

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES NEW EFFORTS TO IMPROVE CHILD CARE AND GIVE PARENTS PEACE OF MIND

This weekend, millions of Americans will celebrate Mother's Day and take time to recognize the critically important role that mothers play in the lives of their children. To give our nation's mothers the peace of mind they deserve, President Clinton today announced new steps to help parents choose safe, appropriate child care and again urged Congress to take action on child care legislation this year.

The President Announced New Justice Department Report to Help Protect Children in Child Care. The Justice Department report is designed to help protect children, the elderly and the disabled from abuse and neglect in care. Although the vast majority of child care providers are dedicated to the teaching and nurturing of children, one tragedy in child care is too many. Background checks are an important way to ensure that the people watching our children are fit for this responsibility. *Guidelines for the Screening of Persons Working with Children, the Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities in Need of Support* offers practical guidance for screening potential caregivers and makes recommendations for developing statewide screening and background check policies. The new report underscores the need for the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, which the President transmitted to Congress last fall, has strong bipartisan support, and now awaits congressional action. The Compact will facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to the sharing of criminal history information for non-criminal purposes.

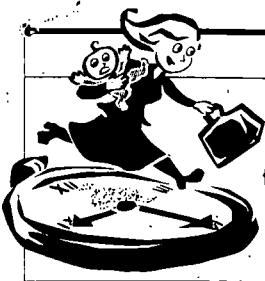
The President Announced New HHS Efforts To Help Parents Choose Child Care. Studies confirm that consumer education is a key ingredient to child care quality. Today, HHS releases two documents to help parents get the information they need to choose child care that is right for their children:

- **New guide will help parents select high quality child care.** The guide recommends four simple steps for parents in choosing child care: (1) interview the potential caregivers; (2) check references; (3) evaluate how the caregiver meets your child's needs; and (4) stay involved. The guide will be available to parents through the Internet.
- **New report highlights model consumer education efforts in the states and urges greater action.** The new report, *Reaching Parents with Child Care Consumer Education*, will help states improve parent education. It highlights successful state approaches and makes recommendations to states and child care administrators on ways to provide information to parents on how to assess their child care needs, locate services, obtain subsidies for income-eligible families, evaluate quality, and choose the best, appropriate care for their children.

The President Urged Congress to Protect Child Support Collection. The President called on Congress to join him in opposing a provision in proposed bankruptcy reform legislation that may undermine the ability of single parents to collect child support and alimony. The Administration supports responsible bankruptcy reform, but under one bill in the House of Representatives, some parents who try to collect child support from former spouses who file for bankruptcy could find themselves in competition with large credit card companies. Since 1992, child support collection has increased by 68 percent, and the President is committed to safeguarding that important progress.

The President Called for Congressional Action on Child Care. Millions of Americans, struggling to be both good parents and good workers, rely on child care and after-school programs for part of each day. As part of his balanced budget request, the President called for significant new investments in child care -- to help working families pay for child care, build a good supply of after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning. Today, the President renewed his call on Congress to put aside partisan differences and take action on child care this year.

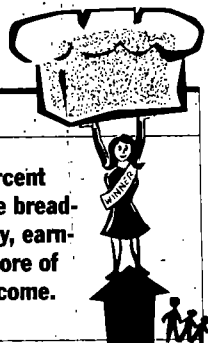
DID YOU KNOW...



One out of seven working moms reports losing some time from work each month because of a breakdown in child-care arrangements.

Child care ranked as the most pressing family need among parents with young children, according to a recent survey of mayors of both large and small cities across the country.

About 55 percent of women are breadwinners today, earning half or more of the family income.



SPECIAL REPORT

The Better Way

JUNE 1998

The Child-Care Crisis

Some 13 million children under the age of 6 now spend all or part of their days in the care of someone other than their parents. If your children are among them, recent headlines probably have you on edge: murderous nannies, the "myth" of quality time, and research that indicates substandard day care can hurt a child's development.

Still, you *have* to work; your family needs the income. So each morning you rush out the door and drop off your child with a caregiver whom you desperately want to trust, crossing your fingers as you watch little hands wave in the rearview mirror and hoping (praying) that this person will somehow love your baby as much as you do.

A lucky few actually find the Mary Poppins we all dream about. But for most of us, the child-care reality is a muddle of compromises and second-bests. And, in too many cases, the options may be downright dangerous. One recent study concluded that 86 percent of all child-care centers range from mediocre to poor. One in eight

centers offers care that is so bad, it jeopardizes kids' emotional and intellectual development.

The situation is even worse in the vast underground network of care offered in private homes. One third of that care is actually risky for kids' growth. "When I started looking for a home-based day care, I was amazed at the number of kids each woman was willing to watch—as many as eight or twelve," says Beth Forbes, who lives and works in Indiana. "People I called weren't licensed, and they generally didn't have a limit. They did whatever they wanted."



Many women have trouble finding child care of *any* kind. Most depend on word of mouth. Recent studies show that families spend a minimum of five weeks searching for the right caregiver, and even after they find someone, arrangements can fall apart. Many families go through several different arrangements, repeatedly disrupting their lives, and the lives of their children, before they find something that works.

It is especially difficult for parents who work odd hours or night shifts. A Department of Labor study found that some

factory workers on the graveyard shift in Idaho grew so desperate that they had to leave their children in cars overnight.

Clearly, the nation is failing its tiniest citizens and their parents. Most other industrialized countries already have comprehensive child-care systems, as well as family allowances and other programs to help working parents. In France, almost all 3-year-olds attend publicly funded preschool, in recognition of the fact that a good early education will help lead to success in school. For 29 percent of children under 2, the French government subsidizes care known as "the crèche." Parents pay about \$10 a day (centers are open from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.) for children as young as 3 months. And they have free on-site health care.

