma County's children at the forefront of all planning and development activities. The CCPC is committed to helping the community reach its goals by convening groups and forums related to the goal areas, and continuing to seek active partners for the implementation of specific strategies. This plan is intended to be a "living document" that inspires community engagement and helps to unite various constituent groups towards our common vision. The CCPC hopes to mobilize public and private resources to address identified needs, and enhance and strengthen collaboration among the children's advocacy groups and service agencies. Through a unified implementation of this plan, Sonoma County can become an environment that:

- Supports families and assures that children have access to opportunities for healthy development
- Values child care professionals and educators
- Ensures that all children have access to high quality, affordable care
- Respects the diversity of cultures and needs represented in the community
- Provides cultural responsiveness to diverse family and individual needs
- Nurtures future workforce development and community economic stability
- Provides education about "children first" politics, policies and investments

Community partners likely to support the implementation of this plan include: businesses, government, non-profit agencies, community members and volunteers, funders, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, schools, health providers, etc.

Trend Linkages to Strategies

Lettered blocks placed next to strategies throughout this plan indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pgs 12-13).



Economic Downturn

(Increase in) Children with Special Needs

Societal & Environmental Conditions

Recognition of the Importance of Child Care & Development

Goals of the Child Care Plan

Goal 1 Child care and learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.

Goal 2 All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

Goal 3 All child care and development programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.

Goal 4 The child care and development workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.

Goal 5 Quality, affordable and accessible child care and development programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.

INDICATORS OF THE CHILD CARE PLAN

The following Indicators define the desired results of each goal, if the Plan is implemented successfully by 2015.

Goal 1

Child care and learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.

1.1 COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP: **The community at large shows an increased interest and commitment to children, families and child care and development programs.**

1.2 SOCIAL AND PUBLIC POLICY: **Social and public policy in Sonoma County reflect the value of children as the future of Sonoma County.**

1.3 FUNDING: **High quality child care and development programs are supported through increased funding and advocacy to meet the needs of families.**

Goal 2

All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

2.1 QUALITY: **All child care and development programs meet standards of high quality.**

2.2 CAPACITY: **There is an increase in capacity of high quality child care and development programs that include infant, on-site after-school, full-day preschool and subsidized child care.**

2.3 ACCESSIBILITY: **Families can access programs that meet their unique cultural, geographic, economic and special needs.**

Goal 3

All child care and development programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.

3.1 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: **Child care and development programs provide opportunities for family involvement on a consistent basis.**

3.2 HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH: **Child care and development programs and family child care homes provide on-site access and referrals to health and mental health services to improve family access to services.**

3.3 SCHOOLS: **School districts, child care and development programs, and other agencies collaborate to provide comprehensive services to children and their families.**

INDICATORS OF THE CHILD CARE PLAN

The child care and development workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.

4.1 TRAINING & INCENTIVES: **There are increased teacher and provider training opportunities and participation.**

4.2 WAGES & BENEFITS: **Wages and benefits are commensurate with similar professions, and are reflective of the regional economy.**

Goal 4

Quality, affordable and accessible child care and development programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.

5.1 BUSINESS: **Business leaders understand the relationship of child care and development to employment and economic sustainability as demonstrated by their advocacy, investments and support of work/family policies and benefits.**

5.2 GOVERNMENT: **Government and community planners understand the relationship of child care and education to housing, land use, transportation, and economic development, and include child care in all development and redevelopment plans.**

Goal 5







Photos courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Goal 1: **Child care and early learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.**

Indicator 1: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

1.1 COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP:

The community at large shows an increased interest and commitment to children, families and child care and development programs.



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Community Input Regarding Community Ownership

Children should be protected, nurtured and helped to develop to their highest potential. Child care and development programs are environments where this occurs. Child care is also essential for working families. To ensure a bright future for our children and a thriving county, the whole community needs to understand how to support children, their families, and the people who serve them.

A widespread public education campaign is needed to demonstrate how child care relates to nearly every community issue, from violence and gang prevention, to workforce and economic development. Child care and development programs are beginning to be seen as a necessary building block of a strong, vital community, as necessary as clean water or good roads. The next step is to ensure that policymakers, funders and businesses consider the welfare of children and the support of their caregivers to be central in setting social and public policy, funding programs, and increasing access to quality programs for all children, regardless of economic status, culture or geographic location.

Community ownership of an issue creates a unified approach to achieving solutions. Partnerships are created less on self-interest and more for the purpose of bettering the community as a whole. This kind of community ownership requires mobilizing everyone in the community to support the accomplishment of a goal. Political systems respond to this kind of public will when considering legislation and political platforms or actions. For this kind of community ownership to emerge, people must have opportunities to gather and organize a community agenda via meetings, forums, town hall meetings and the use of regional alliances. Linkages with local media and the establishment of an ongoing "Partnership for Children" would further unite the community to consider children's needs in all decision-making processes.

Goal 1: **Child care and early learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.**

Indicator 1: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

"What's required to build a movement that might ultimately have the kind of clout that's wielded by the senior citizen's lobby is the alignment of money, message, innovation, and a coordinated strategy." (p. 178)[4]



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Strategies to Promote Community Ownership

1. Launch a widespread "Partnership for Children" movement with a public education component that includes messages about promoting children-first public policy and investments.
2. Develop linkages with local media to provide positive and helpful publicity about the importance of child care and development programs to families and the community. Include non-traditional media outlets such as Spanish-speaking radio, social networking and internet.
3. Enlist the leadership of community-based organizations and foundations who recognize the benefits of child care and development. Explore the pooling of resources, expertise and service delivery.
4. Encourage organizations to review mission statements, policies, philosophy and service delivery from the perspective of "what is good for the children".
5. Update "The Economic Impact of Child Care in Sonoma County 2002", to reflect current economy, industries and trends.
6. Assess the feasibility of a mid-point (2011-2012) update to the current "Needs Assessment for Child Care, 2009". Complete a revision to the full Needs Assessment in 2014. Determine if either update should include growth forecasts of the demand for child care, including geographic differences of each city and community as well as the development potential in each area. Include data collection on current barriers to accessing child care and development services.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 1: **Child care and early learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.**

Indicator 2: SOCIAL & PUBLIC POLICY

1.2 SOCIAL & PUBLIC POLICY:
Social and public policy in Sonoma County reflect the value of children as the future of Sonoma County.



