1980 - 1995

15

YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

Crystal Stairs, Inc.

CRYSTAL STAIRS, INC.

"... reachin' landin's and turnin' corners..."

5105 West Goldleaf Circle
Los Angeles, California 90056-1272
(213) 299-8998

KAREN HILL-SCOTT, ED.D.

CO-FOUNDER & DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Karen Hill-Scott is co-founder and Director of Development and Public Policy at Crystal Stairs, Inc. one of the largest private non-profit child development agencies in California. She is also a nationally recognized consultant in child development and children's television, whose current client roster includes TRW, Kaufman & Broad homebuilders, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority, NBC and KCET.

In 1980, Dr. Scott co-founded Crystal Stairs to combine research, service and advocacy in the area of child development. The agency has since grown at a rate of at least 10 percent each year and has been in the forefront of such groups, assisting thousands of low- and moderate-income families with their child care needs. Crystal Stairs is now the largest single, private provider of child-care and child-nutrition services in Los Angeles with South Central Los Angeles as its primary service area. In 1994, over 1700 children received child-care services through the Crystal Stairs Alternative Payment Program, over 5000 families received child-care referral and placement services, and over 9,000,000 meals were provided to children in family child care through the Crystal Stairs Food Program. Last year, Crystal Stairs opened the first combination child-care center/job training program in public housing at the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development. This project is the result of 5 years planning and collaboration with the Black Women's Forum, the City of Los Angeles Housing Authority, the Community Redevelopment Agency, the State of California and the Nickerson Gardens Resident Management Corporation.

Under Dr. Scott's leadership, Crystal Stairs has been awarded over $100 million in child-care contracts and grants which have resulted in prototype service-delivery systems, definitive research on child-care supply and demand, and major policy recommendations on public-finance and public-resource allocation for child care. Dr. Hill-Scott has appeared as a witness for Congressional hearings on child nutrition, welfare reform, and child care legislation. She has also been instrumental in developing and implementing state child-care, family-leave and welfare-reform legislation.

During the last ten years, Dr. Scott has written and lectured extensively about child-care issues and holds both statewide and national appointments to various child development and policy boards. These include the City of Los Angeles Child Care Advisory Committee, the Little Hoover Commission Committee on Children's Services, the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council, the National Black Child Development Institute Child Care Advisory Committee, and the Social Science Advisory Panel for NBC television.

Currently Dr. Scott is working on a national child-care policy through *Child Care 2000*, a national project organized by Yale University, and was one of the conveners of a privately funded (Packard Foundation, Mervyn's Foundation) Economic Summit on child-care finance in California which was held in October 1993. She is a member of the board of Rebuild LA, and is Chair of the Economic Justice Project of the Los Angeles Women's Foundation.

Dr. Scott received her doctorate from UCLA where she has been on the faculty since 1972. She has received an EMMY award for her work in children's television, and the John Harvard Award for Excellence in Community Service from the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of Southern California. Dr. Scott is married, has four children and resides in Los Angeles.

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ALICE WALKER DUFF, PH.D.
CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Alice Walker Duff is Executive Director of Crystal Stairs, Inc., one of the largest private, non-profit child development agencies in California. She is respected for her administrative skills and legislative acumen, and is a well-known advocate for children's services.

Since 1966, Dr. Duff has worked in the fields of education, civil rights, and the arts, specializing in child care and public policy. In 1980, with Dr. Karen Hill-Scott, she co-founded Crystal Stairs, an agency which helps parents find safe, affordable child-care, enables child-care providers to do a better job, and subsidizes child care in South Central Los Angeles. Crystal Stairs also conducts public policy research, and helps feed more than 16,000 children each day in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties, through the Child Care Food Program. In collaboration with the Resident Management Corporation and Black Women's Forum, Crystal Stairs operates a child care center serving children in Nickerson Gardens, the largest public housing development in Los Angeles.

Dr. Duff's research and writing focus on public policy issues in child care and the arts. She was a principal author of the Cultural Masterplan of the City of Los Angeles. Crystal Stairs has earned a reputation for cost-effective, high-quality services and accurate, relevant research.

Dr. Duff has used her administrative experience and research knowledge to influence public policy on child care and encourage its effective implementation. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Educational Partnership; the Los Angeles County Child Care Planning Committee; the Board of Directors of L.A.'s Best; Board of Directors of the California Child Care Resource and Referral Service Network; Los Angeles County and City Child Care Planning Committees; and the Board of Directors of the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force.

Dr. Duff has served on a number of other boards and committees that protect and expand child-care services in California, including the California Children's Lobby Child Development Policy Board; the California Child Care Advocates; the California Alternative Payment Program Association; the Task Force of Child Development Associates/Council for Professional Recognition; and the United Way Region V Child Care Task Force. She was president of the Los Angeles/South Bay Affiliate of the National Black Child Development Institute.

In addition to her professional activism, Dr. Duff volunteers numerous hours in community service. She was a founding member of the Ethics Commission of the City of Los Angeles, and has had a leadership role in the establishment of many continuing organizations including the Occidental College Black Student Caucus, the Black Alumni of Occidental College, the UCLA Black Graduate Students Association and the Black Graduate Students in Education, the California 500 of the Children's Lobby, and the Family Circle of the Lula Washington Contemporary Dance Foundation.

She is a life member of the NAACP and chaired the Historical Markers Committee for the 81st NAACP National Convention, and the Afro-Academic Cultural, Technological, and Scientific Olympics, (ACT-SO), for the Los Angeles Branch. She was active in the parent governing body of a Los Angeles Unified School District magnet elementary school and was a Community Trustee/Integrative Committee member of the Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now (LEARN). She is an active member of the Congregational Church of Christian Fellowship, United Church of Christ.

Dr. Duff was born and raised in Harlem, New York and comes from a long line of social activists. She is married to civil rights attorney, Joseph H. Duff. They have two daughters, Gingi Folayan and Laura Johnay, who are both alumni of the Los Angeles Unified School District Hamilton Humanities Magnet. Gingi recently graduated from Stanford University where Laura is a Senior.

Dr. Duff received her B.A. in Sociology from Occidental College, her M.A. in Sociology of Education from University of California, Los Angeles, and her Ph.D. in Urban Planning: Social Development Policy, School of Architecture and Urban Planning from UCLA.

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I WHO WE ARE

Crystal Stairs, Inc. is one of the largest private, nonprofit child development corporations in the State of California. It was incorporated to provide service, research and advocacy in the fields of child care and development, maternal employment, and family functioning. Founded in 1980 by Drs. Karen Hill-Scott and Alice Walker Duff, Crystal Stairs administers several government funded programs. Special projects are also sponsored by private grants and donations. Our purpose in all activities is to promote healthy, enriching lives for children and their families.

As a service agency, Crystal Stairs is unique in its merger of direct child care service with research and advocacy. The staff of Crystal Stairs is professional, multi-ethnic, bilingual and capable, possessing many years of experience in child care and related fields. The following sections briefly describe the range of services we currently offer.

II. WHAT WE DO

A. **ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT PROGRAM (APP)** - This program helps income eligible families who are working, in school or training, or seeking work to pay for their child care needs. Once enrolled in the program, parents may select care in licensed centers, family child care homes, and license-exempt programs in the APP service area. All or part of the cost of their child care is paid for by Crystal Stairs. Currently, over 1,700 children receive care through this program. Funding comes from several government sources, including the state general fund, the Federal Child Care Block Grant, and Title IV-A At Risk Program, all administered by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.

B. **CHILD CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CCFP)** - This program pays licensed family child care providers for the nutritious meals served to the children in their care. It also furnishes providers with training on nutrition and child development so the children can grow up with good eating habits. Through this program, more that 2,300 providers prepare approximately 25,000 meals each day for over 16,000 children in Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside Counties. This program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Education, Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Division.

C. **CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL SERVICE (CCRRS)** - The primary purpose of the Referral Service is to help parents in South Central and Southwest Los Angeles find quality child care. The CCRRS makes nearly 6,000 referrals a year and lists over 1,000 child care providers. A variety of CCRRS services, including our newsletter, public information activities, and workshops, increase the quality and capacity of child care in our service area. We work directly with parents, providers, community agencies, employers, and employee groups. The funding comes from the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.

D. **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE PROGRAM** - The Child Protective Services Program provides child care for children who are at risk of abuse or neglect. It gives both children and their parents respite from the circumstances that caused or contributed to severe family problems. Administering the child care subsidy is Crystal Stairs' primary role in the attempt to rectify those problems. Counseling or other psychological services are provided by referrals to professionally appropriate agencies. Information on the full array of family resources collected through Crystal Stairs' other programs is tapped to help the these families. The program serves 475 children throughout the year. Funding comes from the Federal Child Care Block Grant and State general funds administered through the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.

E. **GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence)** - The GAIN program is an employment and training program for recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). GAIN is intended to ensure that AFDC recipients can and do compete in the job market, while also ensuring supervised care for their young children. Crystal Stairs provides enhanced child care referrals and assists GAIN participants, Case Managers, and child care providers in making licensed child care arrangements. Crystal Stairs also acts as a liaison for parents and providers between the several administrative agencies involved in this program. Approximately 3,500 referrals are made annually. Funding for this program comes from the state and federal governments, and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services.

F. **SAGE CHILD CARE PROGRAM** - Crystal Stairs developed and manages a school-age child care center in the Nickerson Gardens public housing development. Working directly with the Black Women's Forum, Nickerson Gardens Resident Management Corporation, and local leaders, Crystal Stairs has created a model child care program which includes culturally sensitive science, math, computer, and art/music/dance components. Funding for this project came from a number of agencies, including the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the California Department of Education, Federal Child Care Block Grant, and the City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency.

G. **SPECIAL PROJECTS** - These projects are as varied as the sources that sponsor them. They are funded by individual donations, corporate donations, public grants, private grants, contracts, or on a fee-for-service basis.

1. ***Enhanced Resource and Referral Services:*** Crystal Stairs provides specialized, enhanced counseling for employees of companies that contract for the service.

2. ***Technical Assistance***: Qualified planning and child care professionals provide a wide range of technical assistance using a variety of information the agency has collected on child care needs and related human service issues in Los Angeles County.

3. ***Christopher Hall Cheston Memorial Library:*** This resource library, housed at Crystal Stairs, is open to the public by appointment. The current holdings include readings in child care, child development, social policy and advocacy, education, foundation directories, and fundraising materials.

4. ***Public Policy:*** Members of Crystal Stairs staff serve on a variety of child development boards and committees and provide expert testimony on child care issues. Public policy analyses are developed for specific clients.

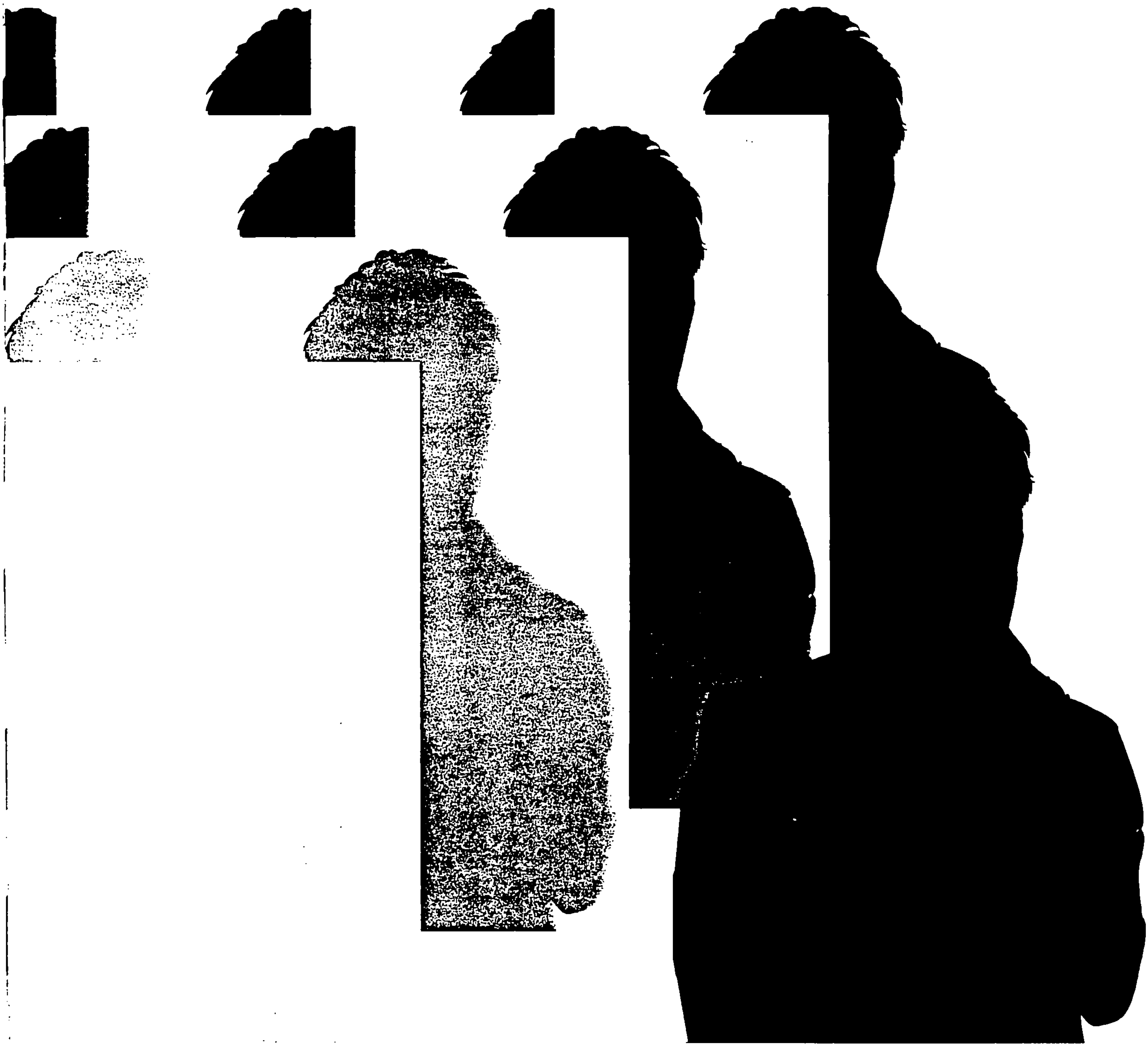
III. WHO TO CONTACT

Information about our programs can be obtained by calling:

(213) 299-8595 for Alternative Payment Program
(213) 299-8595 ext. 219 for the Alternative Payment Waiting List
(213) 299-0199 for the Child Care Resource and Referral Service
(213) 299-1199 for the Child Care Food Program
(213) 299-1290 for Child Protective Services
(213) 299-2393 for the GAIN Program
(213) 249-1361 for SAGE
(213) 299-8998 for Special Projects and for general information about Crystal Stairs
(213) 295-9095 FAX

LEADERSHIP

IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION



Sharon L. Kagan and Barbara T. Bowman, Editors

Commentary

by Alice Walker Duff

The famous John F. Kennedy quotation "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country" always reminds me that the key to success is finding the right questions to ask. In her chapter, Marcy Whitebook asks, "Who's Missing at the Table?" In this commentary I attempt to amplify the Whitebook chapter by asking different questions about leadership in early care and education. The questions are tools to help clarify current understanding of leadership in our field and to better appreciate the Whitebook chapter. The goal is for all of us to envision possibilities that, when realized, will substantially improve our field.

Improving the field is the point of the Whitebook chapter. After asking the title question, Whitebook explains why she thinks early care and education teachers and providers are not acknowledged leaders or spokespersons in their own field. Describing successful programs that challenge current cultural standards of leadership, she suggests how teacher/provider leaders can develop. However, the fundamental question—Why does it matter?—is not asked and is only partially answered in the text. That omission is intriguing. Only when we understand the importance and value of inclusion are we motivated to achieve it.