But in the United States, child care is still thought of as a private expense to be borne entirely by a child's family—and good care doesn't come cheap. The state of Connecticut, for example, recently concluded that a high-quality preschool program costs \$10,000 per child per year—a price beyond the means of most families. Even mediocre care can put a huge strain on family budgets, running, on average, from \$4,000 to

\$10,000 a year, well above the average tuition at a public college. "There's a big difference between what parents can afford to pay and what high-quality care costs," says Marcy Whitebook, codirector of the Center for the Child Care Workforce.

Happily, a bipartisan campaign to improve the situation began gaining momentum this past winter, when President Clinton led the charge with a proposal in his State of the Union address to pump some \$21 billion into making child care more affordable and of higher quality. Influential senators, including Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) have been championing their own solutions, from tax credits and incentives to outright subsidies for working parents (see "Who Will Foot the Bill?" page 180).

"We have to stop pretending parents can solve this on their own," says

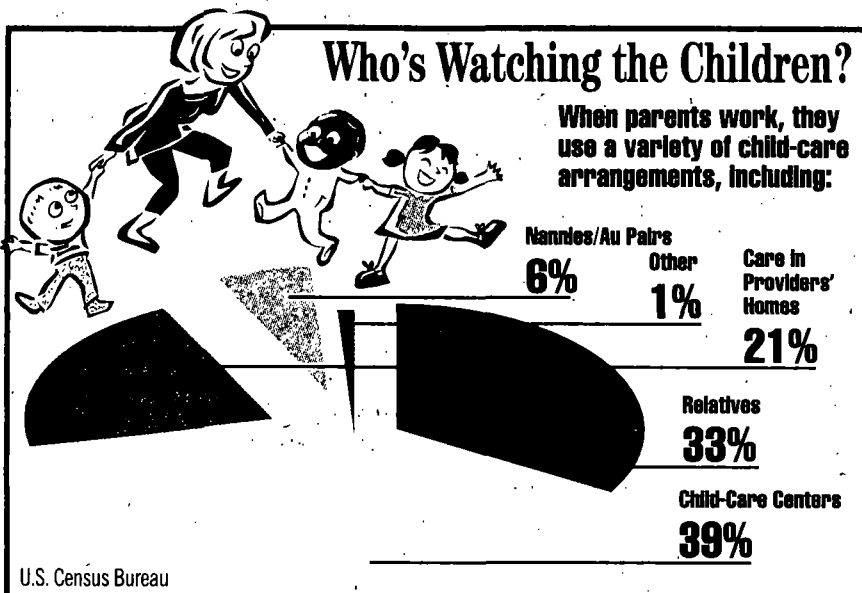
Anne Mitchell, president of Early Childhood Policy Research. "It's time to say that it's not okay to have care that does not meet the needs of children. It's time to say that every child deserves to be safe, well cared for, and learning when their parents are at work."

—Betty Holcomb



"We have to stop pretending parents can solve this on their own."

Anne Mitchell,
child-care expert



What's Best

Sharon Jacobs will never forget the gut-wrenching day she left her new baby in child care for the first time. "At that point, she couldn't even hold her head up," says Jacobs. "I saw all these kids crawling on the floor and I thought, *Oh, God, will somebody step on her?* After we left, I didn't hear a word my husband was saying. I just wanted to rush back and pick up my baby."

The scene and the feelings are familiar to moms who must be back on the job within weeks of giving birth. Fifty-eight percent return to work at least part-time before their baby's first birthday. And most worry, as Jacobs did, whether they are doing the right thing. "My pediatrician told me that it was better for bonding with the baby if mothers were home for the first year," Jacobs recalls.

Many mothers would, of course, love to do what Jacobs's pediatrician suggested. But federally mandated leave to care for a newborn baby is only 12 weeks in the United States, and that law covers only a little more than half of all workers (the law applies only to businesses with more than 50 employees). And many moms can't afford to stop working even that long, because

Your Infant's Brain Power

Providing quality child care has gained greater urgency because of new research proving that the care a child receives during the first three years of life is critical to a youngster's development, both emotionally and intellectually.

An infant's brain actually grows in response to external stimulation; scientists say. As your baby listens to your voice or sees different colors, his brain forms connections known as synapses. An environment rich in sounds, colors, and objects to feel and touch helps to promote growth. "We are confirming what every parent knows," says Deborah Phillips, a psychologist at the National Academy of Sciences. "The quality of child care matters. Babies who are held, talked to, sung to, and read to simply do better later on in school."

—Ann Buxton

for Babies?

during that time they either don't get paid or they receive only a fraction of their regular salaries through employers' disability plans. So what's the solution?

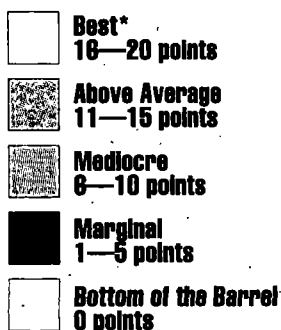
For the majority who have no choice, the most recent findings are reassuring. An ongoing, ten-site project sponsored by the National Institutes of Health found that babies can thrive in many settings, as long as they have love and attention from adults who are sensitive to their needs. "Kids need caregivers who are loving and responsive," says Ellen Galinsky, head of the Families and Work Institute in New York City. "And you *can* find that outside the home."

But it's not easy. The demand for infant care has tripled from 1976 to 1990, yet the supply of affordable, high-quality caregivers remains woefully inadequate. One study by the Department of Education found that fewer than 16 percent of the nation's child-care centers had openings for those under the age of 1. And when quality is available, it's expensive. In urban areas, child care runs about \$1,400 a month, putting it well out of reach for many families.

