

For the Children:
A Comprehensive Plan for Child Care and Learning Programs
Sonoma County 2005 - 2010

Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council

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Planning Process

Developing the Child Care Plan

In June, 2003, the Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council (SCCCPC) held its first planning session for the development of a comprehensive child care plan for Sonoma County. A vision emerged to spearhead a community process that would result in a countywide plan that truly mirrored the needs and values of families in Sonoma County. It was the Council's hope that the process would serve to unite the community in a common vision for the future and result in active participation and community ownership of the plan's goals and strategies.

The first community meeting for the comprehensive child care plan was held on January 30, 2004. Nearly 150 participants were arranged in mixed groups and led by professional facilitators in a visioning process that mirrored the first Council planning session in June. Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive, with many participants stating that the experience of sitting with a cross-section of people from different backgrounds and perspectives allowed a rich interpersonal experience in goal-setting and visioning. Based on input from this meeting and with reference to the San Mateo Child Child Partnership Strategic Plan, broad goal areas for Sonoma County were selected.

In February, 2004, the Council held a series of focus groups to elicit input on five specific goal areas: Quality of Programs, Accessibility, Affordability, System Integration and Community Ownership. Specific focus groups included those involved with public policy, educators, parents, providers, health & mental health workers, social services, those working with children with special needs, bilingual/monolingual providers, and business leaders. Input from the focus groups was integrated into the draft plan, and presented to participants in advance of the last community meeting.

On March 26, 2004, another general community meeting was held to review the draft goals, and work on specific strategies, community partners and implementation ideas. At this meeting, participants were arranged into groups based on areas of expertise and asked to work on strategies for goals that directly affected them. All input from the meeting was then synthesized and combined with needs assessment data to produce the final comprehensive child care plan.

The SCCCPC publicized and held a public hearing on January 12, 2005 at the Sonoma County Office of Education to solicit public comment on the final plan. The final report was then submitted to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Sonoma County Office of Education and the State of California, Department of Education, Child Development Division.

The Role of the Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council and Next Steps

The community has defined its goals and strategies for the future of child care programs and child related services in this comprehensive plan, and has created an instrument that places the welfare of Sonoma County's children at the forefront of all planning and development activities. The SCCCPC 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

BACKGROUND

Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council

The Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council (SCCCPC) 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. These mandates include:



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

- Conducting a local Child Care Needs Assessment.
- Submitting a comprehensive child care plan to the State Department of Education and the Board of Supervisors.
- Coordinating efforts to study and implement a centralized eligibility list for subsidized child care programs in the county.
- Establishing local priorities for child care funding, according to State policy and guidance.
- Enhancing collaborations and partnerships in the child care community.
- Link part-day programs to offer full-day care.



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

SCCCPC is sanctioned by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Sonoma County Office of Education, and 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. SCCCPC meetings are held once per

Background

Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council's updated Child Care Needs Assessment (2004) and the Comprehensive Child Care Planning process form the basis for the goals and strategies set forth in this report. This Comprehensive Child Care Plan is designed 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 parental choice;
- Values child care professionals and educators;
- Ensures that all children have access to high quality, affordable care; and
- Respects the diversity of cultures and needs represented in the community.



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

The Comprehensive Countywide Plan

This plan will be used to:

- Increase awareness of the importance of quality child care and learning experiences for all children, families and communities;
- Provide all stakeholders with a common frame of reference for future action;

Goals and Outcomes 2005-2010

The Comprehensive Countywide Child Care Plan outlines existing conditions in Sonoma County; identifies five goals; notes

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

Outcomes: Government, business, labor, education and the non-profit sector collaborate to fund and support child care programs. Social and public policy in Sonoma County represent the needs of the

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.

Outcome: Quality, accessibility and capacity of child care programs are increased and sustained.

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.

Outcomes: Comprehensive and coordinated services are integrated with child care programs. Centralized access

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.

Outcomes: Recruitment and retention rates of the child care and learning program workforce are improved. Educational standards and opportunities for the child care and learning program workforce is

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.

Outcome: Child care programs and facilities are integrated into the Sonoma County infrastructure.

Sonoma County

Sonoma County is located approximately 50 miles north of San Francisco. The county is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Marin County on the South, Napa and Lake Counties to the East, and Mendocino County to the North. The County is known for is scenic beauty, with 76 miles of sandy beaches and cliffs on the Pacific Ocean, redwood forests, rolling hills and over one million acres of land and water. The climate is mild throughout the year. Although two-thirds of the population lives in one of the nine incorporated cities, almost 65% of the land is dedicated to agriculture. One third of the population resides in the city of Santa Rosa.

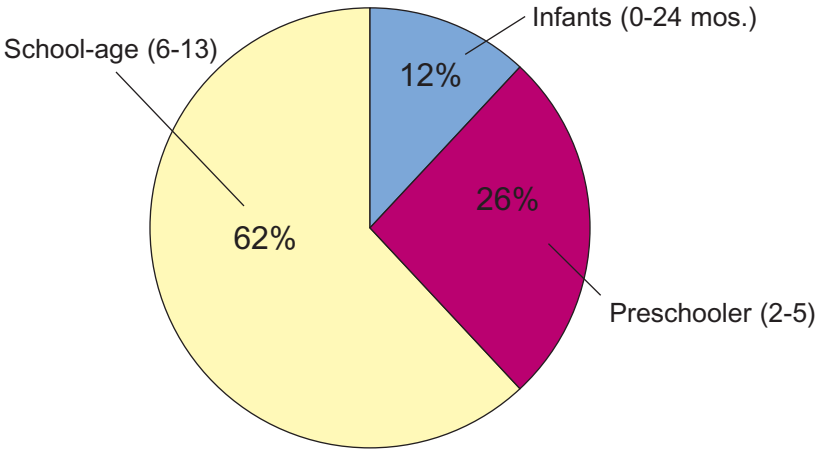


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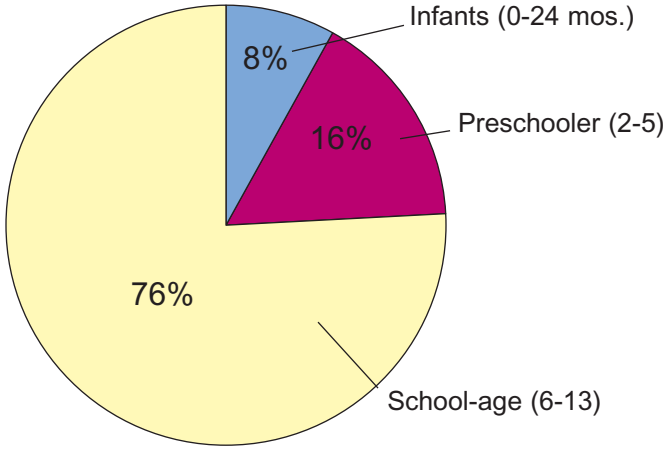
Population of Sonoma County