Community Input Regarding Child-Centered Social and Public Policy

Sonoma County needs to have organized efforts to empower parents and child care providers to voice and vote for their needs. Advocacy includes educating legislators, unifying the child care field toward one vision for child care and children, and mobilizing groups of constituents.

Currently, there are organizations in Sonoma County that spearhead education and advocacy projects. Support for these grass-roots organizations is necessary to build a community network that can respond quickly and decisively to emerging social and political issues. The community's will and priorities on behalf of children can flow to decision-makers at the State and local levels through these groups. Two priorities for advocacy are the distribution of resources and improvements in regulations affecting child care and development.

Meetings, forums, town hall events and other gatherings must be used to reach parents and child care providers. People need places to come together and dialogue about their goals and views about community and economic development. Creating opportunities for this dialogue would allow for a united community voice. Additionally, media-based messaging can help to shift community awareness and norms. One positive outcome from such advocacy efforts could be the inclusion of child and family issues in strategic planning and political platforms. Good social policy can also define and reflect the relationship of child care and other family services to other constituency groups such as law enforcement, medical, legal, and business.

Goal 1: **Child care and early learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.**

Indicator 2: SOCIAL & PUBLIC POLICY

" . . .the measures that define quality – teacher training, pupil-student ratios . . . –have been defined by experts in the field. Yet it is legislators . . . who determine how much prekindergarten teachers are paid and how many kids can be in a classroom. Quality is also defined by how the preschool system is designed, the rules and incentives that give it shape, and those decisions are also made by public officials." (p.179)[4]

"We cannot address early care and education in a vacuum; rather, we must see it as part of a set of policies to foster strong families. To flourish and be ready for school, children need caring and well-educated adults, adequate family income, good nutrition, health care, safe and nurturing environments, and high quality developmentally appropriate learning opportunities." (p.4) [5]

Strategies to Promote Child-Centered Social and Public Policy

1. Research and promote social policies that prioritize the health and well-being of children and families in Sonoma County. Partner with local organizations that educate the community about social and public policy. Develop a "unified voice" with all stakeholders to promote decisions that are based on what is best for children.
2. Hold community workshops and forums on how to organize and advocate for policies and initiatives that benefit children and families. Increase outreach to child care and education professionals, parents, policymakers, legal services, business, and the community at large for Town Hall and other meetings.
3. Provide education and increase participation in advocacy and education groups such as Parent Voices, and develop financial support for these and other campaigns that advocate for the needs of children and families. Include building parents' skills in advocacy and opening communication channels between parents, providers and policymakers.
4. 

Promote inclusion of child and family issues in strategic planning and political agendas. Develop a resource guide for leaders in the field that includes talking points for communication with policymakers.
5. Increase networking and collaboration with local government officials through visits to legislators, invitations to child care events, town hall meetings, tours for legislators of child care facilities, and representatives who serve as "watch-dogs" of legislation and political platforms.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 1: **Child care and early learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.**

Indicator 3: FUNDING

1.3 FUNDING:
High quality child care and development programs are supported through increased funding and advocacy to meet the needs of families.



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Community Input Regarding Funding

Many child care and child development programs receive funding from federal, state and local funding sources. Federal and state funds are distributed as contracts to local community-based agencies, schools, public agencies, and local community colleges offering child care and child development programs. Recent budget constraints at the State level have made it clear that local government, business and community partnerships must increase financial support to child care programs if there is to be a consistent, thriving child care community. Annual budget development impasses at the state level jeopardize continuity of care as well as the survival of small businesses that depend upon subsidized dollars to maintain quality child care facilities. Individual families and child care providers cannot afford to bear the full costs of the care and education of our youngest children.

The following community needs have been identified: coordination and cross-distribution of funding; serving priority areas for special areas of need without fragmenting service delivery; encouraging collaboration between programs without legislating how that collaboration should take place; and respecting the expertise of child care specialists in designing programs.

To achieve the goals of increasing the amount and accessibility of funding, there must be collaboration between those who are familiar with what works for children, and those whose expertise is creating new revenue streams and partnerships. Sharing expertise across professions can provide an infusion of new commitment and interest into all programs that serve children.

Goal 1: **Child care and early learning programs and the children they serve are valued by the community as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.**

Indicator 3: FUNDING



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Strategies to Promote Funding

1. Educate businesses about the benefits of subsidizing or offering on-site or near-site child care, including best practice models.
2. Increase participation by the child care community in local Chambers of Commerce and service clubs to access business support and funding.
3. Utilize all potential funding sources, including in-kind, to increase the quality, capacity and accessibility of early care and education programs.
4. Increase grants to support providers and teachers in addressing special situations and needs of children and families. Show the cost-benefit of prevention and early intervention as a basis for expanding funding for early childhood services.
5. Explore tax breaks, subsidies and special funding programs to fill gaps in services, launch new programs, and support child care programs and consumers of child care.
6. Develop a mechanism to coordinate business investments, First 5 Preschool Scholarships, state and federal subsidies and any future funding to collaboratively meet the gap in child care funding for Sonoma County's eligible and un-served children.