The Whitebook chapter generates a myriad of questions for each of us in the field. From my perspective the most important one is, Are we telling the truth? It is closely followed by others: Do we mean what we say? Are we taking responsibility for our beliefs and actions? Are we holding others accountable for their beliefs and actions? Are we doing what we can for ourselves and not hiding or waiting for someone else to do it for us? Are we seeking positive outcomes for everyone? Do we want success more than we fear failure? Are we people—not saints, victims, or martyrs? Until we can answer these questions in the affirmative for ourselves and the field in general, teachers and providers will continue to be devalued, unfairly compensated, and absent from the policy table. In addition, the majority of the care we provide will be mediocre. Quality, affordability, and accessibility will continue to elude the vast majority of us. Why? Because complex questions get inadequate answers when meaningful participation from significant segments of relevant populations is missing. Inclusion makes us stronger and more effective.

We are not telling the truth about leadership in our own field, and I believe it is debilitating us. I attempt in this commentary to tell the truth as I see it. The purpose is not to assess blame, or ignite guilt, but to encourage a rigorous, honest look at leadership in our field for the purpose of its well-being. This well-socialized provider has been reluctant to speak difficult truths in public, but serious times require risks. From this beholder's eye, leadership in our field is in serious condition. We are faced with unprecedented challenges without confidence in how to resolve them. Never before have so many families and children needed our services. Not since the Great Depression has the perceived relationship of need to identified resources been so out of balance. As I see the unspoken, but broadly accepted, truth, we in the field are self-interested, territorial, competitive, defensive, and scared. We do not seem to accept that we are human.

The problem is not that we have these human traits. The problem is, we do not know how to effectively handle them. In self-defense we deny them. Too frequently we are dishonest about our motives and beliefs. Our beliefs seem to scare us. Having talked to, worked with, and observed legions of people in this field, I think we fear that the best and the brightest are not in this field. We fear challenges to our assumptions. We fear our fundamental societal problems are not "fixable." We fear that if we win, someone else must lose. We fear that we don't have the answers to our most difficult questions. And we are afraid that we do not have the power, or are not able, to effectuate the answers we do have. We are afraid of the truth because we think it is too difficult or too ugly. Do these fears sound familiar to you? What is your list of unspoken truths?

Whatever the truth is, we are not saying it where and when it matters. We even question if it matters. We need the courage to speak the truth to people who have recognized power. First, and most important, we must gather the courage to let down our well-developed defenses and speak the truth to ourselves.

It may be hard to understand or appreciate why it is important to speak difficult truths in public. It may seem that all it does is expose dangerous weaknesses and thus make us more vulnerable. In fact it does. However, it does something else that is less obvious but more powerful. The truth unleashes incredible positive energy. Whitebook and her friends experienced the release of positive energy when the truth of their beauty was recognized and spoken. Speaking hidden truth also allows attention to be focused on fundamentals. An incredible amount of individual and organizational energy is used trying to keep secrets, maintain illusions, and avoid reality. Thus, in addition to finding new energy, truth eliminates huge time wasters. It actually enables accomplishment of goals and exchange of ideas. What about those exposed weaknesses? Will they be our demise?

If they are exposed and left unattended, probably so. But, if they are exposed and attended to, they increase our strength exponentially and increase our power.

In our imposed or selected roles of victim, saint, or martyr, we deny that we are powerful individuals. That denial keeps us trapped in the status quo and keeps us from being leaders. How do we change the status quo? It is a skill that can be taught and must be taught to a wide spectrum of people, especially teachers and providers. It starts with at least one person confronting a consequential question of value and will. While the answer lies within each individual, the solution requires both individual and collective action, conducted both locally and nationally. While articulating and assigning priorities is important, matching time, talent, and financial resources to priorities is essential. Setting goals and time lines, monitoring progress, seeking feedback, revising plans, and working daily is how change occurs. Knowing this, why have we not significantly improved the compensation of early care educators? Tell yourself the truth—about yourself and those you know.

Reading Whitebook's thought-provoking chapter, I ask myself, Am I part of the problem or the solution? What have I done to create, promote, allow, or accept the conditions she describes? I hope this commentary prompts you to ask yourself the same questions. The answer for me is that leadership for direct-service providers has not been a priority. I have not taken responsibility for changing the status quo for teachers and providers, and I have missed opportunities to raise issues of inclusion and compensation.

The next time you attend a gathering focused on any level of policy, ask yourself the following questions: What is the purpose of this meeting? Who are the stakeholders? How are their experiences and concerns included in this meeting? Do we have sufficient inclusion? What would be a better way—in terms of outcomes and resources—to be inclusive? What can be done to make meaningful inclusion possible? What can I do about it? Do not be afraid to ask these questions in the context of race and gender. Solutions may seem impossible, but when time frames are expanded, the seemingly impossible becomes possible.

What is the truth that keeps teachers and providers, African Americans, Latinos, and other people of color away from the table where decisions are made? As Whitebook pointed out, we in early care and education tend to mirror the larger society. We do not understand the value and need for diversity. We hold values that demean caregiving work performed by women involving children. Likewise, we mirror the values that demean people of color, especially men of color. As Whitebook observes, our values result in excluding people who work with children and people of color as our acknowledged leaders. If inclusion is not convenient, we do not extend opportunities to use and develop leadership skills. My experience matches her hunches about the leadership in our field.

Not only is our view of leadership mired in dysfunctional values, but it is also limited by narrow frames of reference. As Kagan and Bowman point out in chapter 1, attention to early childhood leadership issues has been sparse, despite the acknowledged importance of the subject. We still act as though leadership comes naturally.

In addition to Whitebook's illustrations, here are some specific suggestions to improve our leadership abilities. We need to spend money on leadership development. Personal, agency, corporate, association, and governmental budgets must reflect this priority. When parents become true partners with caregivers, greater personal and political will develops to support the field. We must recognize, celebrate, and reward—both financially and psychically—leadership.[1] Early care and education professionals need to seriously consider politics for themselves.[2] As we use mass media and technology to support our field, we can develop our leadership skills and improve the status of the field. Responding to talk radio shows, writing letters to the editor, and communicating on the Internet through home pages and chat rooms are powerful development activities and ways to raise the public consciousness.

I expect that a common reaction to the Whitebook chapter is, It can't be done, because we can't conceive of how to do it now. We do not have highly developed skills in management or systems change or inclusion. But there are ways to have meaningful inclusion at policy tables and ways to develop early care and education leadership and improve our field. We will find them and implement them if we speak the truth not only to power brokers but also to ourselves. We need to heed the wisdom of Nelson Mandela, prime minister of South Africa, who points out that our worst fear is not that we are inadequate. He insists that our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. If we don't tap into that power now, teachers and providers will continue to be undercompensated, undervalued, and exhausted—and they will be unavailable for our children, families, economy, and future.

Notes

1. The National Black Child Development Institute, for example, recognizes leadership with the annual bestowing of the Sarah Harbin Award. Think about the consequences of every organization doing so and publicizing it in the media. I look forward to the day when the Sarah Harbin is as famous and sought after as the Oscar.
2. Maxine Waters from South Central Los Angeles is an examplar. Grounded in her Head Start experience, she has been a leader for early care and education in both the California State Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Chapter 9

Who's Missing at the Table? Leadership Opportunities and Barriers for Teachers and Providers

Marcy Whitebook

I understand beauty and leadership in similar ways. Both come in many forms, yet in any given culture, we can easily identify the form of beauty or leadership that is most highly valued and acknowledged. My understanding of beauty came to me more than a quarter-century ago, as a college senior in the late sixties, participating in my first women's consciousness-raising group. Ten of us—young, healthy, and lovely in a variety of ways—told our life stories, invariably sharing the familiar pain we all felt about our shapes, features, and coloring. Slowly we came to realize that each of us judged our own appearance in relation to our internalized view of the cultural norm of beauty. (As a woman with dark curly hair, I compared myself most unfavorably to blond Julie Christie, who was then in vogue.) We were failing to appreciate, enjoy, or value our own considerable gifts. That shared understanding released enormous amounts of positive energy, allowing us to acknowledge and value our beauty and, most important, to relax the hold of self-defeating energy.

I would suggest that the early childhood community is likewise caught in the grips of culturally sanctioned notions of leadership and, as a consequence, fails to recognize the full spectrum of leaders among us. In so doing, we stifle important, creative energy in our field, restricting our understanding of who leaders are and preventing the valuable contributions and perspectives of many. Specifically, acknowledged leadership in our field tends to mirror the larger society values that demean caregiving work performed by women and involving children. As a result, the acknowledged leaders in our field typically do not work directly with children, and the leadership qualities of those that do each day are routinely overlooked.

I raise these issues not to invalidate our current leadership but rather to argue for creating a more diverse and representative acknowledged leadership in the early childhood field (I know that my own status in the early childhood field is in many ways directly proportional to my distance from the actual work of caring for children. And yet, I believe, the degree to which I am effective as a leader is directly linked to my own experience working in the classroom and my connection to those who currently are teachers and providers.) Expanded understanding and opportunity for leadership for teachers and providers empower all of us who want to improve the image of child care work. Upgrading societal understanding of the skill and importance of early care and education work is essential to garnering the resources that will lead to greater financial reward for teachers/providers and, ultimately, better services for children and families. If our field does not value the contributions of teachers and providers, it is highly unlikely that the rest of society will.

We cannot fail to remember the crisis in our field. Both the quality of early care and education services and jobs are declining at an alarming rate (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1990). Our current strategies to improve programs for children and jobs for their caregivers are unequal to the daunting obstacles we face. We need new ways of looking at the problems that characterize our early care and education system. The greater inclusion of teachers and providers will expand our leadership not only in numbers but in the breadth of potential ideas.[1]

Characteristics of the acknowledged early care and education leadership

Who currently constitutes the identified leadership in our field? Although only limited studies of early childhood education organizations have been conducted, I have some strong hunches about what more extensive examinations would reveal. My impressions, drawn from more than a quarter of a century working in early care and education and from discussions with teachers and providers, suggest the following characteristics.

The acknowledged leaders of the early care and education field *are not* typically practitioners who spend their days working with children. They may or may not have done so in their past. Frequently, if these leaders worked with children, it was long ago and under dramatically different circumstances. This characteristic of our leadership distinguishes us from other professions, such as medicine or law, in which practitioners rise to positions of status and power. Nurses and K–12 teachers sometimes assume more visible leadership roles, often because their professional organizations explicitly represent their interests and promote them as field leaders. In contrast, the largest professional association in our field, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as well as most of the other national organizations, seldom even includes teachers and providers in its slate of candidates for the Governing Board.

Acknowledged leaders in our field typically hold advanced degrees beyond the bachelor's. This is somewhat predictable because our field is highly educated. More than half of center-based teaching staff and regulated family child care providers have some college background. Among center-based teachers approximately one third have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1990; Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes Study Team 1995). But because of the low pay and lack of recognition for working with young children, many with advanced degrees in the field leave the classroom or home—even if they would like to continue. The net result is a leadership cadre with few teachers and providers and the impression that leadership positions are open only to those who hold higher degrees.

A high proportion of our leaders are associated with a university or other institution of higher learning. Many others work in a government department or resource-and-referral agency. Few come from the family child care homes and the relatively small, community-based programs, both for-profit and nonprofit, that characterize our field. Center directors who are identified leaders often hold management positions within a larger system or chain, rather than working closely with a particular group of staff and children. Because of their educational backgrounds and jobs, most of the acknowledged leaders in our field earn incomes that are several times greater than even our most highly educated and tenured teachers and providers. As a function of their jobs and income, our identified leaders have greater freedom to travel, attend meetings and conferences, and write about their experiences in the field. The acknowledged leadership also includes a greater proportion of males and Caucasians than constitutes the larger early childhood workforce (National Black Child Development Institute 1993).

Barriers to teachers and providers assuming greater leadership roles

As the analogy about beauty suggests, there is a distinction between acknowledged, or recognized, leadership and actual leadership. In discussing the absence of teachers and providers in acknowledged leadership roles in the field, I do not mean to suggest that teachers and providers fail to show leadership qualities. Rather, their leadership often goes unrecognized by those outside the classroom or home. And teachers and providers too rarely occupy positions of power and visibility in which they could act as spokespeople for decisions and policies that influence the distribution of resources in organizations and programs. A number of intertwining factors discussed below contribute to the dearth of acknowledged leadership among teachers and providers.

Failure to recognize and value teacher and provider leadership skills

As anyone who has ever worked with a group of children knows, effectiveness requires well-honed leadership skills. One has to guide, both directly and indirectly, the interactions and movements of many young children (and adults) through space and time. Facilitating the transition of a group of children, for example, from high-energy outdoor play to more low-key circle time, and then on to a snack, strikes terror in the hearts of many novice caregivers. The leadership skills required often do not resemble the more traditional notion of a leader as someone who commands authority and respect and directs others. Leadership skills in an early childhood environment require a more subtle and participatory style that is barely visible to the untrained eye. While co-workers know who has these skills, because they are invisible in the greater society, which views child care work as the natural proclivity of women, they are often difficult to acknowledge in oneself and in colleagues.

Even less obvious to people are the many adult skills required of teachers and providers as they interact with coworkers, parents, grandparents, foster parents, volunteers, trainees, and other professionals. Effective teachers of young children are also supervisors and teachers, and therefore leaders of adults. The style of leadership utilized by effective early childhood teachers and providers with their peers does not call attention to itself, but it nevertheless requires careful honing and practice.

The leadership skills that teachers and providers develop while working with children and families can be applied relatively easily outside the classroom or home, if there is adequate support and recognition. Teachers and providers can translate what they know about working with children and adults to other situations. But all too often, when they participate in settings outside the center or home, their skills and experience are not recognized or valued, and they are, perhaps unwittingly, excluded from information or processes, which in turn limits their participation. For example, in public policy discussions, child care teachers and providers lack access to the most recent information on proposed legislation and thus remain silent in discussions. Most do not receive newsletters or other bulletins that provide policy updates. But teachers and providers have valuable insights about the implications of policy changes for children and families—implications that often are unrecognized even by those more aware of the nuances of a particular bill. Teacher and provider voices are often muffled by those of us who volunteer our opinions, often repeatedly, and we fail to consider whether our group process encourages or ensures everyone an opportunity to share their perspectives. When our early care and education meetings assume certain types of knowledge, neither recognizing the range of information and perspective that people bring to the table nor people's comfort level in the particular venue, those with the least sanctioned skills and experience are often hushed.

The lack of support for teacher and provider leadership roles is related to another contradictory phenomenon in the early childhood field. Although we identify ourselves as educators, we often restrict what we know about how humans learn to our work with children and pay relatively little attention to adult learning and growth (Jones 1986). Most of our conferences and meetings and much of the writing in our field mirror more traditional forms of pedagogy and communication that are less accessible or inviting to many teachers and providers. Our restricted teaching and leadership styles also fail to reflect or encourage the cultural and linguistic richness that is so evident in the early childhood workforce.

Insufficient compensation and its consequences

Inadequate pay fuels high rates of job turnover among early care and education workers, forcing many of our most experienced and skillful practitioners to seek jobs outside the classroom or home, and even the field (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1990; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes 1993; Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes Study Team 1995). Among those who stay, many work second jobs to earn sufficient income to support themselves and their families or, in the case of family child care providers, work exceedingly long hours that make participating in leadership activities difficult or impossible.

The lack of sufficient resources in early childhood settings, combined with practitioners' meager earnings, results in limited access to professional development, participation in advocacy, or other experiences for many teachers and providers. Many leadership activities, such as conferences and meetings, are held during the work week. Teachers and providers usually can attend only if they can be paid for their time and a substitute caregiver can be arranged, but the limited resources in the field make this difficult and all too rare. Payment for travel to meetings, accommodations, and meeting/conference fees are beyond the financial reach of most practitioners.

Insufficient organizational representation for teachers and providers

Relatively few child care teachers and providers maintain organizational ties; only 14% of center staff teachers belong to any professional or occupational group (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1990). Even fewer center staff (4%) belong to a union, although this percentage varies by the sector of the industry (Morin 1991). (Nearly 25% of Head Start workers are represented by unions, and even greater proportions of public school child care teachers work under a collective bargaining agreement, but virtually no workers in for-profit centers have union recognition.) Most family child care providers do not belong to organizations, and many have limited or no contact with other providers (Galinsky et al. 1994). Regulated family child care providers and those who participate in the Child Care Food Program are more likely to be involved in family child care associations (Galinsky et al. 1994). But the majority of child care workers do not participate in organizations that enable them to build sanctioned leadership skills or to assume acknowledged leadership roles among their colleagues.