As of 2000, 458,614 people live in Sonoma County; the County's overall growth rate has been at 18 percent since 1990. Approximately 19 percent of the population is under 14 years of age, the age up to which child care is typically provided. Of these children, 12 percent are infants (0 to 24 months), 26 percent are preschoolers (2 to 5 years), and 62 percent are school-age children (6 to 13 years)[1]. Over 56,422 of the County's family households include children (50 percent). Of households with children, over 41,677 (74 percent) are two-parent families and 10,261 (18 percent) are

Children in Sonoma County



Children in Working Families



Source: US Census 2000, Population and Employment Data (Sonoma County, Tables P8 & P46)
"Working Families" is defined as a family household in which all adults are in the workforce.

Sonoma County is a diverse community. Approximately 74.5% of the county population are white; 17.3% are Hispanic or Latino; 3.3% are Asian or Pacific Islander; 1.4% are African American; 1.2% are American Indian and Alaskan Native; and 2.3% Other[4]. At least 15%

A Recovering Economy

According to the Sonoma County Economic Development Board in 2004[6], the Sonoma County economy is past the worst of the economic downturn. Although employment levels are only slowly growing and the County's critical industries are not thriving, other indicators are faring better including rising home prices, low office vacancy rates, and few bankruptcy filings. It is predicted that the local economy will experience a slow recovery in the upcoming years, beginning with positive job growth for the first time since 2000.

An Expensive County for Families

Although less expensive than several of its Bay Area counterparts, Sonoma County is an expensive county in which to raise a family. The overall cost of living in Sonoma County is far above the state average[7]. The median family income is $61,921, 116% above the state median family income[8]. The median home price is $503,000[9], and the average two bedroom rental is $1163 per month[10]. The cost of child care - $8,450 per year for an infant - is among the highest in the state[11].

Californians for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project has estimated the minimum amount families of different sizes need to earn in order to achieve a very modest standard of living with no savings. In Sonoma County, a family with two adults and an infant and preschooler needs to earn $55,967 per year to live without needing public assistance; for a single parent the burden is much greater: he/she must earn $49,836[12]. However, a family of four can earn no more than $39,000 to actually qualify for public assistance in Sonoma County[13]. Because of the high cost of living, a majority of families with children need two incomes to survive in Sonoma County.



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

Working Families in Sonoma County

Welfare reform triggered a dramatic increase in the number of women in the workforce. In Sonoma County, the participation rate

Child Care Needs in Sonoma County

The Need for Child Care for Working Families - Supply, Demand, and Shortage

For parents who choose licensed child care and learning programs, the demand exceeds the supply of such programs in Sonoma County. Two methodologies are used to estimate the demand for child care, a broad estimate and conservative estimate. The broad estimate of demand is based purely on a "need" basis: if all adults in a household work, it is assumed the children need licensed child care. The conservative estimate of demand is based on a "choice" basis using statewide child care

Table 2
Child Care Demand, Supply, and Gaps

AGE CATEGORY	Demand		Supply			Gap in Supply (Excess Supply)	
	Conservative Estimate*	Broad Estimate**	FCCH	Center	Total	Best Case	Worst Case
Infant	3,256	6,128	919	423	1,342	1,914	4,786
Preschool	6,817	12,827	1,886	5,557	7,443	(626)	5,384
School-aged	12,074	36,747	839	5,971	6,810	5,264	29,937

* based on statewide child care utilization patterns (the families who have historically chosen licensed child care instead of other options).

** based on numbers of children in families in which all adults are in workforce.

FCCH: (Licensed) Family Child Care Home

The Cost of Child Care

The Bay Area (including Sonoma County) has one of the highest costs of living in California. Average price levels for consumer goods and services in the Bay Area are 32 percent higher than those in other parts of the country[15]. Sonoma County is among the highest in average cost of child care in the state[16]. Many parents must settle for the child care that is affordable rather than that which they prefer. Center-based infant care is the most expensive sort of care due to the lower child to staff ratio. In Sonoma County, the average cost of full-time, center-based infant care is $757 per month or $9,080 annually[17]. The cost for full-time care of preschoolers in Sonoma County is $546 per month (about $6,550 annually) in a child care center and $670 per month (about $8,040 annually) in a family child care home[18].

Low Income Families

27% or one in four children in the county lives in a family making 75 percent or less of the state median family income, approximately $39,000 for a family of



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

Need for Subsidized Child Care

The high cost of child care presents a challenge to all families seeking care, but it is particularly burdensome for low-income families. Families unable to get the assistance they need must often settle for less expensive and potentially lower-quality care in order to maintain employment. In Sonoma County, 9,762 children (9 percent) are in families living below the federal poverty level[21]. The need for subsidized child care is generally thought to be much greater than the supply of subsidized care, not only in Sonoma County but also across the state. However, quantifying the need is difficult. As of the first printing of this plan, there is no centralized eligibility list in Sonoma County for families wishing to receive child care subsidies. (As of the second printing of this plan in February 2008, there is a centralized eligibility list, administered by the Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County.)

Current and former CalWORKS recipients are eligible for subsidized child care in the form of "vouchers" if they participate in an eligible activity and earn less than 75 percent of the state median income. In June 2004, Sonoma County was providing CalWORKS cash assistance to 4,769 children, food stamp benefits to 11,921 people and MediCal assistance to 29,370 people[22]. Many low-income families not participating in SonomaWORKS are eligible to receive state or federal child care subsidies. It is estimated that only 65% of eligible children are actually receiving state or federal subsidized child care[23]. Some subsidized programs do not meet the child care needs of working parents in that the programs are part day and part year.