"The only way out . . .is to alter the spending priorities of the United States, making children's success the top concern. To do so requires tapping into . . . the 'visceral pull' exerted by youngsters, identifying those in the youth human capital sector – everyone from pediatricians to preschool teachers, child care workers to parents – and showing them that, like bankers and retailers and those in other capital sectors, they share important interests . . . As common values become more apparent . . .these fragmented groups will come together, registering to vote in greater numbers and endorsing candidates who view every issue, from education to Iraq, through the lens of children's needs." (p.261)[4]

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 2: **All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.**

Indicator 1: QUALITY

2.1 QUALITY:
All child care and development programs meet standards of high quality.

According to the " Sonoma County ECE Professional Workforce Survey: Summary of Results":

- *Only one-fifth (20%) of child care Centers represented in the survey sample are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*
- *Of 44 Center Director respondents, 52% have had their child care environments assessed using the applicable Harms-Clifford rating scale*
- *89% of Family Child Care (FCC) homes represented in the survey sample are not accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)*
- *Of 30 FCC provider respondents, only 22% have had their child care environments assessed using the applicable Harms-Clifford rating scale*[6]

Community Input Regarding Quality

Children need to be cared for in environments that allow them to grow and thrive. Quality programs for children provide a healthy and safe environment and include developmentally appropriate activities that are also responsive to the diverse cultural needs of each child. Providers of quality programs are engaged with children and families, and relate to children with caring and attention. Quality programs incorporate play-based learning, age appropriate materials and approaches, and opportunities for children to be exposed to reading and creative expression.

There are many hallmarks of quality on which individual programs focus. A standardized quality assessment tool can be used to measure and promote quality. Providers may receive training and mentoring support to develop and sustain good programs. Assessment based on a child's needs can shape individually responsive curriculum planning. In addition, economically and ethnically diverse programs promote integration and support for all children and families. Another concern in this field continues to be the place of parental choice in the development of quality programs, and the need to preserve a variety of options for families that can respond to each family's unique needs.

Child development specialists, teachers, and health and human services professionals working with children have collaboratively defined the hallmarks of quality care and have tools with which to measure quality. These definitions and tools need to be more widely promoted publicly and included in all outreach, training and incentive programs for child care professionals.

Goal 2: All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

Indicator 1: QUALITY

"Since advocates of high-quality preschool can't monitor every prekindergarten, the challenge is to design a system that will sustain a culture of quality – one that gives parents usable information, lays out the best practices, and offers inducement to preschools that improve themselves." (p. 267) [4]



Photo courtesy of Katie Greaves and Matt Mensch

Strategies to Promote Quality

1. Promote child care competencies, standards and developmental measures throughout the county in order to achieve quality child care and early learning experiences.
2. Identify and connect child care and development programs to resources that help programs achieve accreditation and quality standards.
3. Sustain and expand existing incentive, training and mentoring programs that are accessible to all child care providers.
4. Support programs that utilize quality rating scales, and provide ongoing funding, education and outreach for professionals consulting as external validators for these programs.
5. Establish minimum early childhood education standards for centers, family child care homes and license-exempt providers with regard to societal and environmental factors affecting child development.
6. Develop a comprehensive online resource guide for child care providers and teachers with links to articles and checklists promoting "eco-healthy child care" and guidelines for the use of technology in early childhood.
7. Survey consumers of child care and development services to determine how quality is defined by those outside the child care and development field.
8. Invest in opportunities to develop leadership, expertise and longevity in the field of child care and development.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 2: **All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.**

Indicator 2: CAPACITY

2.2 CAPACITY:

There is an increase in capacity of high quality child care and development programs that include infant, on-site after-school, full-day preschool and subsidized child care.

- *In 2009, there were about 13,200 children that were potentially eligible for subsidized child care and only 4,359 subsidized spaces available, which compose 33% of potential demand.*
- *Average child care costs in Sonoma County range from a low of 20% to a high of 29% of median household income in Sonoma County and they average 24% countywide (assuming one infant and one preschooler)* [7]

Community Input Regarding Capacity

Sonoma County has a severe shortage of child care supply. The "Child Care Needs Assessment – 2009, Sonoma County" reports that "All community areas in the County have current shortages of child care spaces overall for all age groups, and all areas have a shortage of infant and school age care. Six of the 11 planning areas have a shortage of preschool spaces." There are 6,048 fewer spaces for child care in Sonoma County than the number of children who need care.

Additionally, existing capacity is inadequate for a variety of family needs. Quality infant/toddler care in licensed homes and centers is lacking in almost all geographic areas. After school programs are provided on many school campuses, but need to be expanded to schools that have not yet developed on-site child care facilities. More spaces are needed for working parents who need full-time child care for non-traditional work hours, including swing, night and weekend shifts. Many geographic areas lack access to licensed child care capacity due to isolation, transportation problems or economic factors.

In addition to these capacity issues, Sonoma County continues to have long waiting lists for low income subsidized care. Subsidized programs face barriers in funding, State regulations, facility availability and local fees when they attempt to expand capacity. More education of State policy-makers and local officials is needed to resolve these barriers.

Finally, youth (10-18) need to have a safe, accessible place to go after school, ensuring street safety and after school activities that help engage them in the community. However, there are very few options this age group for structured, well-supervised programs. Other special populations whose needs are not adequately met include teen parents, migrant families, families with language barriers, and children with special physical or behavioral needs.

Goal 2: All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

Indicator 2: CAPACITY

"The most recent unemployment data includes over 13 million Americans unemployed and 9 million working part-time because they simply can't find full-time work. As parents lose their jobs or have their hours cut back, newspapers throughout the country have reported that families are removing their children from child care to cut costs, leaving children home alone, and child care programs [are] closing. With the unemployment rate at 8.5 percent and climbing, parents are struggling to afford the cost of child care." (p.1)[8]

[In a survey of California Resource & Referral agencies:]

- Almost three-quarters (74 percent) said that the number of families unable to make child care payments or those falling behind in these payments has increased between June and December 2008.
- About one-third (34 percent) indicated that the number of centers in their communities had declined between the **last half of 2007 and the last half of 2008** and 37 percent indicated that the number of spaces in centers had declined during this time period.
- Centers that have remained open are facing higher vacancy rates – almost two-thirds (65 percent) reported that vacancies had increased in child care centers in their communities in the last six months.
- 76 percent indicated that vacancies in FCC homes had increased in the last six months (between June 2008 and December 2008). [8]

Strategies to Promote Capacity

1. Identify, mentor and develop compensation and support services for child care providers who are interested in providing child care during non-traditional hours such as weekend care, infant care, and care for special populations.
2. Educate policy-makers and funders at the state level about the barriers to increasing capacity of subsidized child care programs and full-fee licensed programs.
3. Support collaborations with current partnerships, schools, recreation and park programs, clubs and the faith community to increase school age and youth care options.
4. Sustain and refine, as needed, the countywide eligibility list for child care subsidies.
5. Work with local governments to implement land use and zoning changes to allow for increased child care capacity.
6. Support collaborative efforts to develop programs with links to K-12 education that are accessible to all children, such as School Readiness, Universal Preschool, an Early Education (0-8 years) framework and Early Literacy programs.