Most organizational options for teachers and providers also include members from a wide variety of early childhood roles. Typically, teachers and providers are only one of several occupational groups within these organizations, and they must struggle to make their voices heard among a competing chorus of other interests. Within their union locals, child care employees often constitute a small minority of the membership, which may comprise service workers or teachers of older children. The same dynamic operates for teachers and providers within NAEYC.

By far the largest organization in the early childhood field, NAEYC has experienced growth paralleling that of the industry as a whole in the last two decades. From modest beginnings in the 1920s as the National Association of Nursery Educators, which represented nursery school teachers and university-based child development professors, NAEYC now numbers 96,000 members, organized in several hundred regional Affiliates. From 1975 to 1990 alone, NAEYC's membership grew four times larger. Only a handful of teachers or providers have been elected to the Governing Board in recent years. Similarly, while the organization's peer-reviewed journal *Young Children* publishes articles for frontline practitioners and includes practitioner-written articles, in fact, few of the articles are written by teachers not associated with an institution of higher learning.[2]

Promoting teacher and provider leadership roles

Articulating and validating the skills involved in child care work, building a career development ladder that supports better compensation and rewards training, and consciously creating organizational roles for teachers and providers are all necessary steps toward building a more diverse leadership in the field. (These efforts will help diversify the leadership not only by job role but also by ethnicity, as teachers and providers are disproportionately women of color.) In recent years, targeted efforts have been made to acknowledge and build leadership roles for teachers and providers. Profiled below are the Worthy Wage Campaign and early childhood mentoring programs.

The Worthy Wage Campaign, initiated in 1991 by members of the Child Care Employee Caucus within NAEYC, is coordinated by the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force, formerly the Child Care Employee Project. The campaign is a nationwide grassroots effort to empower child care teachers and providers to mobilize to reverse the early care and education staffing crisis. It now consists of more than 200 member groups in 39 states, plus the District of Columbia and Canada. The campaign is organized around the following three principles:

1. creating a unified voice for the concerns of the early care and education workforce—which overwhelmingly comprises teachers and providers—at the national, state, and local levels;

2. fostering respect for those who work with young children by improving their wages, benefits, working conditions, and training opportunities; and

3. promoting the accessibility and affordability of high-quality early care and education options that meet the diverse needs of children and families. (*Child Care Employee News* 1992)

The campaign recognizes the importance of local efforts by child care teachers and providers in bringing the staffing crisis to awareness in their communities yet acknowledges that this voice remains weak or absent in most communities. As the campaign evolved over the last several years, local membership groups have developed and many teacher/provider leaders have emerged. As one Seattle-based teacher explains, "The Worthy Wage movement is the nest where in the last three years I have grown tremendously as a leader and a believer in myself and my work with kids" (B. Wiley, personal communication, June 1994). Local campaigns engage in a variety of activities to build the confidence and skills of teachers and providers as spokespeople for the profession in their communities.

Recently, the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force, responding to requests by local campaigns for assistance, created the Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP), a curriculum and training process for child care teachers and providers. The training is geared to people at a variety of levels of experience in leadership, organizing, community action, and advocacy—newcomers meeting with other teachers and providers for the first time, budding leaders who have some experience but want to strengthen their skills, and experienced leaders who need help in nurturing new leadership and replenishing themselves. The curriculum is designed around the three critical stages of empowerment: coming to awareness, engaging in inquiry and analysis, and taking action. The training helps teachers and providers articulate their own stories, interpret these experiences in the larger context of history and community, and use that knowledge to identify appropriate steps toward change.[3]

Early childhood mentoring programs, another significant development in recent years, promote teachers and providers as leaders in the field. Though the programs vary in structure, often because of state and local regulations and sources and amounts of funding, most of the several dozen now in operation across the country are committed to four common goals:

1. retaining experienced and skilled teachers and providers in early childhood classrooms and homes by providing them with financial incentives and recognition of their skills;

2. offering learning opportunities for skilled teachers and providers, particularly in the areas of peer coaching, reflection, leadership, adult development, antibias work, and advocacy;

3. providing learning opportunities for novice caregivers (protégés) with their more experienced teacher/provider colleagues to further their joint professional development; and

4. improving the overall quality of early care and education programs in the community. (Whitebook, Hnatiuk, & Bellm 1994)

Mentoring programs build leadership by acknowledging the skills teachers and providers already have and by helping them to extend their abilities. In so doing, mentoring programs help stem the turnover that is so destructive to our field and enable new teachers and providers to see that they can be recognized for their work with children *and* adults. Mentors speak eloquently about the process.

> I've been a family child care provider for 20 years. By becoming a mentor and responding to people's questions, I am realizing how much I know. (Whitebook, Hnatiuk, & Bellm 1994, 15)
>
> Becoming a mentor is another step in learning from each other. There is so little respect for this field that we don't recognize what we know or have to offer. The mentor program has changed that—there is a new sense of professionalism and respect. . . . It's different because teacher and providers are talking instead of being talked about. (p. 17)
>
> The program encouraged me to find the strength inside of me. It gave me a voice. We need change, and it can't happen unless we are heard. (p. 12)
>
> Her work with children almost seemed magical; she had such an easy way of guiding and nurturing. Since she has become a mentor . . . she uses the same skills with student teachers, gracefully helping them to question and adapt what they do. (L. Gardinier, personal communication 1995)

Almost all of the mentoring programs create time and offer support that enable providers and teachers to become involved. Most include some financial reward for the mentor through a stipend or raise in salary. The programs recognize that good teachers are good advocates and help mentors work on a wide range of skills. Several programs include set aside time for mentors to engage in the larger community as advocates and spokespeople.[4]

Beyond these more formal projects, a number of programs and organizations support and promote teachers and providers by pursuing a combination of strategies. Underlying each of these strategies is recognition of the importance of bringing child care teachers and providers to the tables where decisions are made, and, equally important, the necessity of creating appropriate resources that permit those who work directly with children to take advantage of these opportunities. The strategies include

• more convenient scheduling, coverage, release time, and financial assistance. Meetings, conferences, and advocacy events can be planned to accommodate teachers' and providers' schedules. Paid leave time can also increase participation in these activities by practitioners. Paid, reliable substitute coverage reduces the conflict that workers feel in leaving the children in their classroom or home program to pursue professional development activities. Groups wanting to involve teachers and providers should consider providing financial assistance for child care, transportation, program fees, and accommodations which otherwise limit access to activities outside the home or classroom.

• acknowledgment of the full range of teacher and provider skills. Teachers' and providers' efforts to build skills related to their work with adults, as well as their work with children, require support. Inservice or community training for teachers and providers can focus on adult relationships within early care and education settings and related issues of adult learning, diversity, and leadership styles. Teachers and providers recommit to the field through engagement in learning processes that validate the full range of their job duties and contributions. Redefining leadership, for example, to include teamwork or sensitive support for a child with special needs serves as important professional recognition.

• support for advocacy as a vital part of professional development. The definition of career development for teachers and providers can be expanded to include advocacy activities and participation in community forums as representatives of the early care and education field (Whitebook 1994). To facilitate teacher and provider participation, paid leave and substitutes or other coverage are essential. For example, when centers are asked to send a representative to a community meeting, they may select and support a teacher to attend. United Front Child Development Program in New Bedford, Massachusetts, offers teachers not only annual paid professional-development leave but also three days of paid advocacy leave so that they may participate in community rallies or other events to improve early childhood services. Workers at the United Front Child Development Program are unionized, so they also have the option to take union leave from their jobs, without loss of seniority and with a guarantee of employment. During the leave they may work for their union and be trained in local organizing and other aspects of teacher representation.

Teachers and providers should be encouraged to participate in other advocacy efforts that encourage their leadership (e.g., the Worthy Wage Campaign, mentoring programs, the leadership and diversity projects coordinated by NAEYC Affiliates, or the new Head Start Leadership Fellowship). Centers and organizations can provide supports to enable teachers and providers to participate. For example, Step One School in Berkeley, California, provides release time to teachers working on community education efforts for Worthy Wage Day. Some NAEYC Affiliates and family child care organizations provide scholarships or stipends to enable their members to take advantage of career development opportunities in the community.

• restructure leadership bodies of early care and education organizations, including centers. Teacher and provider representation in leadership positions must be proactively sought if it is to be assured. For the teachers and providers who constitute one third of the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force board, the organization covers all travel and leave costs, for example. For other organizations with limited contact with teachers and providers, such policies require active outreach and recruitment. Because of the lack of value placed on their work and the lack of recognition for their leadership, teachers and providers may not see themselves as capable of participating. At the center level, encouragement and support may mean reserving slots for teachers on governing committees and providing compensation for additional hours beyond the scheduled workday.

• attention to diversity. As leadership positions in the field open up to those people who work directly with children, we must ensure that these opportunities reach teachers and providers from the full spectrum of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. This may require programs and organizations to examine their approach to diversity and their assumptions about leadership and learning and to develop multilingual training and other resource materials and/or provide translation services. (See Moore, chapter 8.)

Conclusion

Those of us who participated in women's consciousness-raising groups years ago have not escaped the influence of cultural norms of beauty. But as we now come to terms with our middle-age faces and bodies, we have an understanding that helps us navigate the years with more self-acceptance and appreciation for ourselves and other women. And I think we contribute in some indirect ways to a broader understanding of the range of physical attractiveness.

My hope is that the early childhood field will begin to recognize and challenge the cultural standards of leadership that silence many of our most creative and dedicated colleagues. We can challenge the internalized low value placed on child care work in the greater society that is reflected in the limited presence of teachers and providers as our acknowledged leaders and spokespeople. By so doing, we can develop a group of leaders who are willing to question the status quo and to take the necessary risks to make working with young children a career that people can afford to pursue and a career that is respected.

Notes

1. Thanks to members of the Worthy Wage Campaign and the Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance for their assistance in helping me understand leadership issues in the field. Special thanks to Dan Bellm, Alice Burton, Robert French, Laura Gardinier, Patty Hnatiuk, Rosemarie Vardell, and Claudia Wayne for their assistance with this article.

2. A number of teachers and providers within NAEYC want the organization to take a stronger position on compensation. These members tend to be college trained and educated, and many identify strongly as professionals. These teachers and providers view NAEYC as the organization that should represent them on economic issues. In part, many want this because NAEYC does a very good job providing its members with the latest in research and other information relevant to their work with children. It seems to them a logical extension of NAEYC's function as a professional organization. Many also believe, however, that NAEYC's success as an organization is relatively independent of teacher/provider membership. NAEYC ironically has experienced enormous growth during the same period that teachers' and providers' wages and levels of program quality have dropped substantially. Many in the NAEYC leadership would like to see compensation improve, but the issue carries less urgency than it does for teachers and providers struggling to make a living for themselves and their families (Katz 1994; From Our Readers 1995).
3. Training can be arranged through the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force office (1-800-URWORTHY).
4. For more information about specific programs and the network of individuals and groups involved in mentoring, contact the Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance, coordinated through the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESTRUCTURING CALIFORNIA'S CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM: THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF A CHILD CARE SYSTEM FOR CALIFORNIA

March 1997

Quality child care is a necessary component of the State's public policy goals related to the health, economic, educational, and social welfare of children and families.

1) The State must commit to full funding of a child care system that is an essential element of a world class educational system, a robust economy, and the successful implementation of welfare reform;

2) The California child care delivery system must be multi-modal, flexible, informed by relevant data collection and administratively streamlined. The system must include, at minimum, the following child care and development service models:

   -Subsidized child care and development centers
   -Alternative payment programs
   -Family child care home networks

3) The State must support the development of a child care system infrastructure planned and funded to ensure access to quality care for all families with child care needs. This infrastructure must include the following components:

   -Resource and referral agencies
   -Child care nutrition and food programs
   -Training institutions and programs
   -Licensing standards
   -Adequate and affordable business insurance

4) Child care must promote the best interest of the child. Therefore, the educational and developmental needs of children must be key factors in making funding and program decisions;

5) Subsidized child care should be guaranteed for all parents who meet the current state income eligibility level;

6) The State must ensure that the families receiving subsidized child care will continue to be served as long as they are eligible;

7) The child care system must provide for populations with special needs, including, but not limited to:

-Children at risk of abuse or neglect
-Children in foster care
-Teen parents
-Migrant children
-Physically challenged children
-Children with exceptional needs
-Children with language barriers

8) Basic standards for the health and safety of children must apply to all child care providers;

9) There must be articulated goals for the training of child care providers. The state must address the issue of training as a component of promoting the best interest of the child;

10) Child care teachers and providers must be fairly compensated. The current compensation structure requires a resolution designed to reward education and tracing related to child development, and to increase retention among qualified teaching staff and family home providers.

Please address any questions and fax comments to Carlene Davis at Crystal Stairs:
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EXPANDING THE CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF WELFARE REFORM

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, (PL 104-93), requires welfare recipients to work, but eliminates the federal entitlement to child care. Title VI of the Act created a redesigned Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) which consolidated existing Title IV-A child care programs (AFDC/JOBS Child Care, At-Risk Child Care and Transitional Child Care) with the previous CCDGB. The CCDBG funding was not increased sufficiently to meet the new work mandates.

The consolidation and capping of these federal funds gives rise to a number of concerns about the overall design and funding of a child care delivery system that will meet the needs of California. Any changes in the child care subsidy system will affect not only TANF recipients, but also all parents, regardless of their income, who use licensed child care. For many compelling reasons, it is imperative that the State maximizes the funding available for child care by:

- **Allocating NEW state money to meet the new short-fall created by the new federal mandate**;
- **Allocating all of the available federal funds so no child care funds are forfeited**;
- **Fulfilling the State's maintenance of effort requirements**;

In defining the welfare reform plan for California, the role of child care must occupy a central place in the debate. The full funding of child care is a mandatory component of welfare reform. A recent study indicates that the current system is only meeting about **one-third** of the need for subsidized care.[1] With the enforcement of welfare reform work requirements, **that need is expected to more than double over the next three years alone**. As families maximize every opportunity to transition off public assistance, access to child care services can and will be a major factor in determining their ability to do so. In Los Angeles alone, the County Department of Public Social Services estimates that there will be a **need for an additional 38,000 subsidized spaces** between 1998 and 2002. The new TANF need for child care represents **a net increase in the statewide need for subsidized child care.**

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[1]California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, *The California Child Care Portfolio*, 1997

It is critical to understand that a child care policy focused solely on ensuring that TANF families meet the State's work requirements is self defeating because it will force working poor families into the welfare system. By way of illustration, consider the following real life situation of a family currently receiving a child care subsidy:

> Deborah is the twenty-seven year old mother of two boys, aged eighteen months and four years. She feels that if it were not for Crystal Stairs' help with child care she would be on welfare.
>
> "Without the subsidy I would be on welfare," Deborah says. "Child care costs more than a car or a house note."
>
> Deborah has worked as a teacher's assistant for five years. She'd like to be a teacher one day and takes one class a semester because that's all she can handle with two small children. Though she'd like to got back to school full-time she doesn't want to be on welfare.
>
> "I actually wish I could take a leave from work and go back to school full-time, but not on welfare," Deborah said. "I have known, and know people on welfare who have gotten into a rut and made to feel that they don't want to do anything for themselves. I want to be able to provide for my children."
>
> When Deborah was ready to return to work after the birth of her second son, there were cutbacks on her job and she had to go on welfare temporarily. When she was called back to work, her mother with whom she lives, and who had helped with the care of her first son, had become ill and was no longer able to help.
>
> "With the help of Crystal Stairs, I was able to return to work," Deborah said. "The only way I'm able to keep my job is with the subsidy help."

If a child care subsidy were no longer available for Deborah, she would have to either: **quit school** to reduce her child care costs; **forfeit housing** in order to be able to pay for child care so she could continue to work; or, **go on welfare** in order to receive child care so that she could continue to work.

The example of Deborah mirrors the experience of thousands of families who are being served or waiting to be served by California's subsidized child care development system (see Stephanie's story in Attachment B). For families that are economically vulnerable, the ability to access subsidized care often provides the only buffer against welfare dependency. Therefore, ***if the State does not want to create an entirely new caseload of TANF families, the State must also continue to fund a child care system that enables working poor families to maintain self-sufficiency***.