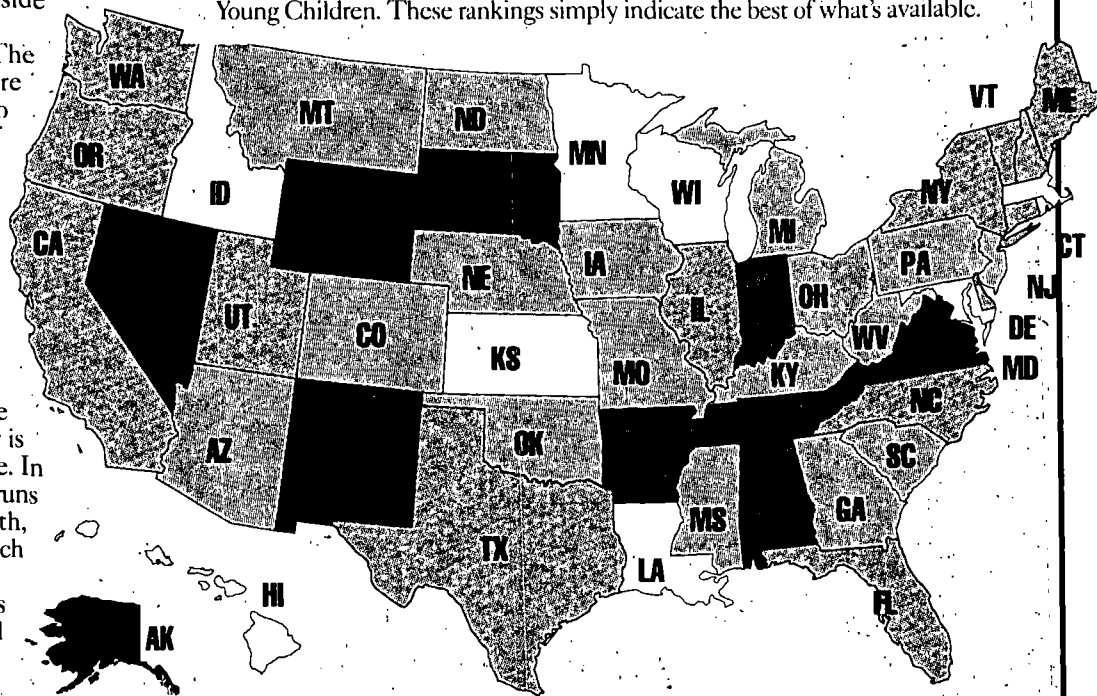
That's why parents turn to neighbors and friends who take kids into their private homes. Unfortunately, state licensing standards for such providers are minimal, and of the 283,000 known home-based child-care providers nationwide (experts say the actual number may be twice that), only 1,000 are accredited. The vast majority operate illegally or are unregulated. Others are exempt from official oversight because they are too small (most states don't even require licenses or inspections, unless the provider is caring for three or more unrelated children in addition to her own). Even for homes that are licensed, inspectors generally follow up only in response to a complaint.

While Congress is beginning to consider options to improve the situation

Rating the States



***NOTE:** Even if your state ranks at the top, it's not an indicator that care is up to the highest standards. Not a single state meets the accreditation standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. These rankings simply indicate the best of what's available.



(see "Who Will Foot the Bill?" page 180), there are also a variety of private efforts under way to improve standards and provide parents with other choices:

●**Voluntary Accreditation:** The National Association for Family Child Care accredits home-based child-care providers who meet its standards, which exceed those set by most states (see "How to Choose Quality Care," page 183).

●**Provider Training:** Advocacy groups, such as Save the Children in Atlanta, have created programs to train providers in health, safety, and child development.

●**Paid Leave:** The United States remains one of the few economically developed nations that doesn't provide government aid to help defray the costs

of child-rearing. In Vermont and New Jersey, advocates are exploring ways to expand the disability- and unemployment-insurance systems so new parents can take paid leave. The cost would be spread among all employers, amounting to just a few dollars a year per employee.

It would be like creating an insurance system for parents who take leave to care for their children, says Donna R. Lenhoff of the National Partnership for Women & Families, a Washington, DC-based advocacy group that led the fight for the Family and Medical Leave Act. "We insure our cars and our homes," says Lenhoff. "Shouldn't we also insure that we can be with our children when they need us the most?"

—B.H.

Who Will Foot the Bill?

It's one of the best run child-care systems in the world. More than 76 percent of its centers are accredited, compared to 7 percent for others in the United States. Parents pay on a sliding scale that costs much less than elsewhere. For example, full-time care can run as low as \$265 a month for a family with an annual income between \$23,000 and \$34,000.

And—surprise—the honor goes to the U.S. Military's child-care system, a program cited by President Clinton as a model for business and government. What do the military centers have that private ones don't? Substantial government subsidies, for starters. Staffers at military child-care centers are paid an average of \$19,000 a year and receive benefits, such as health care and vacation pay. Compare that to a caregiver in a non-military center, who makes an average of \$8,000 to \$12,000 a year, even with a college degree, and has few if any benefits.

But are Americans willing to have Uncle Sam support local child care? Three out of four women say yes, according to polls, and voters have traditionally supported using tax revenues to pay for higher education, health care, even highways. But Congress has not taken the hint.

"It's really ironic," says Faith Wohl, president of the Child Care Action campaign. "Congress will-

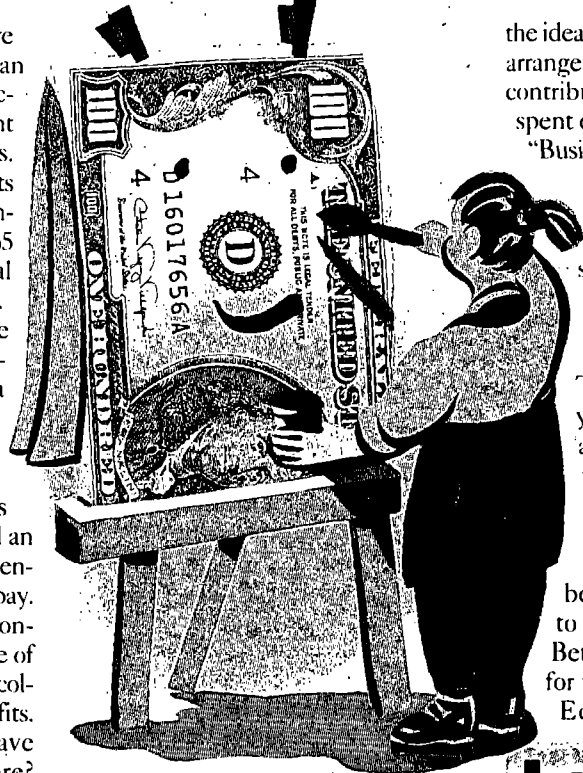
ingly approves tax breaks to help parents pay for college, but does very little to help them pay for the early education that prepares children to succeed. And college comes at a time when parents are more likely to be at their peak earning power. Child-care costs hit when they're least likely to have the funds."