Goal 2: **All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.**

Indicator 3: ACCESSIBILITY

2.3 ACCESSIBILITY:
Families can access programs that meet their unique cultural, geographic, economic and special needs.



Community Input Regarding Accessibility

Even in situations when capacity is sufficient to meet the demand for child care, families still experience barriers in accessing high-quality care. Access to child care for parents with children who have special physical, developmental or behavioral needs can be a challenge. More partnerships and linkages among parent organizations, agencies focused on services to children with disabilities, and child care programs must be developed so parents can access programs that have training and experience in providing care and accommodation for these children.

Sonoma County has a growing population of Spanish-speaking families and agricultural workers that have unique child care needs. Access for these families can be limited by language and cultural barriers. There is limited outreach into this community on the hallmarks of high quality child care. The child care field needs to expand translation and outreach services as well as support systems that can help these families access care compatible with their schedules, cultural and language needs. Other immigrant communities that need similar outreach, interpreter, translation and support services include Asian, African and East Indian cultures. The Native American community in Northern Sonoma County has similar barriers to accessing services.

Sonoma County has many rural and outlying areas where public transportation is limited or non-existent. In these areas, even the development of family child care homes (which often better serve small communities) is limited because of the providers' lack of access to services that would help with licensing processes and provide ongoing program support. This creates an access problem for families who must travel great distances to find any child care at all. Transportation is also a problem for children in schools that have no on-site child care, and for teen parents and low income working parents who don't have cars.

There are other special populations that experience child care access problems and may require outreach, education or coordination by social service agencies. These include teen parents; active military families; recent refugees of national or international disaster or war; families who are recently homeless due to the economic downturn; children with serious or chronic illness; and children of parents who are unavailable, incarcerated, hospitalized or substance-abusing. Finally, affordability of child care is a problem for nearly all families, even when other barriers to access have been overcome.

Goal 2: **All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.**

Indicator 3: ACCESSIBILITY

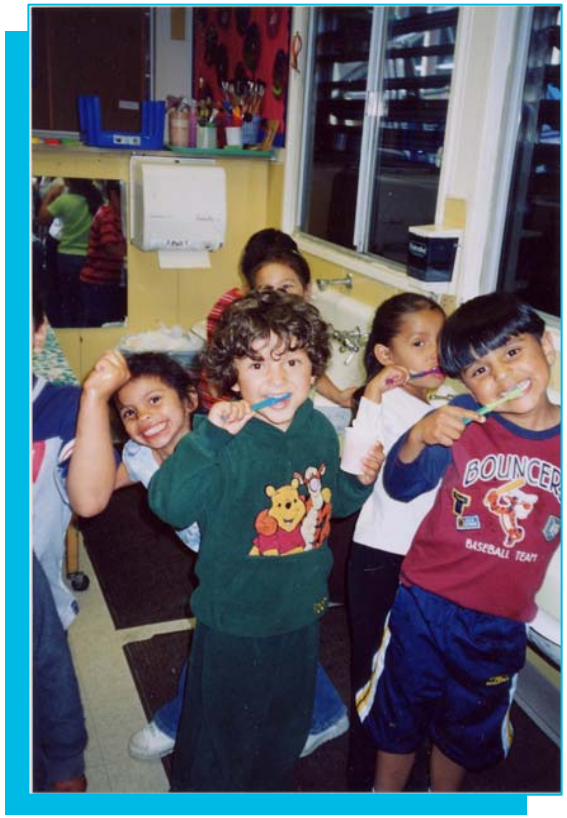


Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Strategies to Promote Accessibility

1. Survey child care providers on their training and experience in serving special populations. Develop training and mentoring programs for providers that include specialized training in serving special populations such as teen parents, agricultural workers, and children with special developmental and cultural needs.
2. Promote ongoing partnerships and linkages among child care programs, parents, agencies serving children with special needs and school programs to achieve continuity of care, access to inclusive settings and service integration.
3. Evaluate barriers to accessing quality care, including transportation, geographic isolation, language, culture and economic challenges, and conduct outreach to providers and agencies that can increase access for families affected by these barriers.
4. Provide targeted outreach to families with other special circumstances (active military; refugees; homeless; those affected by illness, incarceration, hospitalization, substance abuse or absence of parents) by collaborating with the organizations that serve them.
5. Promote the development of a broader priority on the centralized eligibility list for children at high risk (including homeless children); collaborate with child, youth and family services to ensure full usage of respite care funds available; and seek new funding sources to establish emergency respite care for homeless and at-risk families.
6. Educate community agencies and schools on the benefits of child care as a prevention and intervention strategy for at-risk children and families needing stability and healthy environments.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 3: **All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.**

Indicator 1: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

3.1 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:

Child care and development programs provide opportunities for family involvement on a consistent basis.