Clearly, a fully funded child care system is essential to the success of any economic plan designed to both transfer families to work and keep families working. Although the expanded CCDBG represents an increase in child care funding, the federal increase alone is not sufficient to meet the current and new mandated demand for services:

- The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the federal dollars appropriated for child care contains $1.4 billion less than what is needed as a result of the work requirements under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996;

- Because the child care grant for each state is based of FY 1994 or FY 1995 expenditures, and California spent more on child care in FY 1996 than in previous years, the amount of expansion funds is actually reduced;

- The Federal FY 1994/FY 1995 base for the California allocation does not account for the undeclared entitlements for the thousands of families statewide who appeared eligible, but for various reasons did not receive AFDC child care benefits.

RESTRUCTURING CALIFORNIA'S CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

The successful design and implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated child care system for California is no small undertaking. In spite of the challenges, we must take advantage of this opportunity to plan for an integrated, flexible child care system that:

1) **identifies child care as a critical component of the State's workforce policy**;
2) **definitively links child care to early childhood education**;
3) **lays the groundwork for a unified system of care for all families.**

As the Legislature makes key decisions about the future of child care and development in California, please consider the following:

FUNDING - Is child care identified as a critical component of the State's economic plan by fully maximizing the funding available for child care?

INFRASTRUCTURE - Is there an investment in the continued development and enhancement of a child care infrastructure that supports quality care and expands services?

GOVERNANCE - Does the proposal create a unified and streamlined system of child care?

ACCESS - Does the proposal elevate child care to a guarantee?

ELIGIBILITY - Does the proposal ensure that all economically vulnerable families will have access to child care?

QUALITY - Does the proposal include mechanisms for promoting and ensuring quality child care?

As practitioners in the field for the past 20 years, we have had the opportunity to work extensively with parents and other consumers, the full array of child care practitioners, academicians, social service agencies and the community at large. In collaboration with the child care field, we have developed a set of policy recommendations (Attachment A) which we believe represent the fundamental elements of a child care system for California. These elements must, in our professional judgement, constitute the key components of the State's child care plan, particularly as it relates to welfare reform. These elements flow from policy recommendations adopted by the following organizations:

California Alternative Payment Providers Association
California Child Care Resource and Referral Network
California Child Development Coalition
Child Care Law Center
Child Development Policy Institute

We urge the committee to incorporate these recommendations into the policies that the Legislature develops related to child care and welfare reform.

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The following are personal stories from families that are currently receiving child care subsidies, families who no longer receive subsidies and credit the subsidy program with keeping their families together and allowing them to maintain employment and families that have been on the waiting list for a subsidy for as long as five years.

ON THE CRYSTAL STAIRS WAITING LIST

STEPHANIE

Stephanie has been on the waiting list to receive a child care subsidy from Crystal Stairs for three years. The single, twenty-six-year-old mother of three children, a son nine, and daughters, aged four and two, works and receives no government help.

Every weekday morning, Stephanie gets her two daughters up before five o'clock. Once dressed, they leave home on foot, in the dark, just before six to walk the one block to the babysitter's house. Leaving her daughters with the babysitter she walks two blocks to the bus stop to begin her two-hour ride to her seven-dollar-an-hour job as a china buyer for a large department-store chain.

"I feel like I'm fifty," Stephanie said. "I have to keep going because I want my children to be able to look up to me."

After an eight-hour day she returns home on the bus, arriving after dark well after the contracted twelve-hour babysitting day and pays a five dollars per day penalty over and above the one hundred dollars a week she already pays. She cannot work overtime and has no job flexibility allowing her to receive pay advances. She can't afford the $280 per month medical insurance offered through her job because she can barely make ends meet on her salary.

Her nine-year-old-son stays with her sister during the week because she can take him to school and is home when he gets out. Stephanie drops him off on Sundays and picks him up on Fridays. He recently confided to his great-aunt that he wants to be with his mother and feels as if he isn't wanted.

"When it was raining, the kids got sick but I couldn't afford to take off," Stephanie said. "People keep telling me to quit working and get on welfare. I don't want to. I've worked since my son was born doing "temp" work or whatever work I could find."

Stephanie prays for a car and to have her son home with she and her daughters every night. With a child care subsidy she believes she will be able to afford a car.

DONNA

Donna did almost everything according to the book. She maintained good grades in school, went to college and graduated. Her seven month old son was not planned, it was her first time pregnant, and she did not want to have an abortion.

She is a bookkeeper, she goes to work every day, but finds that on her $1,600 a month, before taxes, salary, she is unable to make ends meet. There's the $400 a month cost of infant child care, the $150 a month college loan payment, then there is rent, utilities, gasoline, food and daily needs.

"I hope that they increase the money and not take away from it," Donna said. "I'm not a selfish person, even if not for me, for others who need help. It's not very motivating to find myself operating at a negative each month."

Donna loves her baby boy and enjoys her job, but feels that she's missing out on seeing him grow.

"There should be some type of incentive. It's no wonder that some people give up trying," Donna said.

Donna's on the waiting list to receive child care subsidy but knows that she probably earns too much money. Then she wonders what will happen when she needs new tires or the car breaks down. What's she going to do then?. She didn't realize that child care costs so much. But, even if she had, she still wouldn't have been able to terminate her pregnancy.

VIOLA

Viola is a forty-three-year-old mother of three. She receives child care subsidy for two of her three children. Her eleven-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son attend a YMCA child care program.

Viola doesn't feel it's safe to leave children home alone. Her thirteen-year-old daughter no longer qualifies for child care subsidy.

"I've never wanted my children to be latch key kids," Viola said. "The Federal and State child care grants help to keep children off the streets and from getting involved in gangs or pregnant. You have to try to keep them busy and not just preoccupied by what they see on television. I go to work knowing that my children are in good hands.

"Taking the grants away is like taking the breath away from children," Viola continued. "It is important to always have an adult or someone in authority there for them, to listen, that's important. Home alone, who knows what can happen?"

Viola has always worked and feels that the subsidy program has greatly benefitted her and her children. She enjoys working with children and works for the State of California Department of Rehabilitation. She goes to school part-time and hopes to become a counselor one day.

"One word, one pat on the back, might save a child from going in the wrong direction," Viola says. "I want to do whatever I can to help youngsters, to guide them along the way."

From a family of fourteen children, she's used to never having enough money because there is always another need to be met. Last year an older brother fixed her car and gave her money to fill her refrigerator when he noticed how hard she was working and how empty her refrigerator was.

"Every morning I give each of my children a big hug and wish them a good day," Viola concludes. "You never know what's going to happen, and I always want them to know how much I love them."

CYNTHIA

Cynthia has two sons, aged seven and fifteen. Three years ago when she began receiving a child care subsidy for her youngest son, she was working for minimum wage.

"Crystal Stairs has really helped me," Cynthia said. "I wasn't making enough money to pay for child care but I had to work to take care of my two boys and myself."

With her son in child care, Cynthia was able to find work that paid more and now she pays a portion of the child care expense.

"I can work knowing that my young son is being taken care of," Cynthia said. "Fortunately, my job allows me to get off early enough to pick him up on time, otherwise it would cost me late charges for every few minutes that I'm late."

Both of Cynthia's sons attend schools that are off track, so when one is in school, the other is out. Child care provides before and after school care during the semester and full time care when the seven year old is out of school.

NO LONGER RECEIVING Child care SUBSIDY

EVELYN

When Evelyn was accepted in Crystal Stair's Alternative Payment Program in 1981, she was the 18-year-old mother of a one-year-old baby boy whose father was incarcerated and she was on welfare. Today, she is married to the father of her three children, a six-year-old daughter and sons, aged eleven and sixteen and has been employed by a child care agency for six years.

"If it were not for stable, subsidized child care for my children, I would not have been able to stay in the work force and my marriage would probably not have survived," Evelyn states.

Lacking any job training, Evelyn's first job was with a fabric company at minimum wage where she remained for four years moving up to a bank position where she remained for five years. At first the family was a part of Crystal Stairs subsidized child care program and paid no fee. But, as she earned more, she began paying part of the fee until she felt she could stand on her own and decided to take on the entire cost so that another more needy family might have the opportunity to enter the program.

When Evelyn entered the program both she and her husband were chemically dependent and their marriage was very unstable. Both kicked their addictions in 1986. Her husband now works as an aerospace technician. He started at an entry level job when released from jail and has remained there for fifteen years.

Evelyn feels that her family has benefitted greatly from the Alternative Payment Program and that it builds and strengthens families.

SANYA

Sanya received child care subsidy for her daughters, aged three and six, for two years while she began putting her life back together.

Sanya was going through a divorce and was laid off from a job that she had held for several years, when she found out she was pregnant.

"I didn't know that I could get help," Sanya recalls. "It was a really tough time for me. The child care tuition that Crystal Stairs provided kept me from having to get on welfare, and allowed me to take a job making much less money than I'd been making."

Sanya had gotten a new job before her second daughter was born. She's been at her new job for three years and took her children off the subsidy program last October.

"I knew my income would escalate once I got back on my feet," Sanya said. "Losing a job, finding out you're pregnant, and going through a divorce, all at the same time, these are three of the major things that could cause a person to be depressed."

Sanya feels that the child care subsidy helped her to maintain hope during an extremely trying time in her life, while allowing her to put her life back together and not lose her self esteem.

###

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CRYSTAL STAIRS, INC.

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5105 West Goldleaf Circle
Los Angeles, California 90056-1272
(213) 299-8998

Crystal Stairs Mission Statement

The mission of Crystal Stairs is to improve the lives of families through child care services, research and advocacy.

CRYSTAL STAIRS, INC.

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Los Angeles, California 90056-1272
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Crystal Stairs Values With Regards to Child Care

- We believe quality child care is an important societal issue; it is not just a responsibility of individual families.
- We believe quality child care and development services should be universally available and accessible.
- We believe that how children are treated when young will significantly influence the kind of adults they become and their quality of life in the future.
- We believe that parents should be able to choose among a variety of service models.
- We believe that an adequate infrastructure in government, business, and civic organizations is essential to planning, developing policy, and funding the child care system.

CRYSTAL STAIRS, INC.

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Crystal Stairs Values

- We believe in maintaining high ethical standards in professional and personal conduct.
- We believe in achieving excellence in all facets of our service to the public.
- We believe in experimenting and innovating so higher quality models of service delivery can be created.
- We have a fundamental concern for the person and believe in responding to individual needs within our agency and in our performance of service.
- We believe in equitable treatment of all people regardless of ability, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.
- We believe in respect for, and harmony among, racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender groups within our agency and towards communities we serve.
- We recognize the importance of investing in people, whether it be time, energy, resources, or moral support.
- We believe in enabling employees and clients to make informed decisions and to maximize their ability to participate in decisions that affect them.
- We seek and support opportunities and policies which develop and enfranchise the communities we serve.
- We believe in and promote organizational cohesion so that individuals and departments function as part of a whole.
- We believe in planned growth and expansion of our services consistent with the fundamental values and mission upon which Crystal Stairs was founded.

Linda, 3 Children◆Margaret, 1 Child◆Patricia, 2 Children◆Shandra, 4 Children◆Celeste, 2 Children◆Lisa, 2 Children◆Tami, 2 Children◆Tara, 2 Children◆Sharon
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3 Children◆Jean, 1 Child◆Bridgett, 1 Child◆Gina, 1 Child◆Dena, 2 Children◆Lisa, 2 Children◆Lynn, 2 Children◆Carla, 1 Child◆Yolanda, 4 Children◆Angela

The names on this page comprise only one eighth of the families on the Crystal Stairs waiting list. The demand for child care assistance so outstrips present funding levels that the families above can expect to wait FOR SIXTEEN YEARS for services. Each name represents a low income family that is currently working, not receiving welfare, needs help to pay for child care, and is eligible for assistance.

1 Child◆Kim, 2 Children◆Monica, 1 Child◆Ana, 1 Child◆Ginny, 3 Children◆Vida, 1 Child◆Jacob, 6 Children◆Regina, 3 Children◆Sharon, 2 Children◆Earth
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Children◆Latriska, 1 Child◆Rechenda, 1 Child◆Tina, 3 Children◆Zina, 1 Child◆Rosana, 2 Children◆Pauletta, 3 Children◆Lorie, 2 Children◆Tina,

The Child Care and Development Block Grant and the Title-IVA "At Risk" Program Need More Funding

O **Help low income working families stay off welfare**

At Crystal Stairs, nearly 1,000 low income families with over 1,700 children are receiving child care assistance from these programs. The annual program cost is less than $5 million.

> *"If it was not for programs like Crystal Stairs, I would probably still be receiving welfare. There is no way I can afford to pay for child care and keep food and a roof over my kids' head. Without the child care funding, I would probably have to quit working and return to welfare."* K. Allen

O **Help parents get quality child care to enhance their economic self-sufficiency and the growth and development of their young children**

At Crystal Stairs, about 300 community-based child care providers, both licensed and license-exempt, are serving children enrolled in these programs.

> *"I have no other family support system that I could turn to help take care of my children while I'm at work. In order for me to leave them at day care, I need to know that the atmosphere they will spend so many hours in is loving, nurturing, caring and interested in developing healthy children."* S. Robinson-Stansberry

O **Help more families get off a waiting list and on the road to pride and productivity**

At Crystal Stairs, there are 5,000 families on the waiting list. This means that the average low income, working non-AFDC family could wait as long as 16 years to get help from these programs.

> *"I've been on the waiting list for three years and I have not been able to receive help. I am only able to pay care for my youngest son, therefore I am forced to have my other children lock themselves in our house until I return home from work. The child care program is so very important to us low income families and we really need your help to keep us going in our hard struggle to make it on our own and to stay off welfare."* C. Summers

Crystal Stairs, Inc.
5105 W. Goldleaf Circle
LA, CA 90056

Dr. Alice Walker Duff, Executive Director
213-299-8998
213-295-9095 (fax)

Unresolved Questions on Child-Care Funds

■ **Education:** Advocates hail governor's promise of $300 million, but wonder how the money will be administered and how far it will go toward addressing problems.

By CARLA RIVERA and LYNN SMITH
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Like many day-care providers, Olivia Green has a wish list of ways she would use a few extra bucks: Money to buy the house next door to her Crenshaw district center and furnish it to accommodate the many children she has to turn away would be nice. New toys, fresh paint, and perhaps parenting classes for the overly stressed, generally impoverished mothers who make up her clientele wouldn't hurt either.

So Green was excited when Gov. Pete Wilson this week proposed adding nearly $300 million to the state's child-care system. But her excitement was tempered by questions of whether any of the money will trickle down to her small center that cares for nine at-risk youths.

"The issue of the money is great; Pete Wilson, I applaud you. But it's not something you can give one big bunch of money [to] and that's it. It has to continue," said Green, who runs Families Working Together.

Child-care officials and advocates in Los Angeles County welcome the prospect of a new infusion of state money to expand child-care programs for the county's poorest children. But there are no answers yet, they note, about who will administer the funds and how they will be used.

The governor's proposed increase in funding comes as state legislators begin to consider one of the paramount concerns of new welfare policies mandating that more than 220,000 of the state's aid recipients find work next year: what to do with the children.

The debate will spotlight a subsidized child-care system that is a chaotic patchwork of programs with different criteria for eligibility, different administrators, different levels of subsidy and even different waiting lists.

No one is quite sure, for example, how many children are eligible for subsidized care, how many are currently receiving subsidies or how many are waiting to get into programs.

The state Department of Education funds 16 different programs in Los Angeles County at a cost of $209 million to provide subsidized care to low-income families who do not qualify for welfare. The Department of Social Services administers seven programs of its own for families receiving public assistance, including those for GAIN participants, and for former welfare recipients terminated from aid because of excessive earnings.

California also receives federal child-care funding for Head Start programs.

But there is little coordination among the programs, even though authorities know that many families drift on and off welfare and need many of the same services.

It is a paradox of child care, for example, that as

Please see WILSON, B6

WILSON: Vow of Child-Care Funds Raises Questions

Continued from B1

thousands of needy Los Angeles children wait for room in some centers, subsidized spaces in other high-quality centers go unfilled because they are too far away, too costly or do not offer specialized services, such as infant care. Equally frustrating for advocates is the failure of county welfare officials to adequately inform many poor families of the subsidies available to them.