Child Care: the Business Link

Businesses in Sonoma County need to have access to a trained and educated workforce. Nationally, 68% companies report having difficulty finding skilled labor[24]. Business benefits from high quality child care and learning programs. According to the National Child Care Information Center, a division of the US Department of Health and Human Services, employers who support the child

Child Care: the Transportation Link

Many geographic areas lack licensed child care capacity due to isolation, transportation problems or economic factors. Thus, families living in rural areas of the county must have reliable transportation to obtain licensed child care. Additional review of the transportation/child care link should be undertaken to see what policy recommendations can

Child Care: The Quality Component

High Quality Care Essential

Providing child care that meets working parents' needs must be partnered with components of high quality child care and learning programs. Quality child care and learning programs are vital for their contributions toward the growth and development of children. Studies have shown that a child's experiences in his or her early years influence future mental development, social adaptation, school readiness, and academic performance[27]. Furthermore, quality early experiences play a significant role in children's social and emotional well being.



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

All children need quality experiences in the very 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 include opportunities for children to play, learn at age appropriate levels, and 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[28]. 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.

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. Many child care programs subsidize the cost of providing high-quality care by charging lower fees; this attracts more families but keeps

Hallmarks of Quality Care

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

Quality Care is a Good Investment

According to a recent Economic Impact Report of Child Care in Sonoma County[29], child care is a $91 million dollar industry in the county, placing it just below dairy receipts. The child care industry employs 2,412 (full time equivalent) people, and enables parents to earn over $193 million annually, greatly contributing to the economic viability of the county. Children thrive in high quality child care and are more likely to be ready for kindergarten and later learning than children who are in low-quality programs. Economists have calculated the savings to society generated by every dollar invested in high quality child care and learning programs: $7 saved for every $1 spent[30]. It is



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

Critical Concerns

The Sonoma County Child Care Needs Assessment (July 2004) indicates that there are needs that must be addressed to improve the quality of life for the county as a whole. This countywide plan will address and make recommendations in five key areas:

- The value of child care and learning programs to the community at large as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents;
- Families' ability to access high quality child care and learning programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child;
- Comprehensive and coordinated services in child care and learning programs;
- Recruitment, retention, and compensation of child care and learning program professionals;
- The relationship between quality, affordable and accessible child care and



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)



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Goals, Outcomes, Strategies and Performance Measures



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Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

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.

Desired Outcomes for Goal 1:

- **Government, business, labor, education and the non-profit sector collaborate to fund and support child care programs.**
- **Social and public policy in Sonoma County represent the needs of the community's children and families.**

GOAL 1 INDICATORS

Indicator 1 : COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

Indicator 2 : SOCIAL & PUBLIC POLICY

Indicator 3: FUNDING

Sonoma County residents have shown their desire for a high quality of life in many past needs assessments and surveys. Residents are concerned with issues of crime, violence, gangs, education and recreational opportunities. Many strive to maintain busy demanding lifestyles in an area that includes an active senior community, a cross section of middle and upper income commuters, students in two major colleges and many unique rural and cultural communities. In a community this diverse, the issues of community ownership of any issue is a formidable challenge.

Needs Assessment

- There are 66,208 working families* in Sonoma County, representing approximately 58% of all families in Sonoma County. US Census 2000 (Sonoma County, Table P44).
- There are 97,848 seniors (age 55 and older) living in Sonoma County. US Census 2000 (Sonoma County, Table P8).
- There are 59,045 non-family households in Sonoma County. US Census 2000 (Sonoma County, Table P14).
- 25,745 children live with a single mother or father in Sonoma County. 69% of single-parent families are headed by a single mother. US Census 2000 (Sonoma County, Table P46).
- 58% of families with children under age six are working families.
- 70% of families with children ages 6 -17 are working families.
- There were 10,950 students enrolled in the Migrant Education Program in Sonoma County during the 2003-2004 school year. Data provided by Migrant Education, Region II, Area I.
- The City of Santa Rosa and the County of Sonoma have elements in their General Plans pertaining to families and families' needs.

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

Community Input Regarding Community Ownership

The heart of this plan is our children and the need for our community to protect, nurture and help them develop to their highest potential. Child care and learning programs are environments where this occurs. Child care is also essential for working families.

A wide spread public education campaign is needed to demonstrate the importance of child care and how it relates to nearly every community issue, from violence and gang prevention, to workforce and economic development. Child care must be seen as a necessary building block of a strong, vital community, as necessary as clean water or good roads. Inherent in this education campaign must be the respect and support of the needs of diverse cultural and economic groups, including those impacted by poverty and geographic isolation.

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

Strategies to Promote Community Ownership

1. **Study national and regional models such as "Is it good for the children?" that have established campaigns to promote the inclusion of child and family issues in policy-making and planning at all levels of the community.**
2. **Launch a widespread public education campaign that includes messages about quality child care and early learning, child development, and parent/provider partnerships. Campaign should emphasize the welfare of children and families as a local priority for all members of the community.**
3. **Develop linkages with local media to provide positive and helpful publicity about the importance of child care and learning programs to families and the community.**
4. **Identify constituency groups that are least likely to support child and family agenda, and develop targeted campaigns to enlist their interest and participation.**

Indicator 1
COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP:

The community at large demonstrates an understanding and knowledge of child development and welfare through increased interest in public education, media and fundraising campaigns about early care and education of children.

Performance Measures

1. There is an increase in the frequency and quality of media coverage that highlights positive messages about children and child care.

2. More parents in the community report being impacted by public education campaigns about child care.

3. Groups that are not directly involved with children participate in child-related events and advocacy.

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

Indicator 2
SOCIAL & PUBLIC POLICY:

Social and public policy in Sonoma County reflect the value of children as the future of Sonoma County.

Performance Measures

1. There is an increase in parent and provider participation in forums and events that advocate for the needs of children and families.

2. A platform of social policy is developed that reflects the community's desire to preserve and enhance quality of life for all citizens in Sonoma County, including children.

3. Strategic planning and political platforms are based on social policies that reflect the community's will.

Community Input Regarding Social and Public Policy

There are many themes for the child care field regarding social and public policy, from advocating for a holistic view of the child to promoting sustained funding for programs that are working rather than limiting funding to new innovations. Whatever the specific message, 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 and new grassroots organizations is necessary to build the infrastructure that can respond quickly and decisively to emerging social and political issues. These groups and the community at large must help to create a conduit by which the community's will and priorities can flow to decision-makers at the State and local levels. This includes the distribution of resources, reforms and improvements in regulations, and other issues that effect children and families.