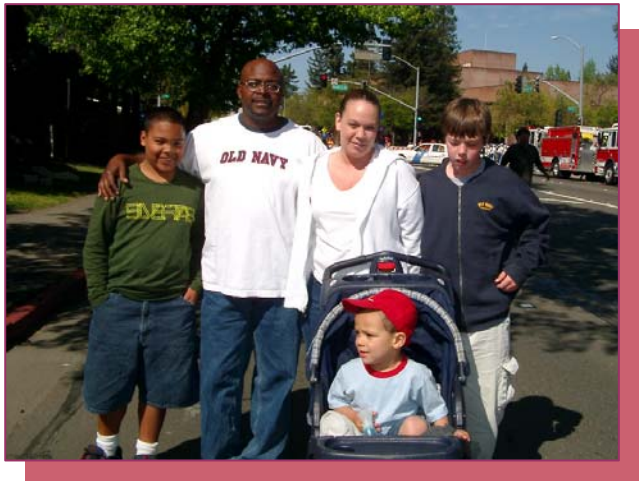


Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Community Input Regarding Family Involvement

Quality child care and development programs respect the family and parents of children as the primary caregivers and guardians of children. Family involvement is a necessary component of early childhood programs, with parents and child care professionals partnering to promote a child's healthy development. A comprehensive, cohesive family plan supports the child and the family through developmental transitions throughout childhood. Continuity of care and communication between various service professionals enables the formation of a team to ensure that a child's needs are met.

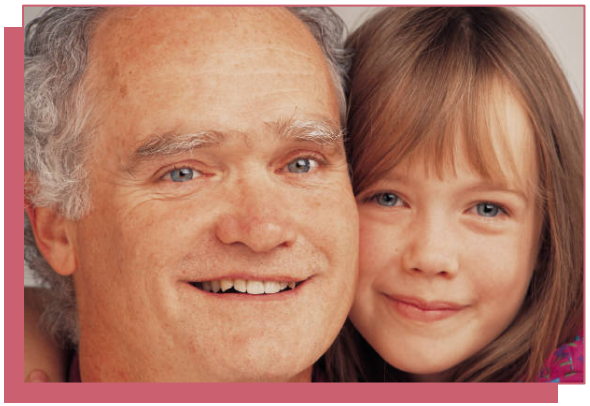
Family involvement includes support systems and opportunities for parents to acquire new skills in parenting and child development. Positive parenting skills are emphasized with parents working with caregivers and children in cooperative settings. Sonoma County has many models for family involvement and parenting programs. Many ideas to increase family involvement in child care programs need the commitment and support in time and funding from business, government and schools. Most parents have busy work lives that prevent ongoing participation in school and child care programs. Strategies to make it easier for parents and providers to come together might reduce these barriers to this important partnership.

An increase in sponsorship of events that bring these groups together can create natural opportunities to encourage partnerships and information-sharing. Family-friendly resource centers and parenting classes are also good environments to form partnerships and share information, when they are affordable for parents and responsive to parents' time constraints and cultural needs. Whatever the specific environment, it is important that the whole family is involved and supported as the context in which the child grows and develops.

Goal 3: **All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.**

Indicator 1: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

"Childhood experiences are particularly pertinent, not because they provide an unalterable blueprint for adult well-being but because what is learned at the beginning of life establishes a 'set of capabilities, orientations to the world, and expectations about how things and people will behave that affect how new experiences are selected and processed.' " (p. 114) [4]



Strategies to Promote Family Involvement

1. Provide information to program staff, families and public policy groups about the importance of family involvement in early learning and the benefits to children.
2. Develop on-site, on-going family programs at child care and development facilities. Include teaching parents how to communicate and work with their child care providers and teachers, as well as experiential training and modeling of positive parenting with parents and providers/teachers.
3. Develop and provide opportunities for family members, in all family structures, to participate in child care and development programs, including early literacy initiatives. Target outreach to fathers, and relatives living in the child's home.
4. Convene child care professionals and educators in forums and meetings to share best practices in promoting family participation. Provide access to the child care community with the principles and practices of model programs that effectively use family participation.
5. Offer joint training programs for parents and providers on special situations, including working with children who have special developmental or behavioral needs, and current research and resources on societal and environmental factors affecting a child's development.
6. Utilize existing gathering places for parents (libraries, schools, parks, recreation facilities, events, resource fairs, health clinics, etc.) for outreach and education opportunities.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 3: **All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.**

Indicator 2: HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

3.2 HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH:

Child care and development programs and family child care homes provide on-site access and referrals to health and mental health services to improve family access to services.

"Startling statistics released by the Pentagon show that 75 percent of young people ages 17 to 24 would be unable to enlist in the United States military if they visited a recruiter today. Three of the most common barriers for potential recruits are failure to graduate high school, a criminal record, and physical fitness issues, including obesity." (p.1) [9]

Community Input Regarding Health & Mental Health

Sonoma County community members are concerned about many health issues in our community, including family and youth violence prevention, drug and alcohol abuse prevention and treatment, nutrition and physical activity, and the accessibility of health insurance. Sonoma County needs expanded domestic violence services, mental health prevention and education services in addition to mental health treatment services. All of these community health issues impact children, families and child care providers. In order to address these issues, service integration and coordination between health agencies and child care providers must expand until all providers are aware of vital health and mental health information and resources.

Mental health services for children and families, especially for young children and families with limited incomes, continues to be lacking in Sonoma County. Non-profit agencies usually have waiting lists for services and many mental health services are cost prohibitive even for middle income families. Despite increased education and training on mental health issues in childhood, there is a scarcity of mental health specialists trained in child development and children's mental health, and very few bilingual, bicultural mental health providers. Lack of mental health resources for families often results in an increase in behavioral problems in child care settings. While child care can be a critical component of child abuse prevention and intervention, not all child care providers are equipped to deal with the special behavioral needs of children and families with mental health issues, or those exposed to violence or substance abuse.

Child care needs to be placed in the context of the larger systems (health, mental health, law enforcement, education, etc.) so that it is seen as an integral part of prevention and intervention efforts. Collaboration between programs that serve developmentally disabled children, including special education and child care programs, needs to be increased and sustained. Similar collaborations could be developed between child care programs and law enforcement, violence prevention, drug abuse prevention and health/mental health programs. Model programs that serve to place health and mental health professionals in child care programs as consultants and educators must be supported and sustained by continued funding and advocacy. These programs address an important need for the sharing of professional expertise and resources across fields.