By the county's own estimate, only about 30% of the children on welfare who have been eligible for subsidized care currently receive it. Child-care advocates estimate that overall there are about 350,000 children in the county age 13 and under who live in poverty, making their guardians eligible to apply for subsidized child care.

"The numbers are significantly smaller than one would expect for providing services countywide," said Kathy Malaske-Samu, the county's child-care coordinator. "But the Department of Public Social Services has a different attitude toward child care now than it has in past. They have recognized the relationship between child care and the parent's ability to work. There is a new emphasis, spurred to some degree by welfare reform."

If the Legislature approves Wilson's proposal, Los Angeles County could be in line for about one-third of the $300 million, enough to provide subsidies for as many as 40,000 additional children.

Officials and advocates agree on the vital importance of subsidies: In Los Angeles County, the average pre-subsidy cost of full-time licensed care for a child under the age of 2 eats up 64% of minimum-wage earnings, according to providers. For a preschooler, 45% of minimum-wage earnings is typically spent on unsubsidized child care.

In many ways, the timing of the governor's funding proposal could not have been better for Los Angeles County officials. Earlier this week, a county child-care advisory panel assisted by the Rand Corp. released a study that detailed many of the problems afflicting the system.

It has outlined an ambitious plan to revamp services: expanding facilities in communities that have been underserved; refocusing child development programs, including Head Start, to offer more specialized care; and training new child-care workers, many of whom are expected to be former welfare recipients.

But major questions about the proposed new funding stream remain. Among them:

• Who will administer the money? Wilson has targeted the vast majority of funds—$210 million—for social service departments that serve welfare recipients. Many advocates, however, support proposed legislation that would increase oversight by the Department of Education, where the priority would presumably be on child development.

Both providers and local officials want the money distributed evenly among all low-income clients.

"We have to be very careful when we start targeting the money toward any group because these are basically the same families," Malaske-Samu said. "We have to be very careful as we structure the services that families teetering on the brink don't fall over. A lot of the difference is availability of child care."

• Is the proposed aid more than a one-shot deal and, if so, will future needs outstrip the available money? Providers fear that the proposed funding levels are not nearly high enough to meet the future demands anticipated under the federal welfare overhaul. The Rand report, for example, cautions that within two years, the cost of child care in the county could equal the governor's proposed addition of $300 million statewide this year.

"It's sort of the glass half-full or half-empty," said Alice Walker Duff, executive director of Crystal Stairs in South Los Angeles, one of the largest child-care and development agencies in California. About 44% of their families are on Aid to Families With Dependent Children. "There's supply and demand, and someone has to subsidize the demand for many, many families."

• How will the money be used? Again, state officials have yet to determine what, if any, restrictions will be placed on the funds.

A spokeswoman for the State Department of Social Services said Wilson wants to give counties broad leeway to utilize the funds as they please, whether it is for expanding facilities, adding child-care workers, or providing vouchers for families to help pay for care.

Many providers, however, say that parents should be required to place their children in licensed centers or family day-care homes, rather than leaving them with relatives or neighbors, as many programs now allow.

"That child is not receiving an early childhood education," said Green. "It's a rip-off. . . . I know too many people paying half the money and leaving the kid with whomever. So the baby sits up and watches TV all day, and we're not talking 'Sesame Street.' "

Green's comments echo a debate that rages within the child-care community over the propriety of allowing subsidized care by non-professionals. Many providers cite studies that have shown such care to be less beneficial to children.

State and local officials say parents must be allowed the broadest array of options.

"It's very hard because many people in many cultures feel much more comfortable having someone in the family take care of the children rather than a stranger," said Vivian Weinsten, a member of the county's Child Care Advisory Board and a member of the Rand study panel. The idea is not to get rid of that but to see if we can't make people a little bit more willing to look at issues like health and safety."

And Malaske-Samu said there are many structural barriers in the system that force families to choose less formal and inexpensive child care. Most welfare programs that provide subsidies require mothers to pay for child care upfront and later be reimbursed. Even the subsidy for care by relatives is not a direct payment but adjusted in the recipient's grant.

Despite the myriad questions they have, local providers expressed guarded hope that the current debate will focus attention on the needs of real families and the county's most vulnerable children.

In addition to expanding child-care slots, the new funds proposed by the governor might be used to help coordinate and streamline operations between the social services and education departments, they say.

"We are hopeful that some of this money can be utilized to acquire new spaces as well as rehabilitate and renovate existing ones," said Mildred Lovett, program director for Second Baptist Children's Center, which serves 98 children in South-Central Los Angeles whose parents are either working or in training. "What we have now is families that get a job on Monday and want child care on Tuesday. Unfortunately, a lot of programs cannot accommodate that. We've always had a waiting list, even before welfare reform started."

LOS ANGELES TIMES EDITORIALS

Effective Welfare Reform Hinges on Child Care Accord

New state funding would help parents stay in jobs

The clock is ticking for California welfare recipients. Federal law requires that 227,500 find jobs next year. Real progress on that front would make winners of both the former recipients and the state, providing a better economic future for families and lower government welfare costs.

The key is to keep people in stable jobs, not bouncing on and off the dole as discouragement increases on all sides. One big piece of the puzzle is training in both job skills and the social skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Another is ensuring the availability of jobs, which thanks to the robust economy is looking more possible now. But while welfare mothers and a few fathers get the chance, and a push, to enter the workplace, of at least equal importance is decent and accessible child care, the kind that allows a parent to be reliable on the job because the children are in reliable hands.

Decent and accessible child care allows a parent to be reliable on the job because the children are in reliable hands.

Gov. Pete Wilson gets credit on the child care issue for his handling of an unexpected state surplus. He proposes to spend nearly $300 million in addition to the already budgeted $1 billion in state and federal funds for child care. The total would pay for 430,000 subsidized child care slots.

There is no partisan debate in Sacramento over the importance of child care to welfare reform. There are philosophical differences, over such questions as how long should a new mother on welfare stay home with her child. The governor wants 12 weeks, arguing that welfare mothers should be treated the same as working mothers, who typically qualify for only 12 weeks of maternity leave after childbirth. Democrats would allow welfare mothers to stay home for the first year. With the shortage of infant care and the high cost, which averages $600 a month per baby, allowing a mother to stay home with her baby until age 1 seems reasonable, at least for now.

Democrats and Republicans also differ over how much, if anything, a parent should contribute to help pay for the subsidized care. Many Democrats argue that the parent should pay nothing because the state would incur a high cost in collecting a small fee from the beneficiary. Wilson supports fully subsidized care for two years, after which the parent would pay the full amount. Free care, however, could continue a sense of entitlement that encourages dependency. A minimal payment would teach responsibility.

Wilson should combine his worthy plan with a proposal in the Legislature to increase oversight of state child care programs by the Department of Education rather than the overworked Department of Social Services. This could give youngsters a better chance of entering school ready to learn.

In California, 1.8 million children depend on welfare. More than half are expected to need care when welfare reform requires their parents to work. The state should guarantee it.

Los Angeles Times

Sunday Final

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Child Care Major Pitfall in Welfare Reform

■ **Crisis:** Shortage of facilities and high costs may put poor children in peril, many experts warn.

By MELISSA HEALY
and DAVID LESHER
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

In the nation's unfinished welfare reform puzzle, the crying need for child care looms as one of the largest challenges to bringing more than 2 million public aid recipients into the work force.

Officials are just beginning to recognize the yawning chasm that exists between the number of poor children who will need day care and the capacity of day-care centers and homes to give them affordable, high-quality care.

It is, many warn, the gap that could swallow welfare reform, taking many tiny victims along the way.

Please see WELFARE, A18

CLARENCE WILLIAMS / Los Angeles Times

Boy watches children play at Nickerson Gardens' Sage day-care center.

WELFARE: Child Care Shortage a Looming Problem

Continued from A1

In California, the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of poor children—some as young as 3 months old—is expected to swamp a crazy-quilt of child-care programs that already have waiting lists.

And, even with a greatly expanded pot of federal dollars, the demand for child care threatens to far outstrip the resources of state administrators. The average cost of placing a single infant in a day-care center today is about $7,000 a year—more than the government now pays in welfare to a family of three.

"The key to making welfare work is child care—period," Assemblywoman Valerie Brown (D-Kenwood) told her colleagues recently. "I am perplexed at how we provide enough subsidized child care to move these people into work. We don't even come close to having enough providers now."

The California Legislature, like others around the country, is struggling now to strike a balance between the demands of welfare reform and the need to protect children from placement in inadequate day-care facilities. This dilemma arises as scientists and politicians tout the importance of the first few years of life in determining a child's future productivity and well-being.

> Under a controversial proposal by Gov. Pete Wilson, California would join a handful of other states that require women with infants as young as 3 months old to find jobs as a condition of continued public aid.

At a recent White House summit on early child development, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, the Harvard physician sometimes called "the nation's pediatrician," upbraided President Clinton and lawmakers for turning "the wrong way" on welfare reform and treating the nation's poor children as an afterthought.

"We should have looked at what we were going to do with children before we pushed women out into the workplace," he said. "It's so obvious to anybody."

Nationwide, welfare reform could drive more than 3.5 million children into day care of one sort or another, and roughly 1.5 million will be of preschool age, according to experts and government data. Finding room for them will be difficult in a national patchwork of regulated day-care centers and homes that at last count had room for a little over 7 million children, and are virtually all filled now.

Beyond that, day-care homes and centers are costly and, according to studies conducted in several states, are not currently concentrated in the low-income areas where welfare recipients live in large numbers. Although federal subsidies for child care could total $20.9 billion for the next six years, many state officials are warning that the money will run out well before they can assist all the welfare recipients and working poor who need such subsidies.

Shortage Especially Severe in L.A.

In California, the child-care conundrum is as vexing as anyplace. "Of all the issues in welfare reform, child care is going to be one of the most difficult because we have a finite set of resources and there are all of those children," said an aide to Gov. Pete Wilson.

The state system consists of 19 programs, most of them operated by the Department of Education, the rest by the Department of Social Services.

The system is on overload, with almost 250,000 children in subsidized day care and up to twice that many on waiting lists.

State analysts have not yet estimated exactly how much additional child care will be needed as the state sets about putting about 700,000 aid recipients to work in the next three years.

But, with nearly 2 million children living in California's welfare families today, some experts believe that more than half are likely to need some subsidized care as a result of welfare reforms. That means the state's child-care needs would multiply several times.

The crunch in child-care availability for low-income kids is particularly severe in Los Angeles. Crystal Stairs Inc., which operates the Sage day-care center and is the largest distributor of day-care funds in the city, each year processes nearly $20 million in state and federal grants for care and meals to about 2,100 poor youngsters.

But at Crystal Stairs alone, which serves most of the neediest communities in and around South-Central Los Angeles, more than 7,000 eligible children are on the waiting list.

"The way it is now, somebody can wait for months or a year for child care," said Margaret Pena, welfare lobbyist for the California Assn. of Counties. "Under this new system, that just can't happen. People getting a job that starts next Monday need child care that starts next Monday."

The child-care challenge has been heightened by a controversial proposal from Wilson. Under the plan, California would join a handful of other states—Michigan and Wisconsin among them—that require women with infants as young as 3 months old to find jobs as a condition of continued public aid.

Among all types of child care, none is more costly or less readily available than infant care. And according to the scientific evidence presented recently at the White House, there is no area of child care where high quality is more important.

Those concerns have led many states to exempt from work requirements women with children up to a year old, as the 1996 welfare bill allows.

But Wilson and his staff have argued that women receiving public aid should be subject to the same pressures that confront most other mothers who need to work to support their families. Such women, they note, often return to work six weeks after the birth of a child, or even earlier, and manage to find child care.

Wilson's critics say the comparison is unfair, particularly because day care is in such short supply. They note that middle-class women and even low-income women who are established in the work force are more likely to have the financial means to hire a provider and make such an early return to work feasible.

In California, licensed day-care centers and family homes have room for fewer than 23,000 babies under 2 years old, according to the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network. And in Los Angeles County, the availability of such licensed slots is tighter, numbering just over 5,000.

"When you're hard-pressed to supply enough child care for children under 2, and it's very expensive as well, you have to ask yourself, isn't it better to wait till the baby is 1 year old?" said Patty Siegel, director of California's Child Care Resource and Referral Network. "Expanded parental leave is one of the best solutions to the infant care crisis. We'd much prefer to see longer parental leave."

Special Risk Seen for Infants, Toddlers

The supply crisis in child care, and especially that in infant and toddler care, is closely related to another worry of children's advocates: that federally mandated welfare-to-work programs will compromise the quality of child care, especially for the very young.

Ideally, welfare reform would provide an opportunity to improve the lives of children by placing them in child-care settings that would be safe, stimulating and supportive. But preschoolers, says Wisconsin children's advocate Patricia Mapp, will likely be the "collateral damage" as mothers, pressed by economic need and the federal directive, will leave their kids "wherever there's a warm body."

Nationwide, about a third of women leave their young children in the care of relatives or friends when they work, according to Ellen Galinsky of the Families and Work Institute in New York. For low-income women, that proportion is believed to be considerably higher.

For poor women, leaving children in the care of relatives and friends is low-cost and relatively convenient. But in a 1994 study, Galinsky and a team of researchers found that it is also the lowest-quality form of day care. Only 1% of 226 such situations surveyed were judged to be "potentially enhancing" for a child's intellectual and social development.

They found that about 70% of such situations were "potentially harmful to children's growth."

Less than a quarter of those relatives or friends caring for others' children told the researchers they would choose to be looking after their charges if they had a choice. This kind of attitude, Galinsky says, affects every aspect of their care, from the number of stimulating activities they plan to their reaction to a crying child.

Nor is there much reason to believe that the day-care homes or centers to which parents entrust their youngest children are of vastly higher quality. A much-cited 1995 study of day care in four states found that 40% of those serving infants and toddlers provided "less than minimal care." Along with safety problems and poor sanitation practices, the researchers found unresponsive caregivers and a dearth of toys or other materials that stimulate a baby's cognitive growth.

A study of low- and middle-income African American families in North Carolina found that less-than-minimal levels of care prevailed in more than 60% of the day-care homes and centers examined.

In the final analysis, many experts say, if the children of today's adult welfare recipients are stranded in poor-quality day care, they will be no better equipped to work their way out of poverty. The nation could wean one generation of aid recipients from dependence, only to learn it must turn around and help the next one.

"If we look at welfare reform as a two-generational approach to dealing with the problem, then we have to pay attention to the situations that the children are in," said Arlyce Currie, program director of a nonprofit child-care organization in Oakland for 24 years. "I'm worried that we are going to say, 'Choose whatever you can find'—and not necessarily situations that are good for kids. Then we just put money down the hole again."

Some States Easing Regulations

Across the country, states are responding to the shortage by easing the regulation of day-care providers and encouraging the growth of an industry already plagued by low pay, little training, slim financial margins and indifferent care.

Wisconsin, which has blazed the way in many areas of welfare reform, has created a system that would allow parents in its welfare-to-work program to choose among several levels of regulated care—the most regulated costing the most, the least regulated costing significantly less.

California and a welter of other states are experimenting with ways to encourage welfare recipients to meet their work requirements by providing child care for other welfare recipients.

Along with several other states, Virginia is considering a plan to eliminate minimum educational requirements for those who care for children and raise the child-to-staff ratio in day-care centers from 10 or 12 children per staff member to 15 for each staffer.

Such proposals meet with withering criticism from child-care advocates. They fear that quality in child care—already a hit-or-miss proposition—will become even scarcer as states seek to expand the supply practically overnight. That fear has confirmed the belief of many children's advocates that for federal lawmakers and now for state officials, child care is a distant second consideration—or worse—behind work requirements.

Indeed, the federal welfare reform bill, which would provide as much as $21 billion in child-care assistance funds over the next six years, would allow states to spend as little as 4% of the total funds to ensure and enhance the quality of child care. That is down from a past practice of requiring 25% of all funds to go toward quality assurance efforts.

At the same time, child-care experts are more favorably impressed by other initiatives California is exploring to increase the availability of child care to low-income parents. Wilson and his staff have said they hope to take steps that encourage more companies to offer their employees subsidized day care. Similarly, they hope to find ways to induce more small businesses to pool together and form nonprofit day-care centers.