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

Strategies to Promote Social and Public Policy

1. **Develop social policies that prioritize the health and well-being of children and families in Sonoma County. Establish these social policies with local governments as the basis for public policy and decision-making at all levels.**
2. **Partner with local organizations that educate the community about social and public policy. Hold community workshops and forums on how to organize and advocate for policies and initiatives that benefit children and families.**
3. **Provide education and increase outreach to early care and education providers, parents and community members to encourage participation in local efforts directed at policy changes. Increase participation in advocacy and education groups such as Parent Voices and Family Action, and develop financial support for these and other campaigns that advocate for the needs of children and families.**
4. **Promote inclusion of child and family issues in strategic planning and political agendas.**

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

Community Input Regarding Funding

Many child care and child development programs receive funding from a variety of federal, state and local funding sources. At the local level, federal and state funds are distributed as contracts to community-based agencies, schools, public agencies, and many of the 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.

Local funding priorities tend to encourage expansion and addition of new child care programs while those that have proven effective and are of high quality must redesign what is already working in order to qualify and compete for funding. Funding agencies must realize that sustaining existing quality programs is as important as funding new innovations. Continuity for children and programs must be seen as a higher priority than the discovery of new models and projects.

The following community needs have been identified: multiple-year funding with 5-year strategic plans; coordination and cross-distribution of funding; reducing categorical funding in favor of providing flexibility for programs; 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.

Strategies to Promote Funding

1. **Establish a child care facilities agent to support the financing of construction of child care and early learning facilities. The agent will assist child care providers in brokering financial packages, which combine public and private support.**
2. **Educate businesses about the benefits of subsidizing or offering on-site or near-site child care, including best practice models.**
3. **Increase participation by the child care community in local Chambers of Commerce and service clubs to access business support and funding.**
4. **Identify all potential funding sources, including inkind, to increase the quality, capacity and accessibility of early care and education programs.**
5. **Develop a marketing plan that incorporates all strategies and is tailored to potential funders.**

Indicator 3
FUNDING:

High quality child care and early learning programs are supported through increased legislative advocacy and public policy which acknowledges and provides funding to meet the needs of families.

Performance Measures

1. New funding sources are identified that can sustain current quality child care programs.

2. RFPs reflect the community's needs without fragmenting service delivery.

3. Business, government and the child care community meet to exchange expertise.

Goal 2: All families with children birth to age 18 have access to high quality child care and learning programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

Desired Outcomes for Goal 2:

- **Quality, accessibility and capacity of child care and learning programs are increased.**

Needs Assessment

GOAL 2 INDICATORS

Indicator 1 : QUALITY

Indicator 2 : CAPACITY

Indicator 3: ACCESSIBILITY

- The greatest shortfall of child care in Sonoma County is in infant care. There is also a considerable gap in the provision of child care for school age children.
- Full time infant care spaces in child care decreased by 61% between 1998 and 2004. The result is that there are enough infant spaces to care for only 22% of the county's infants whose parents are working.
- There are enough spaces in child care to serve only 19% of the school-age children and 58% of the preschoolers needing care (based on families in which all adults are in workforce).
- There is a need for full day, full year preschool that is universally accessible.
- Child care providers and preschool teachers on average have 12 or fewer units of early childhood education.
- 40,334 children, or 7 out of every 10 children whose parents work, are in informal child care settings, including relative care, either because parents have chosen those arrangements or because no formal child care spaces were available or affordable.
- Many families are employed in the service sector and have schedules that do not adhere to traditional work hours. Families need care during extended hours, weekends, evenings and nights. Parents who commute to work and student parents who also work need 10-14 hours of care per day.
- It is challenging for parents to find appropriate facilities, trained staff and accessible transportation, especially for school age children where no onsite child care is available and for children who are mildly ill.
- Child care for children with disabilities and mental health issues is scarce and parents struggle to find a provider who will accept their child. There are 6,209 children with special needs between 0 and 13 years of age in Sonoma County. (Sonoma County Office of Education)

- It is estimated that over 2000 children birth to five years have teenage parents, yet only 4 high schools in the county offer onsite subsidized child care, for a total of 76 spaces.

Goal 2: All families with children birth to age 18 have access to high quality child care and learning programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

INDICATOR 1: QUALITY

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 include opportunities for children to play, learn at age appropriate levels, and be exposed to reading and creative expression.

In Sonoma County, a common definition of quality must be explored and adopted among programs that serve children and families. There are many hallmarks of quality that individual programs focus on. Many believe a standardized quality assessment tool should be used to measure and promote quality. Some have placed the emphasis on providers receiving training and mentoring support both to develop and sustain good programs. Others believe that assessment based on a child's needs rather than the credentials of the provider should be considered. In addition, there is dialogue on the value of having economically and ethnically diverse programs, and promoting integration and support for children and families with special needs. 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.

Strategies to Promote Quality

1. **Convene a cross-section of experts to define what constitutes quality in child care programs. The following issues will be addressed in the discussion: licensed/exempt, developmentally appropriate practices/academic standards, cultural competency, health/safety standards, assessment tools/ accreditation, common terminology, training types/levels, need for training in special needs and cultural competencies, how to include small programs, promote family involvement, etc.**
2. **Adopt and promote countywide child care competencies, standards and developmental measures in order to achieve quality child care and early learning experiences.**
3. **Identify and connect child care and early learning programs to resources that help programs achieve accreditation and quality standards.**
4. **Develop incentive, training and mentoring programs that are accessible to all child care providers.**

Indicator 1
QUALITY:

All child care and early learning programs meet standards of high quality.

Performance Measures

1. Local competencies and indicators of quality are defined, published and promoted throughout Sonoma County.

2. The number of child care programs that offer high quality programs is increased as indicated by accreditation standards or by achieving locally defined competencies.

3. The number of child care homes that participate in training and outreach activities is increased.

Goal 2: All families with children birth to age 18 have access to high quality child care and learning programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

INDICATOR 2: CAPACITY

Indicator 2
CAPACITY:

There is an increase in capacity of high quality child care and learning programs including infant care; after-school care on school sites; preschool which is universally accessible (including full-day subsidized preschool); and subsidized child care for all identified populations.

Performance Measures

1. Increase in amount of child care available, including care during non-traditional hours, care for mildly ill children, infant care, school-age care at or near schools, and care for special populations.
2. Reduction in the barriers to developing and sustaining quality subsidized and full-fee child care programs and facilities.
3. Increase in high quality, supervised programs for youth 11-14 years old.
4. Coordinated development and expansion of School Readiness, Universal Preschool and Early Literacy programs.

