

CHILD CARE WORK GROUP

OCTOBER 4, 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary is an excerpt from the October 4, 2004 work group meeting, the most recent of a series of meetings initiated in the fall of 2002. The following groups co-sponsored this event: the Children's Roundtable Child Care Committee, the Child Care Law Center, the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the California Child Development Corps, and the California Child Development Coalition. For the full version of the report, please visit www.childcarelaw.org.

Principles and Vision

California child care policy should:

- Honor children and ensure that children learn while parents earn.
- Support strong families and strong, diverse communities.
- Maintain and further develop a comprehensive early care and education system.
- Provide adequate resources for access to high quality early care and education.
- Make high quality early care and education, with real parent choice, available to all children.
- Focus special attention on our youngest children.
- Value, educate, and adequately compensate the child care workforce.
- Strengthen the child-centered focus of licensing and regulation.
- Seek balanced budget solutions and equitable new revenue sources.

Financing and Systemic Issues

California child care policy should:

- Maintain, expand, and devote adequate resources to an integrated early care and education/school readiness system.
- Develop a comprehensive planning process linked to proposed preschool initiatives.
- Link child care to comprehensive services.
- Expand services to immigrant families and children.
- Recognize the diversity of California's communities and families.
- Leverage all possible federal dollars for services to families and children.

Access, Affordability, and Eligibility

California child care policy should:

- Maintain child care access for all welfare to work participants, including those in CalWORKs Stage 3.
- Oppose reductions in income eligibility levels, and base eligibility on self-sufficiency standards that reflect realistic, regional living costs rather than on the outdated federal poverty standard.¹
- Maintain equitable fee levels for families.
- Oppose time limits for all subsidized families.
- Increase access for infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, families whose first language is not English, and all other children who face barriers to high quality child care.
- Maintain and expand access for school-age children.

¹ For more information on the self-sufficiency standard, see www.sixstrategies.org.

Provider Payment and Rate Structure

California child care policy should:

- Develop strategies to increase the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) and Regional Market Rates (RMR) to reflect the actual cost of care locally.
- Designate new resources to implement and maintain an inclusive and fair tiered reimbursement system that encompasses state contracted programs, private centers, licensed family child care programs, and license-exempt providers.
- Locate authority over rates in the California Department of Education, not the Department of Finance.
- Carefully evaluate the impact of rate changes, and consider piloting changes to the reimbursement system regionally before implementing them statewide.
- Do not allow the SRR, which supports the higher standards required by Title 5, to fall below the RMR in any area of California.

Staff Compensation, Professional Development, and Retention

California child care policy should:

- Provide ongoing support for Child Care Retention Initiatives (CRI's) programs statewide, including CARES and AB212.
- Move toward comprehensive and permanent wage enhancements for all teachers and providers working with children, from infancy to school-age.
- Address workforce development issues comprehensively in planning for Universal Preschool.
- Improve and simplify the Child Development Permit Matrix and Credentialing System.
- Build a comprehensive and accessible professional support system for early childhood education students.

Licensing and Regulation

California child care policy should:

- Restore the intent, integrity, and effectiveness of licensing as the foundation of quality care; require more frequent inspection on visits to providers.
- Protect and preserve the licensing system's current health and safety standards.
- Work toward annual visits for all licensed providers.
- Provide increased technical assistance for providers and parents
- Improve the accessibility of information for parents.
- Implement fiscal accountability for Community Care Licensing and make the licensing process transparent.
- Avoid further increases in licensing fees.
- Designate Community Care Licensing as a core health and safety function to protect it from budget reductions.
- Exempt licensing staff and administration from state hiring freezes.