

FAMILIES MATTER

**FAMILY-CENTERED
CHILD CARE**

VOLUME II

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT
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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Heather Weiss, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is today at the center of a national movement to strengthen and support American families. HFRP's pathbreaking research provides practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with timely, insightful information about effective family support initiatives.

Disseminating its research widely, HFRP links people, programs, ideas, and resources together to create innovative family support programs and services and family-sustaining policies. HFRP's research helps states create systems to monitor and assess programs and services, and helps communities better integrate family support services in neighborhood programs. Using HFRP data, schools are learning more about the specific benefits of parent involvement and the best strategies for successfully engaging the entire family. HFRP's research findings are enabling practitioners to design culturally appropriate programs, and helping training and education programs effectively prepare teachers to work with families.

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NOTE TO READERS

This volume illustrates how family support principles and practices are being implemented in 12 child care programs. It contains profiles of each of the programs, highlighting commonly shared family support components. The programs include family child care homes and centers. They serve families from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Although the programs primarily offer care for young children, a few of them also provide after-school care for older children.

The program profiles contain practical information about how child care can best serve the whole family. They examine avenues for collaboration and professional development as well as the challenges of family-centered child care. Based on the perspectives of practitioners in the field, they offer an important resource for other programs serving both children and adults in a family.

PROFILES OF FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

- 1. Associated Family Child Care Services—Chelsea (Chelsea, Massachusetts)**
- 2. Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center (Washington, D.C.)**
- 3. Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care (Somerville, Massachusetts)**
- 4. Community Family Development, Inc. (Poughkeepsie, New York)**
- 5. Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care (Fort Worth, Texas)**
- 6. The Family Farm (Chapel Hill, North Carolina)**
- 7. Gardner Children's Center (San Jose, California)**
- 8. KCMC Child Development Corporation (Kansas City, Missouri)**
- 9. Los Niños Child Development and Family Program (Napa, California)**
- 10. Pacific Oaks Children's School (Pasadena, California)**
- 11. Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support (Atlanta, Georgia)**
- 12. Webster Child Care Center (Webster Groves, Missouri)**

Program Profiles were prepared by Stephanie Black, Margaret Carels, Saren Eyre, Holly Kreider, Priscilla Little, Natalie Martin, and Janice Mason.

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea Chelsea, Massachusetts

One of 11 programs run by Associated Day Care Services, New England's oldest and largest nonprofit child care provider, Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea is a child care agency that coordinates child care delivery in 24 Chelsea and East Boston family child care homes. Associated is based on the philosophy that children's needs are best met by meeting the needs of their families at the same time. Strong community collaborations and a commitment to quality family child care enables this Chelsea agency to offer professional child care training, parenting classes, literacy efforts, social events and ongoing support services for children, parents and caregivers.

Program Contact	Tracy Lang, Program Director
Location (Administration)	80 Everett Avenue, Suite 215 Chelsea, MA 02150 Phone: (617) 889-4884 Fax: (617) 889-0634
Number of Sites	24 family child care homes in Chelsea and East Boston
Year Program Began	1982
Number Served	100 children/75-90 families
Population Served	African-American, Caucasian, Latino and Vietnamese;
Age Range of Children	Two months to six years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	1:6
Number of Staff Members	5 in central office, 24 home-based caregivers
1995 Budget	\$500,000 (excluding human resource costs covered by parent organization Associated Day Care Services)
Primary Funding Sources	Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, private and corporate donations

Points of Distinction

- **Offers comprehensive support for home-based caregivers:** Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea coordinates child enrollment, offers ongoing professional child care training, sets up parent lending libraries, and provides social workers to help home-based caregivers meet individual family needs.
- **Collaborates with other agencies:** The program collaborates closely with numerous community agencies to enhance its outreach efforts and to provide training for caregivers. It also works with these agencies to streamline the referral process and to advocate for improved social and health services.
- **Serves disadvantaged families:** The Associated system serves primarily low-income families who receive child care subsidies. Many of the families are single-parent, some involve foster parents or grandparents raising children, and some have been referred to the system as a part of the DSS family preservation program for children considered to be at-risk.