Community Input Regarding Capacity

Although Sonoma County has a good supply of child care, child development and after school programs in many areas, capacity is uneven and unstable 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 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 and facility availability when they attempt to expand capacity. More education of State policy-makers and local officials is needed to resolve these barriers.

Finally, Junior High age children 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 for parents of this age group for structured

Strategies to Promote Capacity

1. **Identify and mentor 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. **Collaborate with current partnerships, schools, recreation and park programs, clubs and the faith community to increase school age and youth care options.**
4. **Design and implement a 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 School Readiness, Universal Preschool and Early Literacy programs that are accessible to all children in Sonoma County.**

Goal 2: All families with children birth to age 18 have access to high quality child care and learning programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.

INDICATOR 3: ACCESSIBILITY

Community Input Regarding Accessibility

Even in situations when capacity is sufficient to meet the demand for child care, many 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 is also a challenge. Recent funding has begun to address the need for training of child care professionals in integrating children with special needs into existing programs. 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 more programs that have the necessary 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 is limited by language and cultural barriers. Limited outreach into the community on the hallmarks of high quality child care has also contributed to access barriers. The child care field needs to develop translation and outreach workers 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 and interpreter or translation services include Asian, African and East Indian cultures. In addition, 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, development of family child care homes is limited because of the providers' lack of access to services that would help with licensing processes. This

Strategies to Promote Accessibility

1. **Develop training and mentoring programs for providers that include specialized training in serving teen parents, agricultural workers, and children with special developmental and cultural needs.**
2. **Promote ongoing partnerships and linkages among child care programs, parents, and agencies serving children with special needs and school programs to achieve continuity of care, access to inclusive settings and service integration.**
3. **Assess 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.**

Indicator 3
ACCESSIBILITY:

Families can access programs that meet their unique cultural, geographic and special needs.

Performance Measures

1. There are increases in child care services for children with special needs until all identified children have immediate access to service.

2. There is an increase in the number of child care providers and teachers trained in providing quality child care services in inclusive settings to children and families with special developmental and cultural needs.

3. There is a reduction in the specific barriers to access for agricultural workers, teen parents, families living in isolated rural areas, immigrant families and families with limited resources.

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated and coordinated services that support children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and are centered on respect for culture and diversity.

GOAL 3 INDICATORS

Indicator 1 :
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Indicator 2 :
HEALTH

Indicator 3:
MENTAL HEALTH

Indicator 4:
SCHOOLS

Indicator 5:
INFRASTRUCTURE &
COORDINATION

Desired Outcomes for Goal 3:

- **Comprehensive and coordinated services are integrated with child care and learning programs.**
- **Centralized access to information and resources for all programs is increased.**

Needs Assessment

- There are 40 school districts in Sonoma County governing the County's 193 schools (K-12).
- There are 111,447 children in Sonoma County, of which 85,176 are under age 14.
- Of those under age fourteen, 44,702 live in families where all adults are in the workforce.
- While there are many child care spaces at some Sonoma County Schools, there are waiting lists at many.
- There are no child care programs at the Middle Schools in the County, leaving a large number of 12 and 13 year olds without supervision in the afternoon, which is when the most juvenile violence occurs.
- Sonoma County has no formalized infrastructure or agency charged with coordinating child care programs throughout the community.
- Although some elementary schools have preschools onsite, there is very little coordination/communication between the early care field and kindergarten.
- There are several programs to address the health and mental health of children in child care and to assist child care programs in designing environments that promote optimal child development. However, more coordination is needed between support programs.
- Head Start serves approximately 520 children per year. It can be used as a model of integration.
- There are few examples of elementary schools acting as neighborhood hubs where community services can be offered to the general public.

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated and coordinated services that support children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and are centered on respect for culture and diversity.

INDICATOR 1: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

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 childrens' 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.

More events that bring these two groups together such as California Parenting Institute's Family Expo are natural opportunities to catalyze partnerships and share information. Family friendly resource centers and parenting classes are also good environments to form partnerships and share information, as long as they are affordable for parents and responsive to parents' time constraints and cultural needs. Whatever the specific environment, it is

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 early learning facilities to support families through child and family developmental transitions.**
3. **Develop and provide opportunities for family members, in all family structures, to participate in child care and learning programs, including early literacy initiatives.**
4. **Increase awareness and expansion of existing programs that incorporate family participation in child care and early learning programs.**
5. **Conduct a community wide public education campaign that informs citizens of the importance of quality child care and empowers parents to become involved in advocating for quality programs.**
6. **Assist families in developing the skills to get involved in their child's care.**

Indicator 1
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:

Child care and early learning programs will provide opportunities for family involvement on a consistent basis.

Performance Measures

1. Increased family participation in child care and learning program activities.
2. Family support components included in all child care programs.
3. Improved support for programs that encourage involvement of the whole family.
4. Improved quality and dissemination of information on parenting classes, family support services, etc.
5. Increased frequency and quality of positive public education messages about child care in the media.
6. Increased membership and participation in parent advocacy and education groups.

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated and coordinated services that support children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and are centered on respect for culture and diversity.

INDICATOR 2: HEALTH

Indicator 2
HEALTH:

An infrastructure between child care and early learning programs and health services is developed to improve the health and well being of children.

Performance Measures

1. Collaboration between health care agencies and child care programs results in improved health services and increased access to health services for families.

2. Families and child care providers receive increased information and education regarding health and safety.

Community Input Regarding 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. All of these community health issues impact children, families and child care providers. In order to address these health issues, service integration and coordination between health agencies and child care providers must expand until all providers have access to vital health information and education.

Child care needs to be placed in the context of the larger systems (health, law enforcement, education) 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 developed and sustained. Similar collaborations could be developed between child care programs and law enforcement, violence prevention, drug abuse prevention and health programs.

Model programs that serve to place health and mental health professionals in child care programs as consultants and educators must be sup-

Strategies to Promote Collaborations with the Health Community

1. **Promote a model of integrated child care and health support, where multiple services and information can be provided to families, including health insurance.**
2. **Convene local organizations to develop improved ways to assist children with special needs, chronic illness and physical, mental and learning disabilities within the context of child care and early learning.**
3. **Increase collaboration between public health programs, community clinics, medical providers, law enforcement, and child care and early learning programs to link families to services and information.**
4. **Enhance communication between maternal, child and adolescent health programs and after school populations on issues of youth violence and firearm use, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and child obesity. Include information on youth development and positive lifestyle choices (good nutrition, physical activity) in outreach efforts.**
5. **Coordinate immunization information, referral and services between health services programs, clinics, child care and learning environments.**
6. **Ensure food and nutrition are available in all child care programs, including training to providers and funds for support.**

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated and coordinated services that support children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and are centered on respect for culture and diversity.