Polls also indicate that Americans like

the idea of employer-sponsored child-care arrangements. Yet, businesses currently contribute only one cent of every dollar spent on child care, according to Wohl. "Business can do more," she says.

But the business community can't solve the problem alone. In fact, most experts expect that sooner or later, the federal government will have to come up with some way to raise public funds to pay for early education and care. The military spends \$273 million a year to care for 200,000 children on a daily basis. The estimated cost of providing high-quality care across the nation? Anywhere from \$80 billion to \$180 billion a year.

"We have to break the link between what parents can afford to pay and teachers' salaries," says Beth Bye, accreditation coordinator for the Hartford Association for the Education of Young Children.



Local Efforts

What can your community do to help ease the child-care crisis? Some states and cities are already using money collected from "sin" taxes, such as those levied on cigarettes, as well as lottery revenue. Here, other successful efforts that you may want to bring to the attention of your local officials:

SEATTLE, WA; SAN FRANCISCO, CA; TUCSON, AZ; PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL; and TAMPA, FL.

These cities have earmarked part of their property taxes for child-care services. In Florida, it amounts to a yearly tax increase of about \$37 per household.

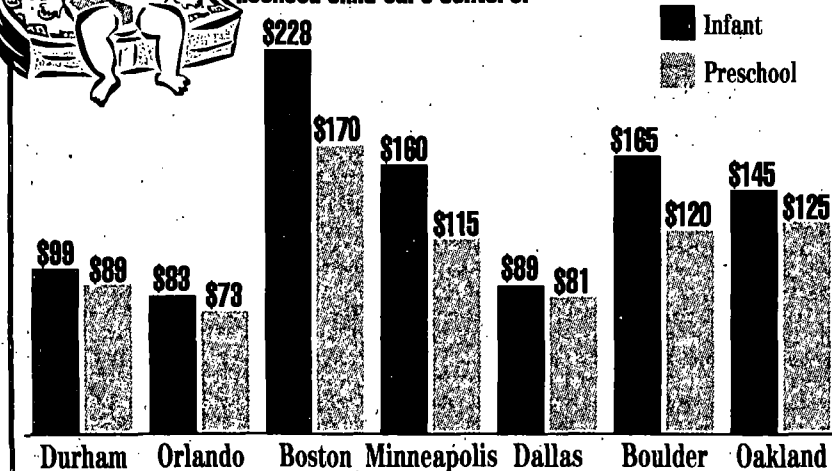
PITTSBURGH, PA

During the last several years, the local United Way chapter spearheaded an effort that has raised an astonishing \$30 million to assure that every child in Allegheny County gets a good early education. The effort started when Heinz Endowments, a local foundation, gave the United Way a \$1 million chal-



The Cost of Child Care

Here's a city-by-city sampling of average weekly costs for licensed child-care centers:



Children's Defense Fund

"Until parents get help to pay caregivers the wages they deserve, this will never change."

This year, members of Congress are looking at a variety of options for improving child care. Here, some of the best ideas currently under consideration:

IDEA: More tax credits for child care.

Such credits allow families to write off a specified amount against their tax liability, based on income. For instance, a family with an income of \$30,000 and one child in day care could write off about \$1,200 a year in federal taxes—which is about \$500 more than they can now.

IDEA: Tax refunds for child care.

Families earning less than \$30,000 would receive an automatic refund of \$1,200, instead of claiming a credit against their tax liabilities.

IDEA: Improved caregiver training and pay.

Study after study shows that better trained and better-paid caregivers are more likely to offer more sensitive, nurturing, and safer care. President

Clinton proposed a \$250 million scholarship fund to train more caregivers and reward them with bonuses after they complete the courses. The goal is that this would be an incentive for more workers to stay in this field, which has a 30 to 50 percent annual turnover rate.

IDEA: Tax breaks for stay-at-home parents.

Parents who stay home with their infants would earn tax credits. For instance, families earning up to \$70,000 would be eligible for a credit of about \$540 a year.

IDEA: Extending the Family and Medical Leave Act.

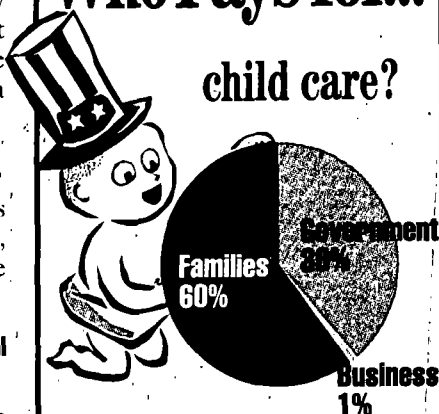
Several bills currently pending in Congress would extend the Family and Medical Leave Act to allow more workers to take unpaid time off from their jobs after the birth of a baby.

IDEA: Cash or vouchers to pay for child care.

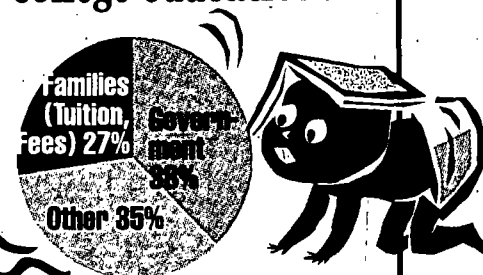
Several senators have proposed using money from the tobacco settlement to help working parents. —B.H.

Who Pays for...