In a more far-reaching and potentially far more costly proposal, state schools Supt. Delaine Eastin has assigned a task force to study the possibility of making preschool universal throughout the state for children as young as 3 and 4 years old.

"I worry about the children," Eastin said. "I want them to be safe and secure. I support people going into the work force. I just don't want to say the people who have to pay the biggest price is the kids. It is a huge, huge potential problem. . . . I really worry about this."

Lesher reported from California, Healy from Washington.

Jenessa Bright, above from left, Kip Henry and Charles Pruitt put blocks away after playing at the Sage day-care center, where Shaquanda Mason, left, chases instructor Darlene Pickens. The center is run by Crystal Stairs Inc., which serves needy areas of Los Angeles and has more than 7,000 children on its waiting list.

Photos by CLARENCE WILLIAMS Los Angeles Times

Child Care: An Overview

New federal legislation will require welfare parents to work, forcing states to dramatically expand their child care systems. But the high cost of child care in California is a major hurdle.

■ Costs

The average monthly cost of day care for an infant is more than the welfare check (Aid to Families With Dependent Children) for a family of three.

Welfare check for family of 3	$565
Average child care for infant under 2	$585
Average child care for ages 2-5	$407

■ Day care demands

State officials have not estimated how much more child care will be needed under welfare reform. In many cases, they think parents will find alternatives to subsidized care. In all, the families of 2.6 million children would be eligible for subsidized care.

249,189 — Children now in subsidized day care

1.9 million — Children on AFDC

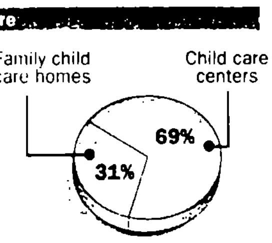
500,000 — Estimated number of children now on waiting lists

2.6 million total — Children whose families would be eligible

Note: Families with income less than 84% of the state median are eligible in California for child care assistance.

■ Children in licensed day care

There are 234,247 slots in 30,730 private homes licensed to care for children in California and 531,848 slots in 8,831 licensed child care centers.



■ State budgets for child care

Gov. Pete Wilson's welfare plan would trigger an increase in child care demand starting in April 1998. The governor's budget for the upcoming fiscal year anticipates a 23% increase in the number of children receiving care, but Wilson aides say the following year will see a sharper rise in child care funding.

1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
$814,555	$992,462	?

Source: Governor's office; California Child Care Resource and Referral Network; state departments of finance, social services and education

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★ SECTION E • SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 1995

THE SUNDAY PROFILE

GENARO MOLINA / Los Angeles Times

Crystal Stairs chief Alice Walker-Duff with open house guests, above, and Malaika Tawasufi, below: A calm center in the middle of a financial funding storm.

A Step Up in Life

Alice Walker-Duff firmly believes that money spent on child care pays off. But can she convince America?

By LYNELL GEORGE
TIMES STAFF WRITER

These are desperate times. Usher in Act 1 of desperate measures:

"What is this? A lounge act?" whispers one bewildered late arrival, eyes wide, sliding into his seat.

Certainly it's not a starched-and-pressed affair of the Roberts Rules of Order variety; these proceedings have shades of some circuitous Lucy Ricardo-Ethel Mertz scheme to usurp the Tropicana, if only for a day.

For its staff appreciation luncheon, Crystal Stairs, one of the state's largest nonprofit providers of child-care services, goes all out—with talk of menus, costumes, music, intricate choreography.

But their skit, "As the World Turns at Crystal Stairs" is more dire than satire.

Alice Walker-Duff, Crystal Stairs' executive director, looks on during rehearsal as Karen Hill-Scott, stealing the scene for a moment with her Casio keyboard, vamps on a few familiar themes. Taking five, she then doles out alter egos to the assembled employees: the Voice of the Future, the Rich Lady, Newt Gingrinch. . . .

"Your roles are relatively small, but significant to Alice," says Hill-Scott, shifting the spotlight back to the new boss, who sits quietly behind broad-framed glasses, scratching notes, her hand a blur, like a student in seminar.

Her unspoken wish: If only the real Newt Gingrich could be as easily defeated as a powdered-hair and Sunday-suited effigy. Plans for his demise? If all goes well, he'll be felled by a brief rain of Nerf balls.

The Republican-backed "contract with America" promises severe repercussions for many federal and state social services. Walker-Duff and Hill-Scott, who oversees development for Crystal Stairs, have done the math. And the numbers are no laughing matter. As much as 82% of their $19-million budget could go by the wayside in the next few years, jeopardizing child-care resource and referral services for parents citywide, a child-care center, a food program and GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence), which provides employment and job training.

"It would be a shame if the funding on the state and federal level was cut," says Charlotte Allen, assistant director of the Hollywood-based social service agency Home SAFE, who also stares at the future with uneasiness. "But if I know Karen and Alice," she adds with a conspiratorial chuckle, "*they will* have a talk with President Clinton themselves. And get it taken care of."

Since the beginning, the duo has made for intriguing foils: Hill-Scott the bluster, Walker-Duff the calm center of the storm. Walker-Duff, 48, co-founded with Hill-Scott the precursor to Crystal Stairs, the nonprofit Childcare Resource and Referral Service, in the late '70s. Their fledgling organization set up shop, using funds from the Joint Center for Community Services, in a couple of storefronts—one in Leimert Park, another in Inglewood—staffed by half a dozen or so students and mothers, the curious and others, who touched down to help out for a spell. But "temporary parttime" somehow protracted into 15 years.

Levi Kingston, board chairman of the Hoover

Please see PROFILE, E6

PROFILE

GENARO MOLINA / Los Angeles Times

During an open house at Crystal Stairs, Dr. S. Chandra Mohan examines Anika Nehesi. The seeds for Crystal Stairs were planted during a classroom urban planning project at UCLA.

Continued from E1

Intergenerational Child Development Center near USC, remembers the landscape as not only barren but indifferent. "There really wasn't much happening in South-Central in terms of child care. People of color didn't have much representation. And when you thought about child-care providers, they were generally out [in] the Valley," he recalls. And no one at that time had anything to do with policy.

Ara Parker, then director of the neighboring YWCA child-care program on Vernon Avenue, quickly made the newcomers' acquaintance. "They were the only black alternative program in the state," says Parker, who now serves on the board of the Washington-based Black Child Development Institute. "They were involving as many community people as they could. And from the very beginning . . . *all* races."

Parker has heard a range of fervent testimonials—formal and otherwise—from mothers: ". . . that Crystal Stairs allowed her to go back to school. To get off AFDC [Aid to Families With Dependent Children]. . . . What people have to realize, if families don't have safe child care . . . they won't get into the [training] programs. And they won't be able to move out in the working world."

That issue is one of the primary engines driving this child-development movement, and Crystal Stairs has been a catalyst.

"I knew that they were both leaders. Not just in their community, but in the child-care community as a whole," Patricia Siegel, executive director of the San Francisco-based California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, says of Walker-Duff and Hill-Scott. "The skills they have are unique. They've been able to bring child care this broad vision."

Incorporated in 1980, Crystal Stairs, which takes its name from a line in the Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son," now operates from sprawling headquarters in a quiet business park within a holding pattern of Los Angeles International Airport.

Walker-Duff and Hill-Scott, both of whom are married with grown children, have learned to negotiate the career-slash-family minefield without bruising too many egos. Both live an easy drive from work—to allow for less road and more family time. Both speak glowingly of their spouses and of their children's accomplishments—of the importance of being grounded.

But the duo's job-scope continues to be ambitious—now including child-care research; resource referral; child development; a food program that reaches 12,000 children daily in Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside counties; parenting classes; employment training programs, and SAGE, a child-care center in the Nickerson Gardens Public Housing Development.

"They have a great reputation for getting things done," says Stephanie Brady of Children Now, a public policy and advocacy agency on the Westside. "They don't step away from a fight. If they identify a need and it goes beyond their set parameters, they are not afraid to push beyond."

For many just starting out as child-care providers, a big part of the puzzle is learning to negotiate the system, developing business as well as legal acumen. Hill-Scott and Walker-Duff took it as their charge to gather information and spread the word among their colleagues.

"Early on," recalls Charlotte Allen of Home SAFE, "Karen and Alice had a sense of the politics before others did. They really knew how to address the issues with the powers that be." As the eyes and ears of those too swamped to keep their fingers on the pulse of governing bodies, Allen says, "they help us to see the light in terms of legislation. In Washington, Sacramento, they make our needs known."

With 5,000 children now on waiting lists for its various services, Crystal Stairs has more than tripled in size and reputation in the past 15 years, primarily through word-of-mouth. But for some in the child-care community, it has not only grown dramatically but has become remote—removed.

"I think Crystal Stairs has gotten a little bit *too* big, as far as serving the community needs," says one child-care provider who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "In dealing with parents I hear complaints about being on the waiting list for years—that they put their name on when the baby was born and now the child is 10 years of age."

That shortcoming has trickled down and re-emerged in other ways.

"I remember when they first started, when they were working with the community. Now, the most we see of Crystal Stairs is their nice building," says the child-care provider. "They need to get back and get in touch with the community. Explain to people why, out of all the money they receive, they can't do more? Why families get accepted to other programs but not theirs?"

Wilma Kiel, Hoover Intergenerational Child Development Center's project director, hears the dissatisfaction, yet clearly sees the dilemma. "There are many parents who complain about the length of the waiting list. The demand is overwhelming. Crystal Stairs has really become a beacon in the child-care community, and therefore parents look to Crystal Stairs to answer everything. I think constant reminders to the community as to what they do would really dispel a lot of . . . misinformation."

Indeed, Crystal Stairs' growth has been startling. Tremendous. For an upstart that began with a staff that could fit in two rooms into one whose embrace includes a good portion of Southern California, some things could be anticipated.

But they didn't, or rather couldn't, anticipate the challenge waiting for Walker-Duff just as she settled into the corner office as executive director two years ago. She stepped in when Hill-Scott stepped down to pursue a new career as a consultant for children's TV programming.

Walker-Duff thought her focus would be on delegating new duties, easing staff into management positions, embracing a multicultural service population. But it wasn't so simple shifting from storefront to corporate office. "And then I was somewhat annoyed when the buck stops *here*," says Walker-Duff, pressing her fingertips on her desktop. "And Newt comes along. It was not supposed to be like that."

'People really do need to express their opinions and let their elected officials know what they really think. Tell them: "I can't work without it. Child-care subsidies mean something for me. . . ." Child care means that children are growing up strong and healthy and able to make a real future for the country.'

Alice Walker-Duff

□

"Life for me ain't been no crystal stair," the mother tells the son.

The poem, one of Langston Hughes' most quoted, acknowledges life's uncertain corners, yet is shot through with the spiritual optimism that Hill-Scott and Walker-Duff felt should embody their mission and philosophy.

This landing, one could say, is full of tacks and splinters—but they know they can't turn back.

The seeds for Crystal Stairs were planted in a classroom project for an urban planning class Hill-Scott taught at UCLA.

"A philanthropic group, the Neighbors of Watts, wanted to know the feasibility of developing child care in the Watts Industrial Park," she recalls. "We hit on the reality that nobody in the city knew where all the child care was. . . . I knew then that we had information nobody else had."

Most people were lost in their search for child care, according to Hill-Scott's findings, and the existing centers were experiencing unstable enrollment.

By the time the state began allocating funds in the late 1970s, to experiment in reducing the cost of child care, Hill-Scott was ready with the proposal.

In September, 1976, the letter arrived: *Congratulations, you are funded*. "And then I go, Oh no! I'm a full-time professor, I've been signed to run a program."

That letter, however, dovetailed with Walker-Duff's return to Los Angeles—with two new babies, Gingi and Laura, in tow. She had followed her husband, civil rights lawyer and former L.A. NAACP President Joe Duff, to New York while he served in the Air Force.

"I had this idea that maybe Alice would manage this project for me," recalls Hill-Scott, adding that she knew full well that Walker-Duff, whom she had met in graduate school at UCLA, would find it outrageous. "At least till the end of the academic year. And I could figure out another plan.

"From October to June . . . eight short months . . . until end of the academic year," Hill-Scott promised.

Walker-Duff thought it over. This wasn't exactly part of her plan to work in politics.

"Eight short months," Hill-Scott promised.

For a friend, Walker-Duff agreed.

"At least till the end the year . . . and I could figure out another plan. . . ."

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Eighteen years later, Alice Walker-Duff has placed herself just shy of the 10 o'clock position at the conference table. A brainstorming session has been called to discuss ways to raise Crystal Stairs' profile amid the possible budget cutbacks.

She is long-limbed, with graceful hands and the countenance of a leader. Yet much about her is muted, unobtrusive: her clothing, billowy slacks and oversized mud cloth vest; her face free of makeup; even her voice, as soothing and hypnotic as water on rock. Her calm she attributes to church and yoga. The patience of the ages. Tried-and-true methods for centering.

"She's like so many women who are sort of deceptive," says long-time friend Brenda Shockley, president of Community Build Inc., a nonprofit organization that is promoting business in L.A.'s African American communities. "The person that you see at first blush does not begin to show the depth of the person who is really there."

"What I like about her," says Brady of Children Now, "is that she is not looking for personal acclaim. She is uncomfortable in the spotlight, yet she knows how great the need is."

This is where being an incurable optimist comes in most handy.

"Absolute worst-case scenario is we lose 82% of our budget. I don't believe for a minute that we are going to lose that," Walker-Duff coolly informs the assembly.

Her goals for Crystal Stairs are just as orderly as her laser-printed meeting agenda. Diversifying its funding is the first step. But the more difficult stretch might come further down the road—juggling finances with the need for image enhancement and outreach.

"Most important is that we are not just here pushing paper and spending money . . . that we are making a difference," Walker-Duff says. "I really want to make sure our reach is a bit wider—people who don't have children, who don't need subsidies, who don't need child care in the immediate sense. To let them understand that they need to be in a society that makes it possible for the people who *do* need it to get it, so that the whole society works well."

With referrals coming from all directions—providers, parents, phone book listings—and thousands on the waiting list, Crystal Stairs finds itself in a double bind. "Our outreach to the general public hasn't been as large because we were inundated. We had no ability to meet those needs and we didn't want to say—come, we've got services to help you, when in fact we don't. We are fully extended, fully used."

Marshaling the time to simply carve out a plan of action has been the challenge. "I do recognize that we really haven't done a very good job of letting people know the benefits of what we do," Walker-Duff later confides, sitting behind a desk carpeted in papers of varying sizes, colors and import. "You get funded to provide the service. You're not funded to provide the service *and* let everybody know how you are doing. But if we don't let the public know, they won't give their tax dollars."

It's pitch that seldom falls on open ears, Walker-Duff knows. The "me decade" took the first swing. Now, with the curtain up on the '90s, the drama unfolds—as safety nets unravel, many are left pulling lint from shallow pockets and fervently preaching bootstrap philosophy.

"It's seeing the benefit for society as a whole," Walker-Duff says. "Not just for parent and child. There is a connection between the way children are treated when they are young and how they behave. And if we don't take care of children when they are young, *we'll* have hell to pay when they grow up."

Not long ago, even Walker-Duff was among the unconverted. "I didn't have any burning ambition. Like Joe *always* wanted to be a lawyer. I never had that particular desire to be any particular thing."

But she was quite clear about what she didn't want. With feminism in full bloom, "women's work" signified a clanking ball and chain. And this was a time of "relevance"—for women, for African Americans—requiring that every move be fleet and every gesture count.

"Child care was *not* the area I wanted to work in. But I got sucked up once I started."

What seduced her was the chance to effect some significant change from her little corner of the universe. Child care and politics were far from estranged. "It was about recognizing that child care really *is* an infrastructure support to our economy and trying to figure out what was the appropriate governmental role."

Elevating this "female issue" to one of wider concern, she learned quickly, was certainly cutting-edge public policy. "Unfortunately," she points out, "20 years later it still is. But now people are recognizing its importance. When they say *work*, they usually say *child care* associated with it. And when we first started, they didn't. So," she acknowledges, a shade of concern disrupting the calm of her face, "there has been progress."

The "not enough" hangs in the balance.

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Not too long ago it was just an ill-tended lot scattered with trees. Wild survivors.