INDICATOR 3: MENTAL HEALTH

Community Input Regarding Mental Health

Mental health services for children and families, especially for young children and families with limited incomes, is severely 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. In addition, there is a lack of mental health providers trained in child development and children's mental health, and a lack of bilingual, bicultural mental health providers.

Substance abuse, alcohol abuse and domestic violence continue to impact the mental health of family caregivers and their children. Child abuse and street violence also must be addressed by mental health resources. Sonoma County needs expanded domestic violence services, prevention and education services in addition to mental health treatment services. Lack of mental health resources for families also results in an increase in behavioral problems in child care settings. Not all child care providers are equipped to deal with the special behavioral needs or problems of children exposed to violence or substance abuse.

Strategies to Promote Collaborations with the Mental Health Community

1. **Develop a model of integrated family support and mental health services that includes definition of mental health in this context.**
2. **Develop and support child care and early learning programs that incorporate access to mental health services and support.**
3. **Inform parents of mental health resources and help them access existing services, including low-cost services.**
4. **Establish continuing education opportunities and certificates for mental health providers to specialize in providing effective mental health services to children. Support collaborative efforts that increase access of mental health providers to early care and education programs.**
5. **Establish continuing education opportunities for child care and early learning professionals to understand and promote the link between mental health and early childhood development.**
6. **Work with local institutions to place mental health specialists at child care and early learning settings and provide**

Indicator 3
MENTAL HEALTH:

All child care and early learning programs and family child care homes provide on-site access and referrals to mental health services.

Performance Measures

1. All child care providers have access to mental health consultants and utilize the resources provided.
2. The number of mental health referrals originating at child care and early learning programs increases.
3. Partnerships are coordinated with local universities to establish counseling internships at child care programs.
4. No-cost and low cost mental health services for children are available and accessible to families.
5. Increased number of mental health workers who have received specialized training in children's mental health issues and the needs of families and child care providers regarding mental health.

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated and coordinated services that support children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and are centered on respect for culture and diversity.

INDICATOR 4: SCHOOLS

Indicator 4
SCHOOLS:

There is increased collaboration between school districts, early childhood programs and other agencies providing services to young children and their families.

Performance Measures

1. Awareness of early childhood education as an important part of the educational system is increased, as measured by collaboration among school districts, child care programs and other agencies.

2. Transition from early care to pre-kindergarten is seamless as measured by kindergarten readiness, parent and staff satisfaction surveys and collaboration evaluations.

Community Input Regarding Schools

Sonoma County has forty school districts to coordinate and hundreds of early childhood education programs and child care providers. With the recent movement toward universal preschool and school readiness, 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 be placed in Education at the State and Federal level rather than Health and Human Services so that the linkage between early 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 where a school works with neighborhood resources to provide for families' needs should be expanded and supported by the community. In addition, forums and

Strategies to Promote Collaborations with Schools

1. **Form new and expand existing collaborative relationships between schools, child care and early learning programs, and other agencies to share and where needed develop standards and shared protocols, curricula and testing formats.**

2. **Expand "preschool to kindergarten" connections and interactions between child care and learning programs, families and kindergarten teachers to promote smooth transitions for children.**

3. **Create opportunities for regular dialogue between school leaders, parents and early childhood community.**

4. **Promote the development of schools as neighborhood "hubs" for the provision of services and information to families.**

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated and coordinated services that support children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and are centered on respect for culture and diversity.

INDICATOR 5: INFRASTRUCTURE & COORDINATION

Community Input Regarding Infrastructure and Coordination

Currently Sonoma County has no formalized infrastructure or agency charged with coordinating child care programs throughout the community. Many agencies play specific roles in the provision and coordination of child care services, but there is no countywide, centralized location or body that is responsible for unifying the child care field. If child care is to become valued and respected as part of essential family support, the child care field will need to formalize a structure and clearinghouse for information and establish accountability for child care goals.

Community members have suggested several means to creating this infrastructure, including establishing a staff position in the county for child care coordination and creating a web-based clearinghouse where all child care related information can be posted and accessed. Many believe that a 5-1-1 telephone system is needed to promote access to child and family resources, including child care. A clearinghouse or central location for child care information could include such pressing concerns as substitute registries, funding opportunities, and comprehensive needs assessment data. In addition it would provide access to information on barriers to child care program development as well as information on pending legislation and State or Federal trends. Funding for the staff position as well as information systems would need to be provided from multiple sources, including business, government and private funding sources. Proposed outcomes for such funding proposals would need to reflect the needs of families while at the same time quantifying the benefits of child care in terms of community development and employer interests.

The overall benefits of establishing such an infrastructure include unifying service professionals who provide essential family support services, and establishing child care as a community owned priority for development, as vital as any other established county service (health,

Strategies to Promote Infrastructure and Coordination

1. **Create an early care and education infrastructure for Sonoma County, including a coordinating position or body that acts as an intermediary between child care and business, government and community members.**
2. **Establish a clearinghouse or centralized internet-based system that provides universal access to all information related to early care and education, including needs assessments, planning documents, programs, advocacy groups, community services and funding opportunities.**
3. **Develop research tools and assessments that analyze the cost/benefit of early care and education for employers, law enforcement agencies and policy-makers.**

Indicator 5
INFRASTRUCTURE & COORDINATION:

An infrastructure is developed for child care and early learning programs that includes centralized access to information and resources as well as an identified lead individual or organization to coordinate collaboration efforts.

Performance Measures

1. All members of the community have access to information and resources on child care issues through a centralized clearinghouse.

2. Linkages between child care programs, business, government and community are established and increased to improve coordination and support of all vital services.

Goal 4: Providers and teachers in child care and learning programs are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work.