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea Chelsea, Massachusetts

Program Background

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea was formed in 1982 to meet the large demand for child care in Chelsea and East Boston and to create a professional support system for independent home-based caregivers. Associated Day Care Services is the parent organization of Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea (hereafter we refer to Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea as Associated, not to be confused with parent organization Associated Day Care Services). The 40-year-old parent organization runs 11 sites: eight child care centers and three child care "systems," of which Associated is one. The system is a network of home-based caregivers running their own businesses under contract with Associated. The benefits of connecting with the agency include receiving supplies, record-keeping assistance, and professional training, plus the ability to serve families involved with the state's Department of Social Services family preservation program.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Associated serves the communities of Chelsea and East Boston, low-income urban neighborhoods near and in Boston. One strength exhibited by many families in these communities is having multiple generations living within blocks of each other, providing "layers" of people to help raise children. Approximately half of the families served by the agency are Latino (primarily from Central America), with African-American, Caucasian, and Vietnamese families constituting the other half.

The Associated system serves primarily low-income families who receive child care subsidies through the state's Department of Transitional Assistance or occupy slots contracted by the Department of Social Services. Many of the families are single-parent, some involve foster parents or grandparents raising children, and some have been referred to the system as a part of the DSS family preservation program for children considered to be at-risk.

Collaborations

Associated participates in two major collaborations. The first is with the Chelsea Early Childhood Project, which brings together all the child care programs in the community including Head Start, the public schools, and for-profit and nonprofit child care centers. The second is with the East Boston Community Partnerships for Children, through which the agency is linked to the Chelsea and East Boston Neighborhood Health Centers.

Both collaborations enable Associated to expand its outreach efforts and inform caregivers and families of the resources available to them in Chelsea and East Boston. Partnering with community groups leads to improved sharing of local resources, enhanced training offerings for caregivers and parents, as well as more effective parent advocacy services. Working with the East Boston Community Partnerships for Children facilitates providing families with medical information and referrals to doctors.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

In the brochure it distributes to parents, Associated Day Care Services claims that its "rich history, strong community collaborations and extensive funding partnerships allow us to provide comprehensive family support services, initiate innovative projects and play a key role in shaping public child care policy." While supporting caregivers and their efforts to support the family, the agency also provides families directly with support services and other family-focused activities. The staff at Associated's office and the caregivers in the system convey to parents that they are partners in their child's care.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Every six months, a developmental assessment or progress report is completed on each child. The reports are sent home to parents, who then have the opportunity to discuss them with caregivers. Caregivers use these discussions to build relationships with parents and identify concerns.

Associated's family day care homes are small enough that caregivers are able to work closely with children and families and learn the individual needs of children and their parents. Caregivers focus on developing trusting relationships with families and supporting them. Parents and children often eat meals with caregivers, and parents frequently discuss child-rearing issues with caregivers. Caregivers sometimes visit children at their homes, especially to offer support if a child is sick. Some receive visits from older children they once cared for.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Parent education occurs on two levels at Associated: through the agency directly and by the caregivers in the network. The agency offers a monthly parent training series with topics selected in accordance with interests expressed on parent surveys. Presenters are frequently members of the staff and are always from within the community, offering parents that sort of "insider" perspective they find most valuable. Individual caregivers are a valuable source of parent education, answering questions about teething, sleeping habits, and other developmental subjects. Caregivers attempt to offer parents the sort of knowledge and advice that they might get from a mother or other supportive family member, helping fill some of the roles left empty in the fragmented families they serve.

Associated also has a variety of literacy initiatives, including a parent lending library and a Family Literacy Day with activities for both children and parents. As parents engage in such activities as applying for citizenship or taking ESL or child development courses, caregivers offer support and act as positive role models. They show parents it is possible to balance the demands of work, family, and self-improvement, and achieve their goals.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Through a grant from the Children's Trust Fund, Associated offers parents opportunities to come together for dinners in the office, providing child care so that parents can have discussion topics ranging from nutrition to parents' expectations of children. These and other social gatherings give parents a chance to get together with other parents who live in the same community and speak the same language, to talk about the realities of raising young children in the inner city and build a peer support system.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parents participating in the Associated program play an active role in planning the parent training series' workshops. Parents meet to discuss which topics they feel most need to be addressed, express their interests through surveys, and the program develops the training around parents' concerns.