And what has taken root in that space is a collection of khaki-colored bungalows, militaristic on the outside. But within, nurturing words and guiding hands see that bright futures begin to bloom.

SAGE is an oasis in the Nickerson Gardens Public Housing Development in Watts. It has been a laboratory to fine-tune the larger potential of what child care can be.

During Crystal Stair's initial research, Walker-Duff recalls, it became clear that the parents who needed child care the most didn't have money to pay for it. The addition of food made the equation even more complex.

"We found out that people in South-Central Los Angeles didn't know that there was a federal food program," she says, "that children who are in day care can also get nutritious meals." They hitched a food program up to their engine in motion, "a way for providers to increase the quality of care that they had to offer."

Based on their model to unify these elements, Crystal Stairs opened SAGE's doors last year, after a five-year struggle to collect funds, the proper OKs and wade through red tape.

"At first the recruitment was hard," Cookie Murray, 28, recalls. Two of her three children participate in the after-school program offering math, computer skills and the arts while she works and attends college. "The residents didn't believe it was for them. Or they weren't going to school or trying to find employment. But once they saw it working, you couldn't get a place."

Murray says SAGE has done much for the neighborhood, the spirits within it. "They have security here at night. And although there is crime everywhere in L.A., the guys don't mess with the center. They look out for it. They know it's an asset to us."

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SAGE is yet another landing—part of Hill-Scott and Walker-Duff's dream to see that "children have lives with crystal stairs in them." Something to help them reach the next landing.

The effort, however, must be a concerted one. "People really do need to express their opinions and let their elected officials know what they really think," Walker-Duff says. Raise the voice just another notch or two, and the consciousness might follow. "Tell them: 'I can't work without it. Child-care subsidies mean something for me. . . .' Child care," she adds, "means that children are growing up strong and healthy and able to make a real future for the country."

It is the counter-image that tests even the most devout optimist.

"I went to see 'Die Hard With a Vengeance' and I've been thinking about all these movies, about what it's going to be like in the future. And they are *all* terrible visions. . . . I learned in graduate school about the self-fulfilling prophecy. And we have very difficult-to-dispute evidence that if teachers expect children to do well—lo and behold, they learn."

Applying that to the future, Walker-Duff suggests that "if we don't really start recognizing that positive things *do* happen, *can* there be a positive future? People can work for the benefit of everybody. And common good really means good for everybody. And if we don't start letting people know that and getting people to work on it, we *will* have this dreadful future."

Alice Walker-Duff

Age: 48.

Native?: No; born in Harlem, lives in Los Angeles.

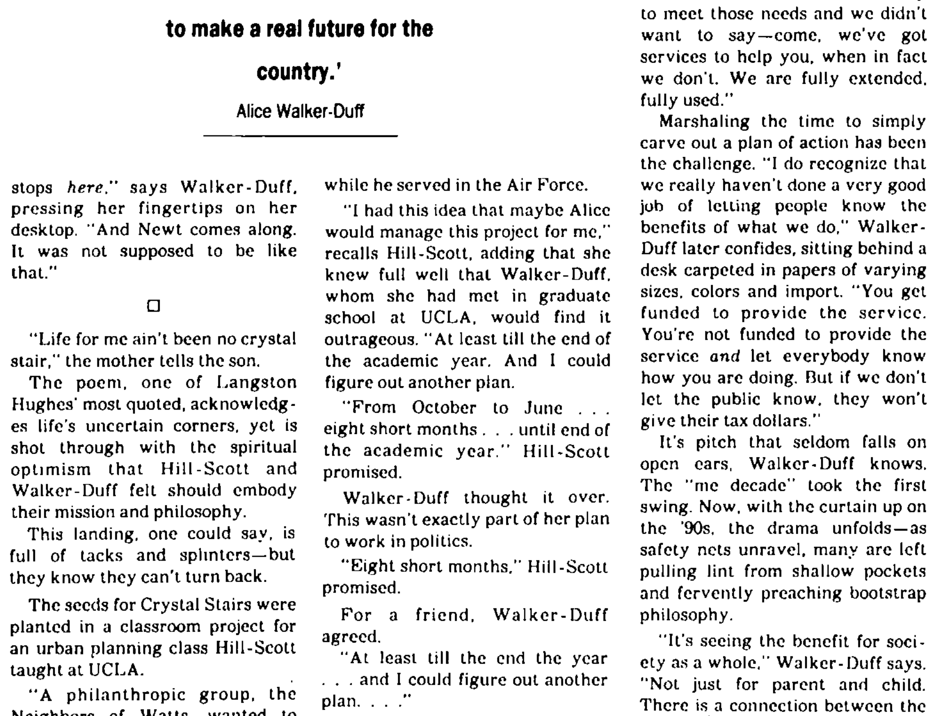
Family: She and her husband, attorney Joe Duff, have two daughters, Gingi, 22, and Laura, 19.

Passions: Church, yoga, writing.

On the dilemmas of modern motherhood: "I'm really thankful that I didn't have the pressures that some mothers have now. I wasn't torn between staying home and taking care of my children versus this 'wonderful career' that I could have. So I didn't have that tension. I got to do things, like breast-feed my kids for a long time. Watch them grow."

On the link between food and child care: "People who are making policy don't understand the importance of good nutrition. Because they say, 'Well, I grew up with hot dogs and potato chips. . . .' But what they don't realize is that they didn't grow up in child care for nine hours a day and that wasn't 80% of the meals they ate every day. . . . That has very serious consequences for the health and development for our children."

On partnering in business with friend Karen Hill-Scott: "She's a ball of energy. Fast-talking, fast-walking. She really is an unbelievable person, so working with her has been rewarding—creating something in a partnership. And we are definitely doing good work. We'd worked together so long, so we knew how to respond to one another. She has an unbelievable capacity to do things and is extremely generous. And I am the traditional achiever—I always do well in school—so I didn't want to let her down."



Crystal Stairs' Executive Director Alice Walker-Duff, left, and co-founder Karen Hill-Scott raffle off a basketball signed by Lakers players. The child-care facility is bracing for massive funding cutbacks.

YOUNG IDEAS
Los Angeles Sentinel

Nickerson Gardens' Gets Much Needed Child Care Center

BY REGINA JONES
Special to Young Ideas

A much needed and long fought for child care center opened in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development last week. A large crowd of residents, parents, children, well wishers and funders turned out to celebrate the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for the SAGE Before and After School Child Care Center. Congresswoman Maxine Waters' vision took six years of hard work by many dedicated individuals to bring the center to fruition.

Waters has worked for years to empower communities by providing job training and education to move people from poverty to self-sufficiency. Knowing that without adequate child care, parents would not be able to work to support their families. Six years ago Waters got the Black Women's Forum involved in her vision to open a child care center in Nickerson Gardens.

Black Women's Forum, recognizing that it did not have the expertise to run child care centers sought out Crystal Stairs, one of the state's leading child care advocates to implement the planning and later asked them to operate the center.

The Nickerson Gardens residents embraced the idea and worked closely with Project BUILD, Black Women's Forum and Crystal Stairs to bring the center to completion.

Nell Wilkerson, a 15 year resident of Nickerson Gardens and Resident Coordinator, thanked Rep. Waters for having the vision.

"Over a six year period, we worked, planned and negotiated for everything that came together to create this center, " Wilkerson said. Of course none of it would have been possible without the vision of Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Before Congresswoman Waters came along we didn't know anything about job training programs and we certainly didn't know we could provide child care."

Janetta Harvey, an 11 year resident and mother of two children enrolled in the center, talked about how the center has enhanced her life.

"I am able to work and earn a living knowing that my children are safe, well-fed, getting help with homework and having a good time," Harvey said.

Congresswoman Waters thanked everyone for their support and hard work and promised t keep the dream alive and to keep on fighting for the needs of her community.

Dr. Alice Walker Duff, co-founder and executive director of Crystal Stairs, continued with the introductions of staff and residents with school age children attending the center. She invited those in the audience who were in school, job training programs or working to enrolled their children in the center. She also thanked co-founder and Crystal Stairs board member Karen Hill-Scott for her vision in seeing the project through to completion.

The children stole the hearts of everyone in the audience when they honored Congresswoman Waters with a photo album containing pictures of themselves in the center. Students Thomas Dixon and Adrienne Boyce made the presentation and before the group left the stage, several other children reached for the mike and spontaneously voiced their gratitude for having the center available.

"I'm glad my mommy put me in this school," said four-year-old Dejuane Collins. "I hope other children will get their mommy's to let them go here too."

Mementos were presented to the people and organizations who contributed land, financing, grants, equipment, supplies followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony. Lanise and Danise Razor, two residents, sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and the children performed an African dance accompanied by drummer Francis Awe and dance instructor Omawale Orisayomi, both Artists-in-residence. The afternoon closed with KJLH radio station raffling off Butterball turkeys, t-shirts and two complete Thanksgiving dinners donated by the Fellowship Baptist District Junior Women's Auxiliary.

The beautifully landscaped, five bungalow center with two playgrounds, provides a safe and enriching environment for children ages five to 12 and is now serving 70 school-age children from the 5,000 residents of Nickerson Gardens Housing Development. This model child care program provides a curriculum which includes a computer lab, homework helpers, artists-in-residence and tutoring. Moreover, the parents of the enrolled children are all working, attending school or are in job training. Without the child care, their own potential for development would have been stalled.

While the unemployment rate is 7.7 percent in Los Angeles County, the unemployment rate in Los Angeles County housing development is 96 percent. The majority are unemployed due to a combination of factors that make the transition to employment very difficult. The lack of child care is a significant barrier.

SAGE Before and After School Center is one of four Black Women's Forum developed child care centers and the first to be located in a housing development.

THIS IS THE DAY—Rep. Maxine Waters poses with (from left) art teacher Rosie Garcia, center director Gathoni Maina and student Lakinyra Washington at the opening of the Nickerson Gardens' SAGE Before and After School Child Care Center. The center is one of four Black Women's Forum developed child care centers and the first to be located in a housing development.—PHOTO BY ANTONIO PULLIDO

CUTTING THE RIBBON—Rep. Waters cuts the ribbon at the opening of the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Before and After School Child Care Center. Assisting is Dr. Alice Walker Duff, co-founder and executive director of Crystal Stairs.—PHOTOS BY ANTONIO PULLIDO

PLEASE PASS THE MIKE—Rep. Maxine Waters shares the mike at the opening of the Nickerson Gardens' SAGE Before and After School Child Care Center with Dejon Watkins, a student at the center.—PHOTO BY ANTONIO PULLIDO

LIFE & STYLE

Los Angeles Times

SECTION E • WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 1996

Caught in the Child-Care Crunch

The Dilemma Many Parents Face: Finding the Perfect Balance of Quality, Flexibility and Affordability

By KATHLEEN KELLEHER
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Things unraveled swiftly for Sandra and Fernando Labarthe, both 33, last March. The relative who had been caring for their three children in their Granada Hills home returned to Peru.

The departure sent the Labarthes scrambling for a patchwork solution, which now has Fernando, 7, staying with a neighbor after school and Eduardo, 3, in a Santa Monica preschool where he receives a partial scholarship. Victor, 19 months, spends mornings with his father, a construction worker who bids jobs with the toddler astride his hip. The father then takes Victor to the home of a friend in Van Nuys during the afternoons. Sandra leaves the house by 6:45 each morning so she can drop off Fernando and Eduardo and get to work on time. At the end of the day, she picks up all three children in different places, which takes about an hour.

"The other day I was crying. I was so stressed out," says Sandra, an office manager at the Fred Weisman Center, a nonprofit service for pregnant women associated with the nearby Venice Family Clinic. "I got a call about Victor being sick." Sandra couldn't leave work. "Fernando picked him up. It is really a headache. I just don't know how long I can have my children in three different places."

Who's Minding the Kids?

The working parents' dilemma: What to do with the kids? Quality, affordable care is available, but where? What's the best way to find it? Should government and employers play roles? We offer a guide that might help ease the minds of some parents. **Page E3**

Sandra has been searching for infant care for Victor but has had difficulty finding quality, affordable care. "It is amazing," she says. "One child-care center is $800 a month and one is $600."

The Labarthes pay $360 a month for Eduardo's preschool (his scholarship is $300 a month) and $300 a month for Victor's afternoon care. That adds up to $7,920 a year, nearly one-third of the family's income of $25,000. The neighbor, whose son is a friend and attends the same school, charges nothing to care for Fernando from 4 to 6 p.m., an act of largess that moves Sandra to tears when the subject arises.

The Labarthes' daily struggle with child care is not unusual. Many families teeter between workable, satisfying arrangements and a melange of care forged out of immediate need, financial and geographic restrictions, and other variables. The general state of child care as we enter 1996 does not look promising. Patchwork is the name of the game, especially for families with children of varying ages who require different types of care. While thousands fill the limited number of affordable child-care slots in Los Angeles county, thousands more simply cannot afford the fees.

The Labarthe family qualifies for subsidized child care, but the available spots for state and federally subsidized care go to the poorest families first, no matter where the Labarthes are on the waiting list of 3,000, says Patricia Dash, director of child-care services at the state-funded Child Care Resource Center of the San Fernando Valley.

If the Labarthes were to earn just $267 more a month, they would be ineligible for aid. But the point is moot because there are not enough subsidized spots. Crystal Stairs Inc., a state-funded resource and referral agency in Los Angeles that has a 5,000-family waiting list, says it would take 16 years to serve all the families if it closed the list now.

"The child-care crisis is really a mess," says Sandra Labarthe, clearly flummoxed by her family's paradox: too high an income to win a subsidized spot, but not enough money to shoulder the burden of child-care costs. She has looked at eight centers for Victor but has found them too expensive.

"You feel completely lost," she says. "You need peace of mind to be productive. We both have to work to afford food, rent and insurance. Our money is

Please see CARE, E4

CARE

Continued from E1
gone at the end of the month. How are we going to afford child care? I feel like we are fighting just to survive. Still, you want to give your children the best. It's really a headache."

□

Giving their children the best is a dilemma in thousands of homes throughout Southern California. According to figures culled from the 1990 U.S. Census and the 1990 National Child Care Survey, more than 1.7 million children younger than 12 live in Los Angeles County. One million of these have one or both parents working or attending school.

- 400,184 of the 1 million are not in child care.
- The supply of licensed child-care spaces in Los Angeles County is exceeded by 194,725 children.

Almost 32,000 families are on waiting lists for subsidized child care at state-funded referral services. To qualify for state and federal subsidies, a family of four in Los Angeles County must earn less than $32,000 a year, but most families using or awaiting subsidized child care are far poorer, says Alice Walker Duff, executive director of Crystal Stairs.

According to 1993 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, the median income for a family of four in Los Angeles County is $39,000. Such a family with an infant and preschooler would spend almost a third of its income on 50 weeks of full-time care.

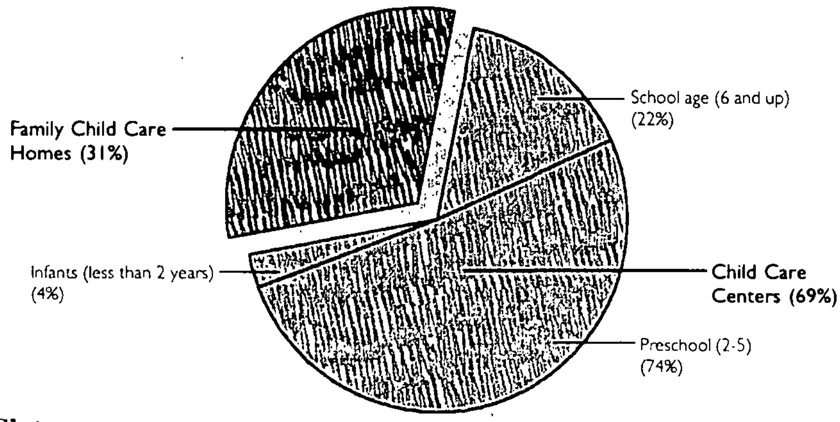
With federal budget cuts proposed, the prospects for improvement on the child-care scene are grim. "What's really frightening is the prospect of two-tiered child care," says Kathleen Malaske-Samu, a Los Angeles County child-care coordinator. "Parents who can afford it will have really good quality child care and parents who don't have the resources will have even fewer choices than they have now, and the protection and quality is also going to be reduced."