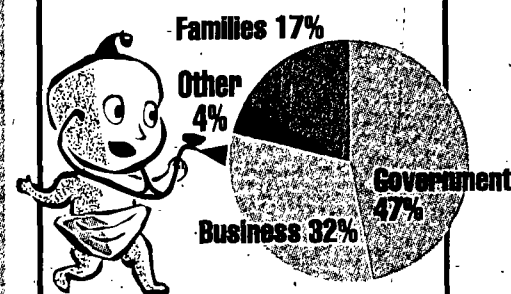
child care?



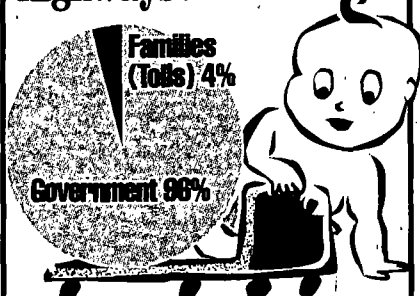
college education?



health care?



highways?



Sources: *Financing Child Care In The United States* © 1997; National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education; "The Nation's Health Dollar 1996," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; "Funding For Highways, All Units of Government 1995," U.S. Department of Transportation.

That Make a Difference

lenge grant to sponsor a major fund-raising and education campaign on the power of early care and education to help kids turn into productive, well-adjusted citizens. The United Way put together a campaign with hard data about how high-quality child-care benefits kids. Now civic and business leaders are on board, and the city has a formal Early Childhood Initiative that helps expand and improve child care there. So far, the money has created slots for 950 kids in high-quality early-education programs. The goal: 7,500 slots in the next five years.

COLORADO

State income-tax forms now include a checkoff box, which allows filers to designate part of the taxes they pay for a child-care fund. The checkoff generates \$250,000 to \$500,000 a year, and the money is spent on training early-childhood-care providers, program accreditation, and other improvements.

Voters in Aspen approved a tiny sales-tax increase (less than one-half cent on a dollar), which will defray housing and child-care costs. The increase

raises about \$250,000 a year, about a third of that is used to help lower the cost of care for low-income working families and to fund a local service that helps parents find child care.

TEXAS

In an attempt to bring new jobs to the Austin area, Travis County reduced the Samsung company's property-tax bill, which has translated into a \$1.5 million tax break for the company. Part of the deal: Samsung is required to use a portion of its savings to pay for child care for employees, with a combined family income of 80 percent or less of the median income in the county.

MASSACHUSETTS

Starting in 1997, the state's Department of Motor Vehicles began selling license plates with the slogan INVEST IN CHILDREN to raise money for the Child Care Quality Fund. The effort raised \$2 million in the first year; money will be used to give grants to nonprofit child-care organizations to improve the quality of care. —B.H.



Hutch Kids: A Five-star Center

Joyce Aasland tenderly cradles tiny Abby in her arms, as the 6-month-old finishes her midmorning bottle. The child looks positively blissful, her body molded into Aasland's arms, her eyes half-closed. "She's totally relaxed, isn't she?" Aasland says to one of the other teachers in the infant room at Hutch Kids, a child-care center that serves employees of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

Abby is not the only baby in Aasland's care, but it certainly feels that way. Even more striking, however, is the fact that all seven babies in the room this day are happily engaged—crawling, exploring, or playing with toys. "I always tell parents who are considering this center to stay until a baby cries," says Nancy Myles, the director of Hutch Kids. "I want them to know how we handle the difficult moments, as well as the good ones."

There are 97 children attending this eight-year-old child-care center. Twenty more are on the waiting list and no wonder. Hutch Kids is one of only 5,730 centers in the nation to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, an organization that certifies centers only after they've met strict standards for health and safety, staff training, and program quality. Washington State's standards on child care are among the highest in the nation, but Hutch Kids goes well beyond even those requirements. For instance, the state allows one adult to care for up to four babies under the age of 1. At Hutch Kids, no adult ever cares for more than three babies at a time, and the day of this visit, the ratio is closer to one adult for every two babies.

Some 71 percent of the staff members have college degrees in early-childhood education or a related field. That's way beyond the level of staff training parents will find in the average center. Few states require caregivers to have any training at all, and only a handful require any college-level courses. "I'm

very picky," says Myles. "I make anyone who applies for a job come here to work for two days—back-to-back. That way, they see what the job is, and we see how they are with the kids."

Fees at Hutch Kids range from \$664 to \$840 a month for full-time care, with discounts for families earning less than \$40,000 a year. As an employer-sponsored center, Hutch Kids pays no rent; and about 7 percent of its annual operating costs are covered by the parent company. Staff turnover is low, which isn't surprising given the benefits: Senior staffers make as much as \$12 an hour, and workers get medical and dental insurance, sick leave, and vacation pay. The center also pays tuition for college courses related to child care and child development.

More than anything, these teachers obviously love the children and their jobs: No one at Hutch Kids watches from the sidelines. Ellen Wood, one of

the teachers in the preschool room, sits with four little girls at a child-size table, happily mixing a batch of yellow goo (cornstarch and water). Tiny hands reach for the funny stuff, and delighted smiles follow as the children realize they can run it through their fingers and change its shape. "We believe it's important for kids to be hands-on, to get into art and explore all their senses," says Myles. "That's one of the best ways of learning about the world."

Hutch Kids offers a wealth of such experiences designed to stimulate intellectual development—buckets of beans to sort and handle, water tables filled with pails and sieves, traditional paints and blocks. The walls are covered with colorful multicultural pictures clipped from magazines and placed at a kid's eye level. If a child pauses to look at something, teachers are quick to engage her in discussion, helping to spur curiosity, learning, and language development.

Parents are made to feel welcome too. One mom arrives to drop off her preschooler, and slides easily into one of the pint-size chairs as she chats with a teacher about her daughter's activities. Every preschool room has computers, toys, and equipment donated by one parent or another. A huge forest mural at one end of the center was painted by a mom who is an artist. Parents also volunteer in the classrooms, although they aren't required to. One dad helped the kids plant basil, coming back for the harvest and teaching them how to make pasta with pesto sauce.

Hutch Kids encourages children to form close attachments to caregivers, bonds that are considered crucial to emotional development. "Once very young children have developed a relationship with a caregiver, we try not to disturb that," says Myles. Children who start at the center as infants often will have the same caregivers until they are at least 2 years old. "We are very child-centered," adds Myles. "The whole idea here is to do what's right for the kids."