Associated gives parents the opportunity to complete surveys on the agency as a whole and on their individual caregiver. Parents have the chance to meet with program staff members twice a year to discuss their child's progress. This also serves as a time for parents to share their impressions of the program and for the staff to share information about the program. Associated uses parent evaluations and meetings to guide its own actions, from mediating a parent-caregiver conflict to determining how to allocate resources.

Meeting Family Needs

Associated used to assign parents one caregiver when they first came to the agency. Today, recognizing parents have unpredictable but strong preferences, the agency gives parents a choice of caregivers. Parents visit the caregivers and choose the one with whom they feel most comfortable. To support literacy development for parents and children, parent lending libraries based in the family child care homes accommodate parents who would not have time to borrow or return books at other libraries.

Associated has a part-time licensed social worker and two social work interns at its administrative office to support families in the program and act as their advocates. Interns will accompany parents on visits to the doctor as requested by parents and are available for home visits or informal conversations. The program is very active in helping parents obtain child care vouchers from the state's Department of Transitional Assistance.

Staff

Associated's office staff includes the program director, one part-time licensed social worker, two social work interns, two family child care coordinators, and an administrative assistant.

The caregivers working with Associated are residents of East Boston and Chelsea and are recruited primarily through word of mouth. After expressing their interest through attending open trainings offered to the community as a whole, those interested in becoming caregivers go through a screening and training process. The agency checks references, visits candidates' homes, holds extensive conversations to make sure candidates truly understand what they are taking on, and links potential caregivers with the program's current caregivers. Candidates must also complete an internship with an experienced caregiver in the network. The final acceptance decision is made collectively by the program's caregivers and the office staff. This entire process takes about six months. Caregivers who contract with the agency generally maintain their association for an average of six years.

Professional Development

Once caregivers are admitted into the Associated network, they have access to ongoing training held at the Chelsea office. The program offers monthly evening workshops in both English and Spanish; topics range from nutrition to play therapy. Hoping to foster an informal learning atmosphere, the agency offers caregivers food and beverages during training sessions. Associated also makes a point of passing along all information it receives from resource and referral agencies and private training providers to caregivers in the network.

Caregivers are given the option to attend courses free of charge at two local community colleges. The cost of continuing education for caregivers is covered by Associated's parent organization through active fundraising efforts. The agency has contracted with these colleges to offer some courses in Spanish. Attending college increases caregiver self-esteem and makes them feel better able to work with parents; parents sense this confidence and respond with greater respect.

Training for Family Support

Believing it cannot serve a child without looking at the whole family, Associated has always included family support in its mission. The concept of caring for an entire family is a fundamental piece of caregiver training. Some training focuses on communication with parents, primarily to ensure that the care of the child is consistent in both the caregiver's and the parents' homes, but also because talking to parents — asking questions and listening — is one way to show respect for and support families. During communication training, caregivers do role-playing activities in which they use examples of communication issues that have arisen in their own experience with parents and act them out with other caregivers. Aspects of communication covered in training include confidentiality and how gossip differs from supportive communication.

Challenges and Next Steps

Working hard to become or remain self-sufficient, many parents find it difficult to make the time to participate in activities sponsored by the program and low attendance at some events is a result. Associated approaches this challenge by asking parents how it can help them in their parenting role and ensuring that the events and workshops offered are shaped by the interests and needs of the parents and families involved. In addition, if an event is geared toward a parents-only audience, the program provides child care.

Language is another issue constantly faced by Associated and its caregivers. The program is basically bilingual (English and Spanish), but it must keep up with the changing language needs of participating families. For instance, the program needs caregivers able to communicate with and understand the growing Cambodian and Vietnamese population.

Some of the parents in the Associated program are referred to the agency by the Department of Social Services (DSS) because of issues of abuse or neglect, and caregivers and the agency as a whole face many challenges in dealing with the issues of these families. One way that Associated has responded to this challenge is by developing a close relationship with the DSS. The two entities consult with each other frequently and rely heavily on one another for cooperation in helping families and making referrals. Another approach has been to use a part-time licensed social worker and two social work interns to work with families and be their advocates.

Associated is looking for funding for programs that focus on fun family outings such as field trips to local museums. The goal is to provide the monetary resources and transportation to introduce parents to places in the community conducive to family play, discovery, and togetherness.

**Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center
Washington, D.C.**

Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center, located in a racially and socioeconomically mixed neighborhood of Washington, D.C., operates a full-day comprehensive child care program, a school-age before- and after-school program, and offers a home-visiting program, Healthy Families, for first-time mothers, mostly teenagers. It is an example of a family-oriented, community-based organization that has evolved and expanded to meet the changing needs of the population it serves.

Program Contact	Beatriz Otero, Director
Location (Administration)	1420 Columbia Road, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20009 Phone: (202) 332-4200 Fax: (202) 745-2562
Number of Sites	One
Year Program Began	1986
Number Served	Daycare program — 75 children; before- and after-school program — 120 children; Healthy Families program — 40 families
Population Served	Low- and moderate-income working families; 68% Latino, 20% African-American, 10% bicultural, and 2% Caucasian
Age Range of Children	Birth to age 14
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Varies according to age from 4:1 to 10:1
Number of Staff Members	45 full- and part-time staff
1995 Budget	\$1,000,000
Primary Funding Sources	Nearly 50 different sources, including local government, foundations, corporate sponsors, fundraising campaigns, and tuition fees

Points of Distinction:

- **Hires early childhood educators from Latin America:** The philosophy of the program is to hire early childhood educators from the community; they are often recruited from the parent pool, the majority of which is from Latin America. The recruited parents have teaching degrees from their own countries and typically need help with upgrading their English and child care skills. The Director has a background in linguistics and provides language training.
- **Varied training methods:** Calvary uses several different training methods, including role-playing, site visiting and mentoring. Calvary was modeled on the open classrooms used by a nearby Virginia center, which the staff visits to observe similarities and differences. Mentoring within the center is done through a lead teacher, who works closely with someone working on a CDA.
- **Evolution from child care center to family support center:** A notable feature of the Calvary Learning Center is its evolution from a provider of child care to an institution that offers a wide variety of family support services. Calvary's program offerings include a youth leadership program where community youth from ages 16 to 19 are hired to assist the staff.

Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center Washington, D.C.

Program Background

The Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center was founded in 1986 as a small child care center serving children ages three and four. In 1995, through a generous corporate donation, the Center expanded into a building of 73,000 square feet. It now oversees four programs that serve over 200 children. The Center's Bilingual Early Childhood Program serves children ages two to five from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The School Age Program offers services before and after school and during school vacations to children ages five to 15. In 1996, a Junior High component was added in response to parent's requests for supervised activities for this age group. Calvary's Family Institute offers family counseling, parenting workshops, play therapy, social service referrals, school/family linkages, health screenings, and support to the Center's Parents' Association. Healthy Families, D.C. provides new mothers with intensive home visitation and support for the first two years.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Calvary is located in the Columbia Heights area of Washington, D.C., and serves families from Columbia Heights, Shaw, Mt. Pleasant, and Adams-Morgan. Center participants are primarily from low-income, working families, a majority of which are headed by single mothers. The ethnic composition of center participants is 68% Latino, 28% African-American, 10% bicultural, and 2% Caucasian. About 75% of the children at Calvary are subsidized by various D.C. government child care subsidies, including subsidies for working poor families and for mothers making the transition from AFDC to training and work.

Collaborations

The Calvary Learning Center has many collaborations with other community-based organizations such as the Washington Child Development Council, an advocacy organization for child care providers; and the Family Support Collaborative, a group of nine agencies that have formed an alliance to work for child welfare, especially cases of child abuse and neglect, through child development centers. As described above, the Center serves as a site for Healthy Families, D.C., a collaborative effort with both Latino and African-American prenatal health care organizations to provide home visiting to young Latino and African-American mothers. The Center promotes educational exchanges with other entities in an effort to increase bicultural awareness among center participants. The director feels that it is important to provide children with the opportunity to reach beyond the boundaries of their own communities. Finally, the Center encourages students from a local art institute to provide on-site art education.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Since its inception, the Center has always provided a nurturing educational environment for children and families, holding the belief that "you can't be successful in the classroom if you don't look at the whole child, including the family." It is only in reflecting on the past ten years that the Director calls her program a family support program: "At first, I didn't know it was what we were doing." Now the program operates on a family strengths model, examining each family's positive attributes, and drawing on them to enhance family life.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Parents are welcome to observe at Calvary whenever they wish; they attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences twice a year, and have monthly parent meetings. According to the director, the key to successful parent-program relations is the level of professionalism with which teachers work with parents. The strong bicultural orientation of the program demands that the staff break down preconceived notions of behavior and try to treat all parents as equals.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Parent education is coordinated through the Family Institute, a parent-generated organization that sponsors workshops and lectures to provide information and support on topics that the organization feels are important to Center parents as a group. In addition, the Institute provides social service referrals, crisis intervention, developmental and health screenings, and assists in home-school relations for individual families. A primary goal of the Family Institute is to link families with community resources in order to obtain direct services.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

