

2009

CHILD CARE BUDGET & POLICY PRIORITIES FORUM REPORT



This report was produced by Child Care Law Center in collaboration with California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Low Income Investment Fund, California Child Development Coalition, The California Child Development CORPS, Parent Voices, California Child Care Coordinators Association, Children NOW, and the seventy participants who attended this year's Forum.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2008, the Child Care Work Group convened for its seventh annual meeting. The focus of this year's work group was budget policies and priorities for 2009 and beyond. As it became clear that the budget and the economic situation in California and throughout the nation was becoming more dire, the child care community wanted to come together to find a unified voice around child care budget priorities. The group also sees important opportunities at the federal level because of the new administration's attention to and interest in early care and education. This year, 70 diverse and committed participants attended, including parents, staff from resource and referral agencies, local planning coordinators, center-based and family child care home providers, advocates, staff from alternative payment programs, higher education faculty, labor, and other professionals.

The day began with context setting where a parent, a provider, and child care advocates spoke about the impact of the economy and the budget both on a micro- and a macro-level. The participants were then divided into six groups and began the process of shaping an advocacy vision for child care, determining budget consensus items and finally identifying priorities for the 2009 budget year. This report captures the results of this day of discussion, which culminated in broad consensus on numerous items that the group wants achieved in the short and long term through the budget process. In addition, we identified seven budget priorities for 2009, as well as a broader vision for child care advocacy.

BUDGET PRIORITIES

- Work toward broad reform of California's budget process.
- Protect current funding of child care and remove barriers to effective spending of allocated funds.
- Advocate that child care investment is a key element of economic recovery.
- Increase investment for early care and education at the federal level.
- Protect and preserve both CalWORKs and non-CalWORKs child care subsidies for low-income families.
- Preserve CARES and AB 212, which reward training and promote retention in the early care and education field.
- Maintain, and incrementally expand, current funding for Community Care Licensing (CCL). Protect and increase resources for CCL and the advocate program.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION ADVOCACY: *Consensus Vision for 2009 and Beyond*

California early care and education policy should:

Support families

- Comprehensive early care and education policy is one component of helping families, but health care and family support must also be included.
- Families must be given real, quality choice.

Provide adequate resources for early care and education

- There are over 200,000 children on the statewide eligibility list, early care and education teachers are sorely underpaid, and additional resources are needed for infrastructure and facilities. Funding to these vital programs and systems should not depend on the rise and fall of the state budget each year.

Make quality early care and education, with real parent choice available across all income levels

- Lack of financial resources should not deprive any family of access to high-quality linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate early care and education for their children.
- Access to early care and education is key to achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency for all families.

Give all children access to high-quality programs

- Many children and families face additional challenges accessing care because of disability, language, poverty or geography. Ensure these challenges do not become barriers by developing new initiatives and investments to increase access.
- Early care and education policy affects all children in care, not just those receiving subsidies. Planning efforts should engage families, unions, businesses, and the early care and education community.
- The Legislature and stakeholders should determine elements of high-quality, determine its real cost and new sources of funding, including appropriate facilities development and maintenance.
- Reimbursement rates should ensure the maintenance of high-quality programs.
- High-quality programs require facilities that support early childhood development and learning.

Value, educate, and adequately compensate the early care and education workforce to support the development of children

- California should promote public and private efforts and systems that recruit, retain, and support a diverse, well-trained, well-compensated child care/ECE workforce that is recognized as professional.

Maintain and further develop a comprehensive early care and education system and infrastructure

- Ensure that birth to five initiatives are integrated and that early care and education works in collaboration with the K-12 system.
- Regional differences should be recognized and reflected in state policy.
- Policy and budget decisions should recognize that early care and education is a high-growth, high-return investment.
- Participate in current planning processes to improve the early care and education system in California.

Strengthen the child-centered focus of licensing and regulation

- Licensing should be a cornerstone of quality and should be sufficiently funded to ensure children in care are safe.

Seek balanced budget solutions and equitable new revenue sources

- California must invest in children at the level necessary to provide for their needs, including early care and education, which is a critical investment for our state.
- The Governor and Legislature should seek additional, ongoing state and federal revenue sources.

2009 CHILD CARE BUDGET CONSENSUS

Systems Issues

- Work toward broad reform of California's budget process.
- Protect current funding of child care and remove barriers to effective spending of allocated funds.
- Advocate that child care investment is a key element of economic recovery.
- Protect and promote economic security for children and families.
- Increase investment for early care and education at the federal level.

Access & Subsidized Child Care

- Protect and preserve both CalWORKs and non-CalWORKs child care subsidies for low-income families.
- Increase access for low-income families by fully funding care for all eligible families on the Centralized Eligibility List.
- Ensure that families below 40% of SMI (equivalent to \$28,284 for a family of four) do not pay family fees.

Reimbursement Rates

- Reimburse for the true cost of care.

Workforce & Professional Development

- Encourage increased compensation for the workforce.
- Preserve CARES and AB 212, which reward training and promote retention in the early care and education field.

Quality

- Ensure investment and access to quality early care and education.

Licensing & Facilities

- Maintain, and incrementally expand, current funding for Community Care Licensing (CCL). Protect and increase resources for CCL and the advocate program.
- Support additional revenue source opportunities for child care facilities.

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