

2012 Public Policy AGENDA IN BRIEF



early care &
Learning COUNCIL
New York's child care resource network

ENSURE VITAL SERVICES TO YOUNG CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Investments in early childhood have both short and long term economic benefits for our state, its families, and current and future workforce.



Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Capacity

- **Build Services.** Assure that all families have access to information to make the best child care choices to meet their family needs.
- **Incorporate R&R into QUALITYstarsNY.** Promote child care resource & referral services, particularly training and technical assistance, as an integral part of the implementation and delivery of QUALITYstarsNY.
- **Support Early Childhood Professionals:** Align professional development services with State initiatives designed to improve knowledge, competencies and dispositions; ensuring professionals have adequate supports including scholarships and wage supplements.
- **Expand Research and Evaluation.** Build the capacity to assess R&R services and how they can adapt and expand.
- **Increase Public Education.** Promote R&R services to parents and providers and increase messages about the importance of early childhood.

Subsidy Reform

- **Maintain Funding for Child Care Subsidies.** Support working families and ensure young children have access to quality early care and education programs. Care for children with special needs must also be reimbursed at a higher rate.
- **Seek Child Care Subsidy Reform:** Create a subsidy system that bases parent co-payments on their ability to pay and ensures equitable eligibility rules across the state. The child care subsidy allocation formula must also be examined. A careful examination of legally-exempt providers will also be necessary.

Social and Emotional Health

- **Increase Funding to Infant & Toddler Resource Centers.** Provide social/ emotional consultation in early child care settings to identify problems early, improve access to care and provide effective interventions which are central to children's mental health needs.

Physical Health and Well-Being

- **Support Obesity Prevention in Early Childhood.** With approximately one in five children overweight or obese by their 6th birthday, New York State must establish a comprehensive, coordinated effort to prevent childhood obesity by improving the quality of early learning environments. ECLC supports Child Care Health Care Consultants in CCR&Rs. Funding should support ECLC to coordinate health-related activities with CCR&Rs across the state.

The Early Care and Learning Council is a co-convener of Winning Beginning NY and fully supports the Winning Beginning NY legislative agenda.

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The Early Care & Learning Council and our Child Care Resource and Referral network are committed to providing high quality, equitable child care services within our communities.

More children than ever are in child care programs at a very early age. - 50% of infants have their moms back in the workforce by 6 months.

Quality child care can make a difference in a child's ability to succeed in school and in life.

▪ **Child Care Resources and Referral Agency Capacity**

The Child Care Resource and Referral Network: Follow us into the future

The average working parent misses nearly two weeks of work each year because of child care problems. A report by Cornell University pegs the cost to companies at \$3 billion a year. When quality early care programs are available, businesses report less absenteeism and turnover, while enjoying greater worker retention and productivity. CCR&R agencies have the unique ability to provide the links to parents, child care providers, community agencies, local governments and employers. ***Each CCR&R agency provides families of all incomes with information, consultation and referrals to child care and early learning options.***

CCR&R network agencies can play an integral role in the implementation and delivery of QUALITYstarsNY (QSNY) throughout the state.

Areas of expertise include technical assistance and training and curriculum development to ensure consistent service provision. The Early Care & Learning Council will also participate in statewide planning efforts; coordinate data collection and reporting; and support quality assurance for CCR&R network services.



Child care providers need appropriate training, technical assistance and support to help them provide high quality services and to stay in operation in this very demanding field. ***CCR&R agencies provide resources and support to local early childhood practitioners. This includes workshops to educate providers to meet regulatory requirements, linkages to certification courses and classes leading to college credit programs.***

Through research and education, the Early Care & Learning Council is a leader in building a powerful and unified voice to advance child care policy and programs for the benefit of all children and families in New York State. ***Increasing the research and evaluation capacity of the Council and its network will bring about many more discoveries which can increase knowledge concerning best practices, produce invaluable data and improve the quality of care in New York State.***

Long term educational achievement is uniformly linked to participation in high quality early care and education. Children who start behind stay behind. However, children with a high-quality early learning experience have an advantage. They are 40% less likely to need remedial services, 30% more likely to graduate from high school, and 200% more likely to go on to college. ***CCR&Rs educate families about high-quality care and help them find it; support low-income families to access the financial resources for child care, recruit and train new child care providers; offer providers technical assistance; and encourage government, business leaders and the public to support the expansion of high-quality services.***



■ Subsidy Reform

Promoting Consistent, Quality Care for All Children: Reforming the Child Care Subsidy System. Child care supports the ability of working parents to participate in the workplace.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty:

- Child Care subsidies are associated with an increased percentage of months worked in a year and increased earnings.
- Child care subsidies are strongly linked to increased employment for women who lack high school diplomas.

Subsidized child care is critical to ensuring that low-income working families have the chance to avoid hardship from job loss and income instability. The availability of quality subsidized child care benefits can be critical for parents with children who have special needs. Increased compensation for professionals that provide this support is necessary to ensure that the most qualified individuals are caring for special needs children.

While the economy is still recovering, child care subsidy waiting lists are increasing, counties are being forced to lower income eligibility levels and co-pays for care are being raised. **Consistent statewide standards for eligibility, co-pays and provider reimbursement rates would help to alleviate some of the issues.**

Numerous low-income families rely on subsidized child care to maintain employment and guarantee their financial security. The State of New York has a goal of equal access to care for all children, thus, the subsidy allocation formula needs to be examined with a focus on maintaining and enhancing services to those young children and their families that are most in need.

In 2010, more than 90,000 young children in New York receiving child care subsidies were in legally-exempt child care. **As State funds are spent for child care in this unregulated system, a careful assessment regarding safety, quality and overall effectiveness of Legally-Exempt Child Care must be done.**



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■ *Social and Emotional Health*

Improving the Quality of Child Care for Babies and Toddlers: 85% of brain development occurs during the first three years – we have a responsibility to help every child get off to a good start! Supporting higher quality care for babies means that children are building a strong foundation that will serve them throughout their life span.

The quality of caregiving relationships and early experiences determines the richness of early brain development and lays the foundation for success in school and life. In high quality programs, trained caregivers support the child and his/her family with a warm, positive relationship. For children 0-5 years old, healthy social and emotional development involves the capacity of children to experience, regulate and express emotions, form close and secure interpersonal relationships, explore the environment and learn. Parents with children with emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges need to obtain supports and services so that children grow up healthy and able to maximize their potential.

Increased funding for Infant Toddler Resource Centers across the state would allow for continued training, on-site technical assistance and development of community resources for child care providers. This would have a direct impact on child care quality and continue to build for the future, beginning with our infants and toddlers.

■ *Physical Health and Well-Being*

Developing the Mind and Body: The Whole Child includes Physical Health and Well-Being

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Childhood obesity has both immediate and long-term effects on health and well-being. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, children who became obese as early as age 2 were more likely to be obese as adults. The dietary and physical activity behaviors of children and adolescents are influenced by many sectors of society, including families, communities, schools, and child care settings. Healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, which can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases, need to begin in early child care settings.

Child Care Health Care Consultants are integral to the vision of ensuring healthy practices are in all child care settings. Child Care Resource and Referral Health Care Consultants assist child care programs in developing and monitoring Health Care Plans and Policies that are consistent with New York State regulations and safe health practices. The Health Care Consultant also serves as a resource by providing technical assistance to child care programs in developing and maintaining appropriate health care procedures and safeguards.

With additional funding, the Early Care & Learning Council can provide statewide coordination for this group of licensed professionals that are committed to developing a solution to one of the state's growing health problems.

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