—B.H.

How to Choose Quality Care

Before you decide on a caregiver, you should not only interview her, but also observe her while she is caring for other children, say child-care experts. Watch her in action, and use these questions as a guide to judging the quality of the care:

Are there enough adults?

Children need lots of attention and supervision to stay safe and feel loved. Experts recommend one adult for no more than three to four babies, four to six toddlers, or seven to ten preschoolers. If there is only one caregiver on the premises, find out if there's a backup who can be summoned immediately in case of an emergency.

Is the group small enough?

Smaller groups mean less noise and chaos, better communication, and more individualized attention. Babies should not be in groups of more than eight to ten, toddler groups should be kept to ten to 20, and preschoolers limited to 15 to 20.

Is the outdoor play area safe?

Areas under climbers and swings should be cushioned to some degree—wood chips, a rubber mat, or grass breaks a fall and prevents injuries. Yards should be fenced in. Dogs should be kept away from kids.



Do the caregivers have training in child development?

Studies show that caregivers who have at least some education in child development tend to be more sensitive and responsive to children and more committed to their jobs. A bachelor's or associate's degree in child development is highly recommended, but research shows that any coursework in child care can be helpful, because caregivers pick up tips on child development and learn how to handle behavioral problems.

Is there much turnover among the staff?

The lower the better. You don't want your child to have a constantly changing cast of caregivers. If you are interviewing a woman who cares for kids in her home,

find out how long she's been in business. The longer the better.

Are the activities age-appropriate?

Very young children learn by using all their senses—touching, tasting, seeing, hearing, and smelling. Most aren't ready to sit still or even attempt to learn the ABC's before the age of 3 or 4. Arts and crafts, nature walks, and water and sand play are all great learning activities for children under 5.

What happens on a typical day?

Activities should be varied, with quiet times and active periods. The youngest children, especially those under 1, should be able to follow their own rhythms—sleep when they are tired and eat when they are hungry. Toddlers should not be forced into group activities. There should be some private space and time to look at a book, play with a toy, or just rest when they don't feel like being part of a group.

Can you talk to the parents of other children in the center before you sign up?

If you can't, walk away.

How are discipline problems handled?

Every child acts out sometimes, even yours. You want to be sure that your caregiver would never hit or physically punish your child, or shake a baby. At the same time, children need firm but gentle guidance to learn to deal with their own difficult feelings. They need caregivers who can help them find constructive ways to vent their occasional anger and frustrations.

Do caregivers follow hygienic practices?

Hands must be washed after every diaper change. No exceptions. The changing area should also be cleaned after every change. Studies have shown that the risk of infection and disease can be largely controlled through such simple measures.

Are all children immunized?

States require that licensed caregivers keep records. If your child is cared for by an unlicensed provider, it's probably up



to you to make sure your child is protected from disease.

Are poisons kept out of your child's reach?

If you're considering care in a private home, make sure that household-cleaning products, medicines, vitamins, and other dangerous substances are locked up.

How will your caregiver communicate with you?

It's a good idea for your caregiver to keep notes, because it's often hard to have an in-depth discussion at pick-up or drop-off times. She should also have a system that allows you to write her messages about things that might change your child's behavior.

Can you drop by unannounced?

This is a must. You don't want to be intrusive or disruptive, but you need the right to see your child—and check up on the caregiver—at your discretion.

Why did she choose to work in this field?

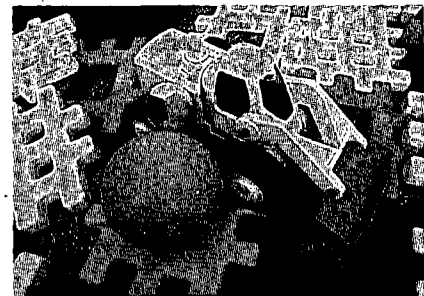
This simple question will draw out your caregiver and give you a sense of how committed, loving, and interested she will be in caring for children.

Is the program accredited?

Gaining accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a sign of a high-quality program. This organization sets standards for child-care centers in all the areas mentioned above, and sets them higher than most state licensing agencies. The NAEYC currently accredits 5,730 centers nationwide.

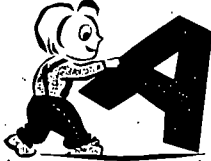
To request a list of accredited centers in your state, call 202-232-8777 (ext. 333), or go to NAEYC's Web site: <http://www.naeyc.org>. To find an accredited program in a private home, write to the National Association for Family Child Care, 206 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900, Des Moines, IA 50309.

—B.H.



Real-Life Dilemmas

Q My husband's sister is staying at home to care for her toddler, and my husband has asked her to look after our baby, as well. Although I like the idea, I worry that she's agreed only because she needs the money.



A Trust your instincts. Studies show that a blood relative may not be the best choice—particularly if she has been pressured into helping out, or if she is doing it only for the money. The Families and Work Institute found that care by relatives was sometimes inferior to that offered by a trained, engaged caregiver hired by the parents. The reason? Your sister-in-law may not really want the job. By contrast, a caregiver who loves what she does and takes it seriously will put more energy into her work, be more attentive to your baby's cues, and provide more stimulating experiences.



Which is best: a child-care center, or having someone care for my baby in a private home?

A Either option can work out well; it's the quality of care that's paramount. If the babies are engaged most of the time, if the caregivers are cuddling and playing with them, if they respond sensitively when a baby cries, then you will know that you've come to the right place. In either environment, no individual caregiver should be responsible for more than three or four infants, and there should be lots of stimulation for your baby.



Q Our 18-month-old has been cared for by a neighbor for several weeks. The caregiver is licensed, cares for only two other children, and came highly recommended to me by several friends. But our daughter cries every time I leave her there. Should I be worried?