Goal 3: **All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.**

Indicator 2: HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

Strategies to Promote Collaboration with the Health & Mental Health Community



1. Develop and promote a model of integrated family support that includes child care and development programs and health/mental health services. Increase collaboration between public health programs, community clinics, medical and mental health providers, law enforcement, and child care and development programs to link families to services and information.



2. Convene local organizations to collaborate on studying local trends, collecting data, and improving services to:
   - children with special needs, including chronic illness and physical, mental health and learning difficulties
   - children and families affected by violence, gangs, substance and alcohol use, and health and mental health conditions
   - pregnant and parenting teens
   - families dealing with difficulties related to obesity, nutrition, exercise, addictions and lifestyle choices
   - address the impact of societal and environmental trends on a child's development and health
   - provide prevention and intervention strategies for parents, providers and teachers on peer conflicts related to class, race and culture.

3. Ensure nutritious food is available in all child care programs, as well as training to providers and funds for support.

4. Sustain and refine continuing education programs and certificates for mental health providers to specialize in providing effective mental health services to children. Recruit bilingual/bicultural mental health providers to participate in these programs.



5. Establish continuing education opportunities for child care and development professionals to understand and promote the link between health/mental health and early childhood development. Emphasize the importance of social and emotional development in childhood and include training in using curriculum that helps to develop behavioral health.

6. Work with local institutions to place health and mental health specialists at child care and development settings.



7. Develop a comprehensive resource guide that includes current research, best practices, trends and referrals for services.

8. Promote community recognition of child care agencies and services as an integral part of societal infrastructure which supports nurturing early childhood experiences leading to long term health benefits.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 3: **All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.**

Indicator 3: SCHOOLS

3.3 SCHOOLS:

School districts, child care and development programs, and other agencies collaborate to provide comprehensive services to children and their families.



Community Input Regarding Schools

Sonoma County has forty school districts and hundreds of early childhood education programs and child care providers. With the recent movement toward school readiness and universal preschool, it has become more important than ever to forge a connection between early childhood providers and elementary school teachers. The goal is to develop a seamless system for children moving from early childhood to kindergarten and beyond, with comprehensive coordination in curriculum, philosophy and developmental assessment.

Child care needs to remain in the Department of Education at the State and Federal level so that the linkage between child care and education can be sustained. Schools, employers and child care providers must address the growing need for parents to have full-time supervision for their children when they work full-time. Neighborhood models, in which a school works with neighborhood resources to provide for families' needs, should be expanded and supported by the community. In addition, forums and meetings between early childhood educators and elementary school teachers should be convened so that a dialogue about best practices and kindergarten transition can occur.

Goal 3: **All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.**

Indicator 3: SCHOOLS

"The good news is that children can be taught basic academic skills – the fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics – in a way that uses, rather than destroys, their natural desire to learn." (p. 9)[4]

"There can be no return to a more innocent world in which nursery school celebrated play and reading was something that youngsters were formally introduced to when they were six years old. Nor should there be. There are creative, intellectually challenging ways to teach children . . . without making a child gnaw at his nails." (p.47) [4]

Strategies to Promote Collaborations with Schools

1. Sustain and expand existing collaborative relationships between schools, child care and development programs, and other agencies to refine standards and shared protocols, curricula and testing formats.
   - Celebrate a successful collaboration between an elementary school and a preschool by presenting an award to a principal at Sonoma County Association of School Administrators event.
   - Select and publicize collaborations that are successful models to school districts and preschools.
2. Expand "preschool to kindergarten" connections and interactions between child care and development programs, families and kindergarten teachers to promote smooth transitions for children.
   - Support elementary principals to hold annual forums with child care and development programs in their service area to encourage collaborations and exchange of needs and ideas.
   - Encourage attendance by parents and providers at Kindergarten open houses.
   - Demystify what child care providers and Kindergarten teachers do through dialogue about best practices.
   - Research and develop materials that can be distributed to parents and providers of new Kindergarteners. Include information on types of schools, contact information, deadlines, requirements, etc. Provide support on new student paperwork orientation.
3. Create opportunities for regular dialogue between school leaders, parents and early childhood community through school tours, and outreach to those experiencing cultural or other barriers.
4. Promote the development of schools as community "hubs" for the provision of services and information to families.

Goal 4: **The child care and learning workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.**

Indicator 1: TRAINING & INCENTIVES

4.1 TRAINING & INCENTIVES:

There are increased teacher and provider training opportunities and participation.



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Community Input Regarding Training and Incentives

Sonoma County has many training opportunities for providers and early childhood specialists, including structured certificate programs through Santa Rosa Junior College, Early Childhood Education programs through Sonoma State University, and alternative training opportunities geared towards family child care providers. Training and incentive programs include stipend and training reimbursement programs for providers, as well as home/site visit and mentoring programs. These programs help to reduce the isolation of teachers and family child care providers as well as increasing resources for providers in specialized areas such as children's mental health and special needs. All programs are aimed at increasing quality in the child care environment and supporting providers in their professional development.

Many of these programs have been developed over the last ten years and outreach and access is limited by funding and program regulations. Model programs need to be supported financially so they can expand outreach activities. More education is needed for child care providers on special needs, and mental and physical health. More funding is needed for salary stipends and training, as well as paid release time to attend training. Providers need support in accessing services that respond to their specific time constraints and cultural needs. Engaging and motivating providers to continue their education and providing recognition and appreciation for the work they do both help to increase retention and recruitment.

Goal 4: The child care and learning workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.