Desired Outcomes for Goal 4:

- **Recruitment and retention of the child care and learning program workforce are increased.**

Needs Assessment

GOAL 4 INDICATORS

Indicator 1 : TRAINING & INCENTIVES

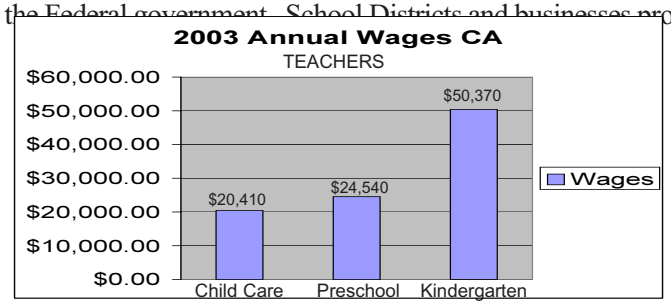
Indicator 2: WAGES & BENEFITS

For many years, the staff turnover in child care programs has been approaching crisis proportions, due in large part to low wages and a scarcity of benefits. The latest data on turnover in child care programs at 27% while licensed family day care homes have decreased in number from 613 in 2002 to 561 in 2004. A starting early childhood teacher with 12 college-level ECE units who works full-time would earn approximately $10.00 in a county where the median family income is $61,921 per year. Recent studies document preschool teachers' mean annual salary at $24,540, child care professionals' annual wages at $20,410, compared with the $50,370 earned by kindergarten teachers. A new wage and benefit study is needed in Sonoma County to document current wages and benefits as a baseline for improvement

Since comprehensive studies have documented that teacher/provider compensation is a key indicator of quality, it is critical to address this crisis collaboratively. A major factor in quality care and education of young children is continuity of care and ongoing opportunities for healthy attachment to caregivers. Staff turnover negatively impacts the quality of programs as well as disrupting these relationships between caregivers and children and families. A well-trained staff cannot be retained in the child care profession as long as compensation falls so far below comparable positions in other fields.

Most attempts to raise salaries and benefits will require a combination of funding, revised reimbursement rates, private and public commitment and support by business and government. Although stipend and training reimbursement programs provide incentives for child care teachers and providers to increase their training and thereby improve the quality of their interactions with children, these are not a solution for low salaries. Currently, of the $27,096,147 in state and federal funding provided to subsidize child care programs, it is estimated that 30% is provided by the State and 70% by the Federal government. School Districts and businesses provide some funding for child care pro-

According to the Center for the Child Care Workforce, in 2003 child care professionals and preschool teachers earned less than



Source: Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2004, "State by State Wages for Child Care Workers, Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers, 2003"

Goal 4: Providers and teachers in child care and learning programs are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work.

INDICATOR 1: TRAINING & INCENTIVES

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 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 few 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, mental and physical health. More funding is needed for salary stipends and training as well as paid release time

Strategies to Support Training & Incentives

1. **Initiate a community based bilingual training for college credit for child care and learning program teachers.**
2. **Increase training courses, workshops and collaborative partnerships on children with special needs, diversity, poverty, and families with special mental or physical health needs.**
3. **Provide incentives to the child care and learning program workforce to increase their professional development and business skills.**
4. **Increase outreach to exempt providers for training.**
5. **Increase the use of state tuition reimbursement funding, stipends for child care permits and permit upgrades through the Child Development Training Consortium.**
6. **Develop additional mentoring programs and increase participation in existing training and peer support programs.**
7. **Increase access to training of all professionals by promoting the availability of courses taught during alternative hours, at varying sites, and using multiple class structures (e.g. online courses).**

Indicator 1
TRAINING & INCENTIVES:

There are increased teacher and provider training opportunities and participation.

Performance Measures

1. Participation and utilization of current programs is increased.
2. Access and availability of a variety of classes, workshops, mentoring programs and incentive programs is increased for all providers.
3. There are increased training opportunities for working with children who have special developmental and behavioral needs.
4. There is an increase in classes and workshops for Spanish speaking providers resulting in an increase in recruitment of Spanish speaking providers.
5. There is an increase in well-trained and available substitutes for child care settings.

Goal 4: Providers and teachers in child care and learning programs are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work.

INDICATOR 2: WAGES & BENEFITS

Indicator 2
WAGES & BENEFITS:

Wages and benefits are commensurate with similar professions, are reflective of the regional economy and are linked to training and professional development.

Performance Measures

1. A wage and benefit study is completed in center-based and family child care programs.
2. There is greater participation of business and local government in financing child care programs.
3. Retention of teachers and providers throughout the county is increased.
4. Commensurate salaries for teachers and providers at all levels is achieved.
5. Participation in advocacy efforts by providers at the State and local level is increased resulting in greater influence on regulations affecting reimbursement rates and regulations.

Community Input Regarding Wages and Benefits

Local anecdotal and needs assessment data show that child care providers and early childhood education teachers tend to leave the field primarily due to the lack of satisfactory wages and benefits. Providing for worthy wages in this profession and allowing for affordable care for parents continues to a dilemma for policy-makers that 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 other service professionals are. It is only in providing adequate compensation and support for these professionals that child care programs can attract 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.

Strategies to Promote Wages & Benefits

1. **Conduct a wage and benefit survey of child care and early learning programs and family child care homes in Sonoma County as a baseline for planning.**
2. **Support the development of a program to raise child care and early learning teacher and provider salaries/benefits at the state and county level.**
3. **Increase the participation of businesses and developers in creating additional dollars for child care and early learning.**
4. **Support higher reimbursement rates for subsidized child care providers from the state, reflective of the regional economy.**
5. **Explore tax breaks, subsidies, and professional links to elementary school for parity in salaries and benefits, based on qualifications and training.**

Goal 5: Quality, affordable and accessible child care and learning programs and are considered a critical part of the infrastructure that helps sustain economic growth and community development in Sonoma County.

Desired Outcomes for Goal 5:

- **Child care programs and facilities are integrated into the Sonoma County infrastructure.**

Needs Assessment

Quality child care makes good economic sense. The licensed child care industry in Sonoma County generates over $91 million in revenues. Centers account for $66 million in gross receipts and family child care homes account for $25 million. The child care industry directly supports 2,412 full-time equivalent jobs in Sonoma County. An additional 1,724 FTE jobs are indirectly supported by the child care industry (through the goods and services it uses). This places licensed child care between the dairy and tourist accommodation industries in total economic output.

Child care enables parents to go to work. It is estimated that child care supports 15,856 FTE jobs in the county by enabling parents to work. The Services and Retail Trade industries are large employers in the County. For parents working evenings or weekends, child care can be extremely difficult to find.

Only the city of Santa Rosa and the County of Sonoma have "family elements" in their General Plans.

No municipality in the County has a Child Care Coordinator on staff to ensure child care capacity is such that it meets communities' needs in location, type, and proximity to public transportation.