A It's not unusual for children to cry at separations from their parents, especially at 18 months old. They have just begun to understand that they are separate from you and may feel a bit bereft as their most cherished adult—you—leaves the room. She probably stops crying soon after you go. Talk to your caregiver and find out if that's the case. If your daughter continues to fuss for longer than ten or 15 minutes, you might want to spend some time at the caregiver's home to see what's going on.

Q My mother-in-law hates the idea that my son is in child care. She's convinced that he's going to be abused, or he's being neglected. I know his center is a good one, and I'm the teachers. How do I persuade my mother-in-law that he's not suffering?

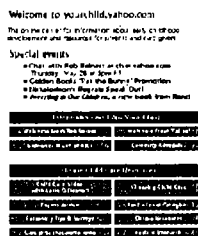


A It probably won't convince your mother-in-law, but the truth is—despite the scary headlines—abuse in child-care centers is phenomenally rare. Less than 1 percent of the reported cases of sexual or other physical abuse of children occur in child-care settings. The sad reality is that kids are far more likely to be abused by someone they know and in their own homes. —B.H.

Where to Find Help

I Am Your Child (IAYC) is a national public-education campaign founded by actor/director Rob Reiner; his wife, Michele Singer Reiner, a photographer; and Ellen Gilbert, a vice president of International Creative Management. The campaign's mission: to inform people of the latest neurological research and raise awareness of how extremely important the first three years of life are to healthy intellectual and emotional development. Since its launch in April 1997, the campaign has reached millions of families and caregivers and is working with public-policy makers and grassroots organizations to make early-childhood development a top priority for our nation. Here, a sampling of the resources it offers:

- **The IAYC Web site** (<http://www.yourchild.yahoo.com>) hosts special events, posts parenting tips, and has information designed to help parents make smart choices. Mark your calendar for the first big event, an



online chat with Rob Reiner on Thursday, May 28, from 8:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. (EST). You can also access the Child Care Aware database through the IAYC Web site (just click on "Find a Local Caregiver"). This nonprofit clearinghouse helps parents find care in their community. If you don't have Internet access, you can call Child Care Aware, at 800-424-2246 for names and numbers of resource and referral agencies in your area.

- In partnership with Fisher-Price, IAYC is offering a **free booklet** entitled "Quality Child Care: Making The Right Choice For You & Your Child." The booklet features an introductory letter from talk-show host Rosie O'Donnell as well as guidelines for boosting your child's early development and tips for choosing the best setting/provider for your child. To get a copy, visit IAYC's Web site at <http://www.yourchild.yahoo.com> and click on "Choosing Child Care." You can also pick up a copy at your local Toys "R" Us or Babies "R" Us store. Or, call IAYC's toll-free number, 888-447-3400. —A.B.

Quality Child Care:
Making The Right Choice
For You & Your Child



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REACHING PARENTS

WITH CHILD CARE
CONSUMER EDUCATION



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Child Care Bureau

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2. Check References

Ask other parents....

- ✓ Was the caregiver reliable on a daily basis?
- ✓ How did the caregiver discipline your child?
- ✓ Did your child enjoy the child care experience?
- ✓ How did the caregiver respond to you as a parent?
- ✓ Was the caregiver respectful of your values and culture?
- ✓ Would you recommend the caregiver without reservation?
- ✓ If your child is no longer with the caregiver, why did you leave?

Ask the local child care resource and referral program or licensing office....

- ✓ What regulations should child care providers meet in my area?
- ✓ Is there a record of complaints about the child care provider I am considering and how do I find out about it?

3. Make the Decision for Quality Care

From what you heard and saw, ask yourself....

- ✓ Which child care should I choose so that my child will be happy and grow?
- ✓ Which caregiver can meet the special needs of my child?
- ✓ Are the caregiver's values compatible with my family's values?
- ✓ Is the child care available and affordable according to my family's needs and resources?
- ✓ Do I feel good about my decision?

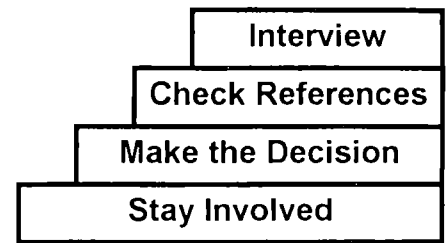
4. Stay Involved

Ask yourself....

- ✓ How can I arrange my schedule so that I can...
 - talk to my caregiver every day?
 - talk to my child every day about how the day went?
 - visit and observe my child in care at different times of the day?
 - be involved in my child's activities?
- ✓ How can I work with my caregiver to resolve issues and concerns that may arise?
- ✓ How do I keep informed about my child's growth and development while in care?
- ✓ How can I promote good working conditions for my child care provider?
- ✓ How can I network with other parents?

These steps are only the beginning. Gather as much information as possible to help you find the best care for your child. To find the Child Care Resource and Referral Program nearest you, call Child Care Aware: (800) 424-2246. For more complete guidelines on health and safety in child care, call the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care: (800) 598-KIDS (5437).

Four Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider



1. Interview Caregivers

Call First

Ask....

- ✓ Is there an opening for my child?
- ✓ What hours and days are you open and where are you located?
- ✓ How much does care cost? Is financial assistance available?
- ✓ How many children are in your care? What age groups do you serve?
- ✓ Do you provide transportation?
- ✓ Do you provide meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)?
- ✓ Do you have a license, accreditation, or other certification?
- ✓ When can I come to visit?

Visit Next (Visit more than once, stay as long as you can!)

Look for....

- ✓ Responsive, nurturing, warm interactions between caregiver and children.
- ✓ Children who are happily involved in daily activities and comfortable with their caregiver.
- ✓ A clean, safe, and healthy indoor and outdoor environment, especially napping, eating and toileting areas.
- ✓ A variety of toys and learning materials, such as books, puzzles, blocks, and climbing equipment, that your child will find interesting and which will contribute to their growth and development.
- ✓ Children getting individual attention.

Ask....