Indicator 1: TRAINING & INCENTIVES

"Culturally responsive ECE allows children to be who they are, like who they are, get along well with others who are different than themselves, ask for what they need and feel is right, and stand up for themselves and others. It fosters children's capacity to thrive in school and in life in an increasingly multicultural country and interconnected world." (p.3)[10]

"1. Our children face a daunting technological frontier of irreversible changes in human biology and the world's ecology. They need a radically different kind of technology education to make wise choices in such a future.
2. Children's lives are increasingly filled with screen time rather than real time with nature, caring adults, the arts, and hands-on work and play. Yet only real relationships, not virtual ones, will inspire and prepare them to protect the Earth and all that lives on it.
3. There is scant evidence of long-term benefits—and growing indications of harm—from the high-tech life style and education aggressively promoted by government and business. It is time for concerted citizen action to reclaim childhood for children." (p.1)[11]

Strategies to Support Training & Incentives



1. Sustain and refine community-based bilingual training for college credit for child care and development program teachers.
2. Increase training courses, workshops and collaborative partnerships on children with special needs, cultural responsiveness, poverty, families with special mental or physical health needs, and the effects of society, environment and economy on children and families. Include special training programs for providers using Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL).
3. Refine and expand incentive training programs for the child care and development program workforce in order to increase participation.



4. Increase outreach to unlicensed providers and centers for training, including unlicensed caregivers operating outside service delivery regulations and oversight. Identify methods of outreach, training, resource needs (including technology support) and best practices for cultural responsiveness.



5. Develop additional mentoring and peer-to-peer support programs, and increase participation in existing training programs. Include experiential training and modeling of effective interactions with children and their families.
6. Increase access to training of all professionals by making courses available during alternative hours, at varying sites, and using multiple class structures (e.g. online courses).
7. Identify and increase outreach and training to child care and development workforce that have potential for assuming leadership positions in the field.
8. Develop a Bachelors of Arts degree in ECE at the local university.

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 4: **The child care and learning workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.**

Indicator 2: WAGES & BENEFITS

4.2 WAGES & BENEFITS:
Wages and benefits are commensurate with similar professions, and are reflective of the regional economy.

According to the " Sonoma County ECE Professional Workforce Survey: Summary of Results":

- *50% of Center Director respondents earn net annual incomes between $26,201 and $40,000 ($2,168 - $3,333 per month)*
- *With an average wage of $15.10 per hour and an average work week of 31.5 hours, Center employees earn an average of $1,902.60 per month ($22,831 per year)*
- *66% of FCC provider respondents earn an annual net income of $16,501 - $23,200 or less ($1,376 - $1,933 per month)*
- *With an average wage of $12.37 per hour and an average work week of 26.7 hours, FCC employees earn an average of $1,320 per month ($15,852 per year)*[6]

Community Input Regarding Wages and Benefits

Local needs assessment data show that child care providers and early childhood education teachers leave the field frequently, primarily due to the lack of satisfactory wages and benefits. Since staff continuity is a critical component of quality early care and learning programs, providing for worthy wages in this profession and allowing for affordable care for parents continues to be a pressing dilemma for policy-makers. This must be addressed by outside subsidies and funding support. Child care providers and early education specialists must be compensated for their skills, education and experience as are other service professionals. It is only in providing adequate compensation and support for these professionals that child care programs can attract and retain the caliber of caregiver that our children deserve and need. The following needs must be addressed to assure the recruitment and retention of quality child care providers and early childhood education specialists:

- ✧ Increased compensation commensurate with education and experience.
- ✧ Health benefits, including vacation and sick leave.
- ✧ Greater collaboration between business and education.
- ✧ Involvement of unions and employee groups to develop solutions for this field.
- ✧ Outreach and mentoring from other industries that have faced and conquered similar market challenges.

Goal 4: **The child care and learning workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.**

Indicator 2: WAGES & BENEFITS





Strategies to Promote Worthy Wages & Increase Retention

1. Research and distribute local and statewide wage and benefit information to strategic stakeholders and advocates in Sonoma County.
2. Partner with local organizers of "children's movement" activities and public education campaigns to include marketing strategies on the value of the child care workforce and worthy wages.
3. Research and develop materials that compare child care wages and benefit information with wages and benefits in other fields that *are* valued by the community.
4. Research worthy wage campaigns locally and nationally that have had successful outcomes.
5. Collaborate with local and statewide child care unions to remain knowledgeable of current trends and legislation.
6. Provide recognition and support for early childhood professionals by holding recognition events, and connecting child care providers for sharing of resources and mutual support.
7. Develop a unified voice for the field on worthy wages and retention through partnerships with existing associations and organizations* that advocate for licensed family child care homes and center programs.

*(Sonoma County Child Care Association, 4Cs, RCCS, CDD-Contractors Collaborative, PACEAPP, SEIU, etc.)

Goal 5: **Quality, affordable and accessible early care and education programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.**

Indicator 1: BUSINESS

5.1 BUSINESS:

Business leaders understand the relationship of child care and development to employment and economic sustainability as demonstrated by their advocacy, investments and support of work/family policies and benefits.



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Community Input Regarding Business

Government, business and the private sector must become involved in child care issues and work in partnership to ensure success. The Sonoma County Child Care Economic Impact Report (2003-2004) demonstrates that stable child care reduces employee absenteeism and turnover, increases productivity, and creates a more stable, committed workforce. It also demonstrates that the child care industry generates revenues and employs workers equal to other major industries in the County. Although the business field has recently produced some active champions promoting the value and benefit of child care and development programs (Heckman[12], Bay Area Council[13], etc.), the current economic and business climate has created a significant barrier to working with business to secure partnerships and funding for the development of child care programs, subsidies and facilities.

Many businesses are very concerned with the family/life issues of their employees, and yet lack expertise in setting up and maintaining benefits and programs that support employees. Businesses could use a single point of entry into the child care world - a "one stop" center that can provide businesses with the guidance needed to determine employees' child care needs.

Child care could use the participation of key businesses in promoting children-first politics, policies and investments, and in establishing model or pilot projects that excel at providing family/life benefits. Forums and meetings between key business and child care leaders could further frame the future goals of this vital partnership.

Goal 5: Quality, affordable and accessible early care and education programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.