At Calvary, parent-to-parent relationships emerge over time. In addition to the informal daily contacts that parents have with each other, the Parents Association organizes parent socials, sometimes around a holiday theme. Parents with common interests meet at Family Institute workshops. The director feels that the most encouraging parent relations she has observed are across racial lines. She believes that the bicultural parent friendships that develop are not only healthy for the parents themselves, but serve as good role models for their children.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is an integral component of Calvary's program. First and foremost, Calvary recruits parents within the community or who already have children enrolled at the Center to become teachers and volunteers. Second, at least two parents serve on the Board of Directors for the school. Third, the Parent Association at Calvary operates as a leadership team to organize holiday events, fundraisers, and staff appreciation days. It provides input to the Family Institute regarding parents issues and concerns.

Meeting Family Needs

As described above, individual family needs are met through the Family Institute. Calvary also maintains a fund to be used for emergency family assistance such as housing, tuition, and transportation.

Staff

Calvary has a total of 45 full- and part-time staff. It actively recruits Latino staff from the parent population, seeking parents who have teacher training from Latin American countries and helping them validate their credits in the United States. Four of the teachers have B.A. equivalents; another four have equivalent associate's degrees. The staff is comprised of 33 Latinos, 7 African-Americans, 4 Caucasians, and one Asian-American. There are three full-time family support workers for the Healthy Families component.

Professional Development

Most staff development is held in house and consists of bringing in qualified speakers to address such topics as health, child abuse and neglect, etc. In 1996 Calvary spent \$10,000 for staff

development, focusing on moving from an individual classroom model to an open classroom model using a creative curriculum. Calvary's staff training priorities include group management and discipline in the classroom, multicultural and bilingual education, and developing teacher-made materials.

Training for Family Support

As with general professional development, most family support training is conducted informally and as issues arise. According to the director, it is crucial to reflect internally the behavioral standards of respect, trust, caring, and honesty, so that community members have good role models. Teachers are trained to treat all parents equally, and without racial or class bias. Because of the open classroom model, there are many mentoring opportunities available to teachers in training, as well as high school students and graduates who wish to volunteer at the Center.

The Healthy Families home visitors training, provided by Healthy Families, America, is separate from the in-house staff training conducted at Calvary. Home visitors attend an intensive two-week training session prior to beginning their visits; they continue to have regular training meetings throughout the year.

Challenges and Next Steps

At present, Calvary has renovated less than a quarter of the space donated to them in 1995. A six-million-dollar capital campaign is underway to complete renovations on the rest of the space by the fall of 1997. Once renovated, Calvary will expand to include: an infant-toddler program with early Head Start; a healthy families center, to expand the home visiting program; a larger space for the before and after school programs, including a dance room, a technology lab, and art room, a library, and a study for homework; and a space to rent to other organizations that are compatible with Calvary's mission as a full-service family support center.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care Somerville, Massachusetts

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care recruits and trains low-income women to become home-based caregivers who offer subsidized child care to area residents. The program fosters close ties between caregivers and the families they serve, creating a sort of extended family network; this offers consistency and stability to the lives of families that might otherwise lack support. With a focus on prevention, the main office of the program offers families counseling, mental health referrals, parenting groups, and other supportive services.