JILL CONNELLY / For The Times

Fernando and Sandra Labarthe play with sons Fernando, 7, Eduardo, 3, and Victor, 19 months.

Child Care Capacity in California

For information about child care in California, call the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network at 415-882-0234.

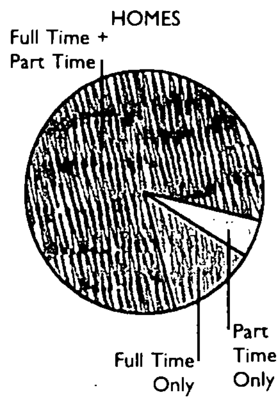


Slots

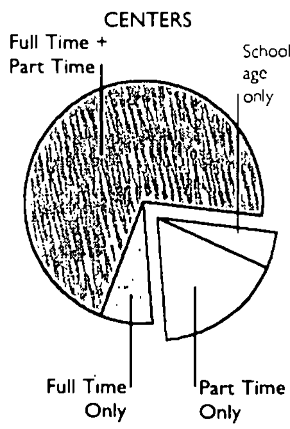
- 234,247 slots in 30,730 licensed family child care homes
- 531,848 slots in 8,831 licensed child care centers

Schedules

- Of *all* slots in licensed family child care homes, 83% accept children full time and part time; 12% accept children full time only; 5% accept children part time only.



- Of *all* slots in licensed child care centers, 71% accept children full time and part time; 7% accept children full time only; and 22% accept children part time only.
- For slots at licensed child care centers accepting children part time only, 22% are in centers serving school-age children only.
  Providers who accept children both full time and part time often prefer children to be enrolled full time, thereby reducing the number of part-time slots available.



- Of the total number of licensed family child care homes, 29% provide evening, overnight, or weekend care and 62% offer before- and/or after-school care.
- Of the total number of licensed and license-exempt centers, 2% provide evening, overnight, or weekend care and 45% offer before- and/or after-school care.

Languages Spoken by Providers

- In licensed family child care homes 98% of providers speak English; 18%, Spanish; 1%, Chinese, Tagalog; less than 1%, Korean , Vietnamese. 7% of providers speak other languages.
- Of licensed and license-exempt child care centers close to 100% have providers who speak English; 41%, Spanish; 3%, Chinese; 2%, Tagalog; 1%, Korean, Vietnamese. 7% have providers who speak other languages.

Totals may exceed 100% because providers may speak more than one language.

Why parents call their R&R

Of the many reasons parents call for child care referrals, those most often cited are employment (77%), school/training (12%), and seeking employment (5%). Other reasons include: referred by CPS or other professional, back-up care, mildly ill care, child enrichment, and other parent needs.

What kind of child care do callers request?

Infant care: 36%; preschool care: 45%; school-age care: 20%

Family child care homes: 77%; child care centers: 55%; in-home care: 4%; other: 2%

Child care near their home: 84%; near their place of work, school, or training: 12%; near the child's school: 9%

Full-time care: 64%; part-time care: 41%

For children under six years old, full-time care: 69%; part-time care: 36%

Evening, overnight, or weekend care: 8%; before- and/or after-school care: 13%

98% of callers requested care by English-speaking providers; 5%, by Spanish-speaking providers; 1%, by Chinese-speaking providers; less than 1%, Tagalog-, Korean-, Vietnamese-speaking providers. Less than 1% requested care by providers speaking other languages.

About the Data

While the statistics included in *The California Child Care Portfolio* offer a profile of care available in each county it should be noted that many factors (including: cost of care, availability of special schedules, ages that providers accept, language matches, training to work with children with special needs, location, proximity to public transportation, and the provider's ability to accept siblings) impact a family's ability to take advantage of a vacant "slot." In some categories multiple services may be offered so total percentages shown may exceed 100%. The data about requests for child care reflect only the needs of those parents or guardians who called an R&R agency. It may not include families who rely on relatives, friends, or neighbors to provide care, or on those parents or families who seek information about child care through other means. Since parents may have requested information about more than one child care option (e.g., they might ask about one or more language), total percentages shown here may exceed 100%. Parents may not have considered all options available and thus information about requests may not present the complete array of child care needs in the county. Nonetheless, this data (collected from people calling R&Rs April through June 1996) represents the most accurate and consistent information available to date about child care requests in California.

California, the state where 10% of America's children reside, was named one of the ten best states for child care by *Working Mother* magazine in June 1996. "California continues to be a leader among the states in child care, increasing the number of youngsters served and working hard to upgrade quality," wrote the editors.

But many challenges remain. Virtually every county in the state reports shortages of certain kinds of care, and throughout the state there are long waiting lists for subsidized care.

In a state that is diverse enough to encompass the glitz of Hollywood, the isolation of small mountain and desert communities, and miles of suburban neighborhoods, it might seem child care problems and their solutions would vary greatly. To some extent that's true: parents in rural communities tend to have somewhat different needs than those living in urban centers. In isolated parts of the state, for example, parents must sometimes drive very long distances for child care; in urban and suburban areas, parents are more easily able to find care near home or work, or somewhere along the route to work.

Most problems related to the supply of child care, however, are evident in virtually every community in California. There is not enough infant care; there are waiting lists (sometimes very long ones) in most communities; and there is not enough care *anywhere* to meet the needs of the growing number of parents who don't work 9-to-5, but must work night shifts, swing shifts, or other nontraditional hours.

In communities across the state, the greatest force driving child care supply, however, is the economy. From large fluctuations, such as a base closure, to the smaller shifts in employment caused by the arrival of a new Wal-Mart with its evening and shift work, virtually any economic change in a community or region can upset the delicate balance of child care supply and demand. Ironically, counties with *growing* economies as well as those with *slowing* economies can end up with severe, sudden shortages of care. Inevitably, California's communities will continue to experience waves of economic change. But anticipating these changes and planning for them can help alleviate disruptions in the child care delivery system.

California

"California has made great strides in helping to provide the support for child care that parents desperately need in order to work. But greater challenges loom as the number of parents who work part time or during off hours increases, and as low-income families struggle to find care that doesn't consume most of their earnings."

Patty Siegel, California Child Care Resource & Referral Network

At a Glance

The People

- An estimated 33,863,639 residents, including 7,091,668 (21%) children under the age of 14; 3,558,919 (11%) seniors, 65 years or older.
- An estimated 602,927 children, 5 years old or younger, live in poverty; 669,704 children ages 6 through 13 live in poverty; 18% (1,272,631) of children under the age of 14 live in poverty.

Languages Spoken at Home

- English: 69%; Spanish: 20%; Chinese, Tagalog: 2%; Korean, Vietnamese: 1%. 5% of residents speak at least one of 20 other languages.

Work, Family, and Child Care

- 51% of children 5 years and younger, and 59% of children ages 6 through 13, live in households where either both parents or the single-parent head-of-household is in the labor force. Of the estimated 1,647,881 children 5 years and younger with parents in the labor force, about 840,419 are in child care outside the family. Of the estimated 2,284,436 children ages 6 through 13 with parents in the labor force, about 456,887 are in child care outside the family.
- 81% of people working outside the home commute to work between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m.; 19% leave home after 10 a.m. to work at off-hour jobs (swing or night shifts).

Salaries and Child Care Costs

- Minimum wage: $5/hour ($10,400/year)
- Average cost of full-time care for a child under 2 years old in a licensed child care center: $135/week or $7,020 annually (68% of minimum wage)
- Average cost of full-time care for a child 2–5 years old in a licensed child care center: $94/week or $4,888 annually (47% of minimum wage)

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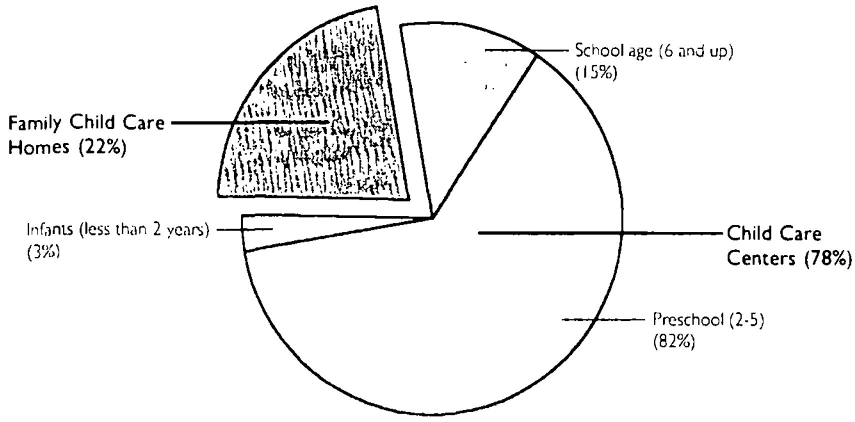
Child Care Capacity in Los Angeles County

For more information about child care in Los Angeles County, call Crystal Stairs, Inc. at 213-299-8998.



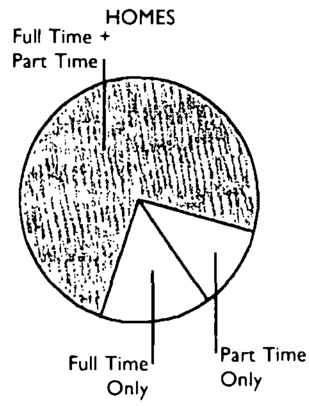
Slots

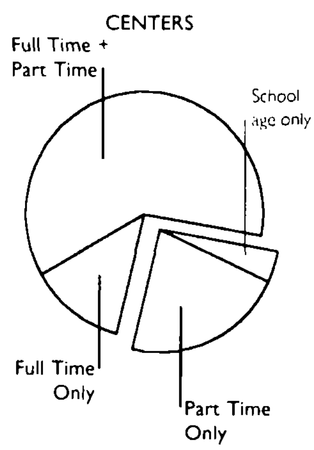
- 38,704 slots in 4,833 licensed family child care homes
- 137,650 slots in 2,134 licensed child care centers

Schedules

- Of *all* slots in licensed family child care homes, 74% accept children full time and part time; 15% accept children full time only; 12% accept children part time only.
- Of *all* slots in licensed child care centers, 61% accept children full time and part time; 13% accept children full time only; and 26% accept children part time only.
- For slots at licensed child care centers accepting children part time only, 16% are in centers serving school-age children only.

  Providers who accept children both full time and part time often prefer children to be enrolled full time, thereby reducing the number of part-time slots available.
- Of the total number of licensed family child care homes, 41% provide evening, overnight, or weekend care and 56% offer before- and/or after-school care.
- Of the total number of licensed and license-exempt centers, 2% provide evening, overnight, or weekend care and 36% offer before- and/or after-school care.





Why parents call their R&R

Of the many reasons parents call for child care referrals, those most often cited are employment (78%), school/ training (11%), and child enrichment (5%). Other reasons include: seeking employment, referred by CPS or other professional, back-up care, mildly ill care, and other parent needs.

What kind of child care do callers request?

Infant care: 31%; preschool care: 51%; school-age care: 17%

Family child care homes: 64%; child care centers: 61%; in-home care: 3%; other: 3%

Child care near their home: 85%; near their place of work, school, or training: 13%; near the child's school: 6%

Full-time care: 77%; part-time care: 28%

For children under six years old, full-time care: 81%; part-time care: 23%

Evening, overnight, or weekend care: 6%; before- and/or after-school care: 10%

97% of callers requested care by English-speaking providers; 11% by Spanish-speaking providers. Less than 1% requested care by Chinese-, Tagalog-, Korean-, Vietnamese-speaking providers. Less than 1% requested care by providers speaking other languages.

Languages Spoken by Providers

- In licensed family child care homes 95% of providers speak English; 29%, Spanish; 2%, Chinese; 1%, Tagalog, Korean; and less than 1%, Vietnamese. 12% of providers speak other languages.
- Of licensed and license-exempt child care centers close to 100% of providers speak English; 55%, Spanish; 3%, Chinese; 2%, Tagalog, Korean; and 1%, Vietnamese. 8% have providers who speak other languages.

  Totals may exceed 100% because providers may speak more than one language.

About the Data

While the statistics included in *The California Child Care Portfolio* offer a profile of care available in each county it should be noted that many factors (including: cost of care, availability of special schedules, ages that providers accept, language matches, training to work with children with special needs, location, proximity to public transportation, and the provider's ability to accept siblings) impact a family's ability to take advantage of a vacant "slot."

In some categories multiple services may be offered so total percentages shown may exceed 100%. The data about requests for child care reflect only the needs of those parents or guardians who called an R&R agency. It may not include families who rely on relatives, friends, or neighbors to provide care, or on those parents or families who seek information about child care through other means. Since parents may have requested information about more than one child care option (e.g., they might ask about one or more language), total percentages shown here may exceed 100%. Parents may not have considered all options available and thus information about requests may not present the complete array of child care needs in the county. Nonetheless, this data (collected from people calling R&Rs April through June 1996) represents the most accurate and consistent information available to date about child care requests in California.

Los Angeles County

"This is such a metropolis. We do multifaceted work with a multifaceted community."

If Los Angeles County could be described in one word, that word would be *diversity*. Throughout the county, housing projects border affluent suburbs that adjoin blue collar neighborhoods. And growing immigrant populations speak a rich array of languages in homes from the San Fernando Valley to the Santa Monica beach, from South Central to East Los Angeles to the Antelope Valley.

In a region as large as Los Angeles, there is a tremendous need for child care for all ages and families of all incomes. Located throughout the vast county are ten separate resource and referral (R&R) agencies, each working to meet the diverse needs of the hundreds of thousands of families they serve.

An issue common to R&Rs throughout the region is the increasing demand for subsidized child care. In Los Angeles County, one of every six residents is on welfare, and many families are struggling to make ends meet on low wages paid by service industry, part-time, and minimum wage jobs.

Another common issue for many families is the commute; freeways are a way of life for most Southern Californians. Long commutes in turn affect parents' search for child care. Many parents travel through the territories of several R&R agencies on their way to work, looking for the most appropriate care along the route.

To meet the needs of the various communities, the county's R&Rs work with a growing number of bi- and tri-lingual providers, promoting greater understanding among diverse cultures by holding special workshops for providers and the families they serve. Each R&R has a large service area and each works with parents from a variety of economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds who are united in their need for quality, affordable child care.

At a Glance

The People

- An estimated 9,636,490 residents, including 2,020,265 (21%) children under the age of 14; 932,676 (10%) seniors, 65 years or older.
- An estimated 203,117 children, 5 years old or younger, live in poverty; 229,889 children ages 6 through 13 live in poverty; 21% (433,006) of children under the age of 14 live in poverty.

Languages Spoken at Home

- English: 55%; Spanish: 32%; Chinese: 3%; Tagalog, Korean: 2%; Vietnamese: 1%. 5% of residents speak at least one of 20 other languages.

Work, Family, and Child Care

- 50% of children 5 years and younger, and 56% of children ages 6 through 13, live in households where either both parents or the single-parent head-of-household is in the labor force. Of the estimated 474,363 children 5 years and younger with parents in the labor force, about 241,925 are in child care outside the family. Of the estimated 602,520 children ages 6 through 13 with parents in the labor force, about 120,504 are in child care outside the family.
- 81% of people working outside the home commute to work between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m.; 19% leave home after 10 a.m. to work at off-hour jobs (swing or night shifts).

Salaries and Child Care Costs

- Minimum wage: $5/hour ($10,400/year)
- Average cost of full-time care for a child under 2 years old in a licensed child care center: $127/week or $6,604 annually (64% of minimum wage)
- Average cost of full-time care for a child 2–5 years old in a licensed child care center: $89/week or $4,628 annually (45% of minimum wage)

Excerpted from *The California Child Care Portfolio* ©1997 (permission to reproduce granted). California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (available through your local resource and referral agency). Data included is from: 1990 Census of Population and Housing STF-3; U.S. Bureau of the Census. CPR, P70-53 "Who's Minding Our Preschoolers?": March 1996; U.S. Bureau of the Census. CPR, P70-30 "Who's Minding the Kids?": Fall 1988; State of California, Population Projections: July 1996; 1996 Regional Market Rate Survey of California's Child Care Providers: Mean Rates for Child Care; and R&R provider and caller databases.