Indicator 1: BUSINESS

- ***"High-quality early care and education is necessary for tomorrow's workforce.*** *Economists have shown that public investments in high-quality early care and education generate a higher rate of return than almost any other public investment." (p.11)*[13]
- ***"High-quality early care and education also contributes to the productivity of today's workforce.*** *By reducing the financial burden of early education and providing reliable and secure care for children while parents are working, a public investment in ECE allows parents to enter the workforce more easily, decrease absenteeism, earn higher wages, move between jobs less frequently, and achieve higher productivity." (p.12)*[13]
- ***"High-quality early care and education has direct economic benefits for regional economies.*** *Early care and education is a $1.66 billion industry that provides more than 37,000 jobs in the region covered by this report, i.e., the nine counties surrounding the San Francisco Bay Area." (p.12)*[13]
- ***"Research has documented high returns on public investment in early care and education.*** *Rigorous peer-reviewed longitudinal studies of three programs show that high-quality ECE offers one of the largest returns on investment of any public spending for economic development, with payoffs in: Education; Crime [prevention]; Earnings, employment, and tax revenue; Health and social services; Net benefits to costs (. . . in all estimates, benefits exceeded costs)." (pp. 12-13)*[13]

Strategies to Promote Business Involvement

1. Engage business leadership, collaborate with business partnerships and support round tables to explore ways to exchange expertise between business and child care industries and model best practices.
2. Compile and disseminate relevant data to inform employers of the benefits of supporting child care and youth activities.
3. Establish and publicize a centralized resource venue to provide businesses with information and consultant services or referrals on developing child care and development facilities and work/family policies and benefits.
4. Collaborate with Human Resource Managers and work with local businesses and government to create options for parents, including family-friendly policies, parental leave, parenting workshops and extended leave. Educate businesses on the current challenges for families in this economic downturn.



5. Distribute materials to business and child care and development professionals on current trends and ideology represented in such works as the Sonoma County Upstream Investments project, the Bay Area Council's Early Education Initiative, and the Sandbox Investment.[4]

Colored letter blocks placed next to strategies indicate a strategy that is related to a recent trend (pages 10 & 11).

Goal 5: **Quality, affordable and accessible early care and education programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.**

Indicator 2: GOVERNMENT

5.2 GOVERNMENT:

Government and community planners understand the relationship of child care and education to housing, land use, transportation, and economic development, and include child care in all development and redevelopment plans.



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Community Input Regarding Government

Many of the same principles in establishing partnerships between the business and child care communities hold true also for government and community planners. Government and community planners need a resource center or venue to access material and expertise on child care needs and issues related to societal and economic development.

Local government has demonstrated commitment to children and families by exchanging concerns, ideas and potential solutions with child care professionals at planning meetings, town hall forums and the Upstream Investments Project. Civic leaders are aware that they must consider the needs of children, families and child care programs in community development and policy-making. Placing family elements in all city and county plans and being willing to modify zoning and permitting requirements would help increase and maintain child care capacity. Government officials should consider establishing a more secure and realistic tax base to support children as a priority, as well as allocating resources for funding child care programs. Legislation should be written that values children and their care as a top priority, rather than decreasing funds that benefit children each year in budget-oriented cuts at the State and local level. Continued advocacy and education is needed to raise consciousness of elected officials about the needs of children and families.

Goal 5: **Quality, affordable and accessible early care and education programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.**

Indicator 2: GOVERNMENT

"An artful leader knows how to talk about values in a language that doesn't come off as preachy or hypocritical, how to translate theories about how the world ought to be working into commonsense concepts of what government ought to be doing. This is the smart politics of the heart, and it can change peoples' minds." (p.242) [4]



Photo courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

Strategies to Promote Partnerships with Government

1. Compile baseline data and information from cities and the county on existing local child care requirements. Assist child care providers in understanding and complying with city and county regulations. Develop a guide for early care and education programs and municipalities which promotes streamlined permitting and land use regulations.
2. Negotiate with housing agencies, and collaborate with developers and contractors in planning for construction or rehabilitation of child care facilities. Encourage developers to build child care facilities at or near transportation, housing and employment centers.
3. Review and modify zoning, building codes, regulations, permitting requirements and municipalities' general plans in order to support the development of child care and early education programs. Work with Northern California Child Care Advocate to resolve barriers to child care licensing.
4. Work with legislators and policy-makers to promote and develop tax incentives for the development of early care and education facilities. Recommend ordinances, financial incentives and/or tax credits to support early care and education programs.
5. Participate in State infrastructure activities and discussions aimed at improving and sustaining child care and development service delivery (e.g., ELQIS, ELAC).

References and Resources

References

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Resources

Alliance For Childhood; http://www.allforchildren.org
464 Hillside Ave. Suite 300, Needham, MA 02494
(781) 444-7148; info@allforchildren.org

Bay Area Council; http://www.bayareacouncil.org
201 California St, Suite 1450, San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 981-6600; dchristensen@bayareacouncil.org

California Association for the Education of Young Children; http://caeyc.org
950 Glenn Drive, Suite 150, Folsom, CA 95630
(916) 486-7750; info@caeyc.org

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network; http://www.rrnetwork.org/
111 New Montgomery Street, 7th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 882-6233; info@rrnetwork.org

California Dept. of Education, Child Development Dept.; http://www.cde.ca.gov
1430 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 319-0800

Child Care Law Center; http://www.childcarelaw.org
100 McAllister Street, Room 360, San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 558-8005; info@childcarelaw.org

Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County; http://www.scoe.org/ccpc
5340 Skylane Blvd, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 524-2792; ccpc@scoe.org

Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs); http://www.sonoma4cs.org
131-A Stony Circle, Suite 300, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707) 544-3077; info@sonoma4cs.org

Community Care Licensing; http://www.ccld.ca.gov/
101 Golf Course Dr., Rohnert Park, CA 94928
(707) 588-5026;

Insight Center for Community Economic Development; http://www.insightcced.org/
2201 Broadway, Suite 815, Oakland, CA 94612-3024
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Mission Readiness; http://www.missionreadiness.org
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River to Coast Children's Services; http://rccservices.org
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