- ✓ Can I visit at any time?
- ✓ How do you handle discipline?
- ✓ What do you do if a child is sick?
- ✓ What would you do in case of an emergency?
- ✓ Are all children and staff required to be immunized?
- ✓ Do you have a substitute or back-up caregiver?
- ✓ Where do children nap? Do you know that babies should go to sleep on their backs?
- ✓ What training have you (and other staff/substitutes) had?
- ✓ May I see a copy of your license or other certification?
- ✓ May I have a list of parents (current and former) who have used your care?



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON.

May 7, 1998

TAPED WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS

DATE: May 8, 1998
LOCATION: Oval Office
TIME: 9:30 AM
FROM: Bruce Reed
Megan Moloney

I. PURPOSE

In honor of Mother's Day this Sunday, you will discuss how all Americans must take responsibility for the care of our children -- through protecting child support collection and taking action on child care.

II. BACKGROUND

Your Mother's Day radio address provides an opportunity to focus on child care, urge congressional action, and make two announcements aimed at giving parents greater peace of mind on child care:

- (1) *Background Checks for Child Care Workers:* You will release Department of Justice guidelines for screening child care workers and other caregivers, designed to reduce the incidence of abuse by care providers. This report demonstrates the need for the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, which you transmitted to Congress last fall and which now awaits congressional action. The Compact is designed to facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to the sharing of criminal history information for non-criminal purposes.
- (2) *Parent Education on Child Care:* You will release two HHS documents: a new guide for parents on what to look for in choosing quality child care, and a report for states on improving child care consumer education.

You will also make a statement on pending bankruptcy

reform legislation and the Administration's opposition to one aspect of a bill in the House of Representatives. Under this provision, certain credit card debts would be nondischargeable under Chapter 7 and thus elevated to the same priority as taxes, educational loans, and child support and alimony. Former spouses could find themselves in competition with large credit card companies to receive their family support. Your advisers recommend strong opposition to this provision; however, such opposition should not be seen as inconsistent with our support for responsible bankruptcy reform.

III. **PARTICIPANTS**

Briefing (9:15-9:30 am)

The President
Rahm Emanuel
Ann Lewis
Bruce Reed
Jen Klein
Jeff Shesol
Nicole Rabner

Radio Address (9:30 am)

The President
Megan Moloney
Rebecca Cameron
White House Communications Agency (WHCA) Staff
White House Television (WHTV)
White House photographer
Approx. 30 guests (see attached for list)

IV. **PRESS PLAN**

The ABC, AP, C-CPAN, CBS, NBC/Mutual/Westwood One, NPR, UPI, USA, American Urban Radio and Standard News networks will carry the address in its entirety to their thousands of stations across the country this Saturday at 10:06 AM ET.

V. **SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

Briefing
Deliver Radio Address
Greet Guests

VI. **REMARKS**

To be forwarded by the Office of Speechwriting

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Draft 05/07/98 7:30pm

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON MOTHER'S DAY AND CHILD CARE
WASHINGTON, DC
May 9, 1998

Tomorrow is Mother's Day, a special moment to express the gratitude, respect, and love we feel all year round. Our mothers give us life; they offer us unconditional love; they endow us with self-esteem and a generosity of spirit. From our first moments, mothers are our best teachers and most selfless friends. And, like my own mother, whom I miss very much, they rarely ask for thanks. A mother's main wish is to see her children grow up healthy and happy.

Today, I want to talk about a few ways we can give all mothers that peace of mind--whether they work at an office, a factory, a hospital, or at home. To make that tribute to motherhood, we must all take responsibility for the care of our children. For many mothers, peace of mind requires affordable, high-quality child care. Millions of American women, by necessity or by choice, pursue full-time careers outside the home. Three out of five mothers with children under six are attempting this delicate balancing act--between work and home, between one's colleagues and one's kids. It is a difficult decision. And for many low-income families, it is not a decision at all--because quality child care is either hard to find or too expensive to afford.

That's why I have included in my balanced budget a significant new investment in child care. I urge Congress to join me in making child care better, safer and more affordable for those who need it.

To help parents find the best care for their children, I am today releasing a report by the Department of Health and Human Services. It's a consumer's guide to child care quality that recommends four steps for parents: one, interview the potential care givers; two, check references; three, evaluate how the care giver meets your child's needs; and four, stay involved. Because, as Mother's Day reminds us, governments don't raise children; parents do. There can be no substitute for a mother's love or a parent's responsibility.

We, too, in the national and state governments, have a responsibility--to protect America's children from abuse and neglect. Nothing gives mothers peace of mind like the knowledge that their children are in safe hands. Today I am also releasing new Justice Department guidelines for screening child care workers and other care givers; and again I urge Congress to act on a proposal I put forth to facilitate background checks. There is strong bipartisan support for this proposal, and I am hopeful that members of both parties will move quickly to give America's children the care they deserve.

But there is one other thing we must do to protect America's children: fathers must take responsibility. Children deserve to be raised by both parents; and, when that's not possible, fathers must provide the child support that's needed. If fathers simply walk away, mothers and

children wind up on the welfare rolls and taxpayers end up paying the bill. That's why my administration has cracked down on deadbeat dads. Since 1992, we've raised child support collections by 68 percent.

We have worked too hard for too long toughening enforcement of child support laws to let our progress be accidentally undone. But that could happen if Congress goes ahead with one part of bankruptcy reform legislation now under consideration. Under that proposal, when a father declares personal bankruptcy, a mother may have to compete with powerful banks and credit card companies for the money they're owed. We all know who will lose that contest: America's children. Fathers have to step up to their responsibilities and so does Congress. Some changes to the consumer bankruptcy laws are in order, but mothers and children shouldn't have to stand in line for the support they need.

America's mothers hold a special place in our hearts. In return, let us give them the love and respect they have given us. On Mother's Day, we do so with cards and bouquets. But today and every other day, we should also do everything in our power to give America's mothers the peace of mind they so deeply deserve.

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GUIDELINES

**FOR THE SCREENING
OF PERSONS WORKING
WITH CHILDREN,
THE ELDERLY,
AND INDIVIDUALS
WITH DISABILITIES
IN NEED OF SUPPORT**

OJJDP
Summary