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

In Sonoma County, nearly $28 million in state and federal funds are invested in child care. These funds, from the Child Care Food Program, Head Start, State Department of Education, State Department of Social Services, benefit Sonoma County because they are directly invested into the local Sonoma County economy via child care programs and providers.

GOAL 5 INDICATORS

Indicator 1: BUSINESS

Indicator 2 : GOVERNMENT

Goal 5: Quality, affordable and accessible child care and learning programs and are considered a critical part of the infrastructure that helps sustain economic growth and community development in Sonoma County.

INDICATOR 1: BUSINESS

Indicator 1
BUSINESS:

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

Performance Measures

1. More employers subsidize, provide as a benefit, or offer child care options to their employees.

2. Model businesses build child care facilities or establish linkages with neighboring child care programs and act as mentors for other interested business leaders and employers.

3. A "one stop" center is established, publicized and accessed by the business community to improve work/family benefits.

Community Input Regarding Business

Government, business and the private sector must become involved in child care issues and work in partnership to ensure success. In Sonoma County, businesses are becoming more educated about the relationship between child care and the economy via the Economic Impact Report for Child Care (EIR), presented throughout the 2002-2003 fiscal year. The report also shows how 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.

The child care field must develop instruments that speak to the needs and priorities of business leaders. Business leaders in turn must share resources and expertise that would allow child care workers to develop sound business practices. Sonoma County needs an intermediary - either a person or a group - who can translate and interpret both the needs of business and child care.

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" cen-

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. **Develop relevant data to inform employers of the benefits of supporting child care and youth activities.**
3. **Make presentations to key businesses, government and community organizations throughout Sonoma County using current and relevant data, such as the "Economic Impact Report of Child Care in Sonoma County," to illustrate the impact of the child care industry on local economy.**
4. **Establish a centralized resource center to provide businesses with information and consultant services or referrals on developing early care and education facilities and work/family policies and benefits. Make presentations to Human Resource Managers and work with local businesses and government to create options for parents, including family friendly policies, parental leave and extended leave.**

Goal 5: Quality, affordable and accessible child care and learning programs and are considered a critical part of the infrastructure that helps sustain economic growth and community development in Sonoma County.

INDICATOR 2: GOVERNMENT

Community Input Regarding Government

Many of the same principles in establishing partnership between the business and child care communities hold true also for government and community planners. Government and community planners need an intermediary to link with child care needs and issues related to social and economic development. A common language must be defined, or an interpreter used to translate the language of child care into terms that government can understand and appreciate. More research and analysis is needed to determine what child care programs work so the child care field is seen as credible and informed when advocating for financial or regulatory needs.

Government in turn must establish a commitment to children and families by considering their needs 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 must also be willing to consider 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

Strategies to Promote Partnerships with Government

1. **Establish a child care facilities intermediary to support the development of child care and early learning facilities. The intermediary will: a) assist child care providers in complying with city and county regulations; b) provide access to and negotiate with housing agencies; c) collaborate with developers and contractors in planning for construction or rehabilitation of child care facilities; d) develop a guide for early care and education programs which includes models and examples of streamlined permitting and land use regulations; e) compile baseline data and information from cities and the county on existing local child care requirements; f) review and modify zoning, building codes, regulations, and permitting requirements in order to support the development of child care and early education programs.**

2. **Advocate for the inclusion of early care and education facilities in the planning and financing of new development and redevelopment areas. Advocacy efforts include: a) encouraging developers to build child care facilities at or near transportation, housing and employment centers; b) working with legislators and policy-makers to promote and develop tax incentives for the development of early care and education facilities; c) collaborating with Sonoma County and the Cities of Petaluma, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Healdsburg and Sonoma to include family elements in General Plans; and d) recommending ordinances, financial incentives and/or tax credits to support early care and education programs.**

Indicator 2
GOVERNMENT:

Government and community planners will understand the relationship of child care and education to housing, transportation, land use, and economic development as demonstrated by their support of the inclusion of child care in all existing and future development and redevelopment plans.

Performance Measures

1. New child care facilities are financed and developed with the collaboration and support of developers, housing agencies, city planners and contractors.
2. Family elements are included in all General Plans and promote the inclusion of child care as an essential community need.
3. Permitting, fees, regulations, ordinances and tax credits reflect a commitment to developing and sustaining child care programs and facilities.

Potential Community Partners in implementation of *For the Children: A Comprehensive Plan for Child Care and Early Learning, Sonoma County 2005-2010*

Potential partners include, but are not limited to:

American Association of University Women
Bay Area School Age Consortium
California Council of Churches
California Parenting Institute
Catholic Charities
Chambers of Commerce
Child Care Behavioral Consultation Project
Child Care Health Linkages
Children's Health Initiative
Child Protective Services
City Councils
City Planning/Community Development Departments
Community Action Partnership/Head Start
Community Care Licensing
Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County, Inc. (4Cs)
Community Resources for Independence
County Board of Supervisors
Early Learning Institute
Early Literacy Coalition
Easter Seal Society for the Redwood Coast
Exchange Bank
Extended Child Care Coalition
Family Action of Sonoma County
First 5 Sonoma County
Foster Family Services
Goodwill Industries
Jewish Children and Family Services
League of Women Voters
Matrix Parent Network
Mayors and Council Members Association
Parents Place
Parent Teacher Associations
Parent Voices of Sonoma County
Preschool California
Professional Association of Childhood Educators/
Alternative Payment Program(PACE/APP)
Redwood Community Health
Redwood Empire Food Bank
River to Coast Children's Services (RCCS)
Salvation Army
Santa Rosa Junior College
School Districts
School Readiness Programs
Service Employees International Union
Spaulding, McCullough & Tansil
Sonoma County Association for the Education of Young Children
Sonoma County Center for Social Change
Sonoma County Child Care Association
Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council/Sonoma C.A.R.E.S.
Sonoma County Economic Development Board
Sonoma County Human Services Commission
Sonoma County Human Services Department
Sonoma County Library
Sonoma County Office of Education
Sonoma County Community Foundation
Sonoma County Mental Health Initiative
Sonoma State University
State Legislators
St. Joseph Health System
United Church of Cloverdale
United Way of Sonoma County
Volunteer Center of Sonoma County
West Ed
Workforce Investment Board
YWCA Women's Shelter

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Endnotes:

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[2] US Census 2000 Population data (Sonoma County, Table P10).

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Quick View: Sonoma County Plan for Child Care and Learning Programs (2005-2010)

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