Program Contact	Pat Cronin, Program Manager
Location (Administration)	187 Central Avenue Somerville, MA 02145 Phone: (617) 623-8555 Fax: (617) 623-5014
Number of Sites	54 family child care homes in Cambridge and Somerville
Year Program Began	1971
Number Served	230 children
Population Served	Fifty percent minority (African-American, Haitian, Latino); low-income and at-risk families, teen parents
Age Range of Children	Eight weeks to five years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Preschool 1:7; family child care homes average 1:6
1995 Budget	\$1.2 million
Primary Funding Sources	Catholic Charities North, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, and the United Way

Points of Distinction

- **Addresses community needs:** Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care addresses two major needs of the community it serves: employment for residents and child care services. The program recruits, trains, and supports low-income women as home-based caregivers and thereby offers more jobs and more affordable child care to the community.
- **Focuses on prevention:** Recognizing that its caregivers frequently serve families dealing with difficult circumstances, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care focuses on prevention and early intervention. The program aims for the timely delivery of basic support for families and provides counseling and mental health referrals at its main offices.
- **Tailors programs to fit families' needs:** Child care subsidies enable low-income working families to participate in Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care's services. Families are also eligible for "supportive" care, comprehensive family services including counseling and referrals, when there is documented abuse or neglect in the home. In addition, the program offers a component specifically for teen parents.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care Somerville, Massachusetts

Program Background

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care started in 1971 after Cambridge Community Services and the Mystic Avenue Housing Project identified two important needs for their residents as access to child care services and employment opportunities. Addressing both needs, the program's goals are to provide quality child care and to recruit and train low-income women to become home-based caregivers.

The parent organization of Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care is Catholic Charities North, a local community service organization. Managed by Pat Cronin, the program provides 54 family child care homes with an array of services, including assistance with licensure, family intake and assessment, matching children to available spaces, and referrals to information resources. The program also offers caregivers guidance, professional development training, and ongoing support.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care offers "basic care" services to low-income families, "supportive care" services to children experiencing abuse or neglect, and teen parent child care. Children may attend a school year-based part-day preschool at the program's main location or full-day family child care. The program organizes parent group activities and arranges counseling and home visits with a social worker for families.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Cambridge and Somerville are ethnically diverse and densely built towns on the outskirts of Boston. Most families have strong ethnic roots; many arrived as part of the recent influx of immigrants from Latin America and Southeast Asia. The strains of urban life and often single parenting make child rearing in these blue collar neighborhoods difficult. Many residents are eligible for state subsidies that give them better access to quality child care. Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care serves primarily low-income, working families, as well as at-risk children referred by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. About one-third of the families in the program have been referred due to abuse or neglect in the home.

Collaborations

The Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care program staff works with two offices of the Massachusetts's Department of Social Services and with area agencies and hospitals to evaluate potential needs and provide early intervention and child development services, as well as treatment for medical, mental health and sexual abuse problems. Individual cases frequently require collaboration with several different entities, depending on the family's background, needs, and mobility. The program also partners with various agencies to provide training and workshops for caregivers and families in the program. It arranges training delivered by professionals representing diverse fields and agencies; its goal is to expose caregivers and families to a wide variety of services and to help them become more trusting of the services and those delivering them.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care recognizes that caregivers have a major impact on the children they care for during the hours they are together, but affirms parents as the primary influence in a child's life. The program's guiding belief, "day care is a family affair," is embodied in caregiver relationships with parents, and caregivers also encourage parents to play an active role in the program.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Program participants often view their child's caregivers as extended family members. Caregivers bring consistency and stability to the lives of families that might otherwise lack these supportive qualities. Many children develop a close bond with their caregiver and stay in the same child care home until they begin school. Caregivers are trained and encouraged to help families through difficult periods and to treat parents with respect and love in a spirit of partnership. Program participants agree that strong parent-provider ties enhance the quality of their children's care.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care strengthens parenting knowledge and skills through demonstration and instruction. Caregivers model parenting techniques with their own children and the children they care for in their homes; they share what they have learned from experience and training about child rearing to help parents be more effective.

The program is rediscovering the preventive impact of specific family support activities, especially parent education workshops. After halting such workshops in the late 1980s due to time and budget constraints and an increased need for therapeutic responses, staff members have shifted back to a preventive approach, realizing that parent education can deter parenting stresses from developing into problems. The program's parent education component includes monthly workshops, parent and parent-child groups, and individual family consultation. Attendance and enthusiasm for the program's parent activities, which are coupled with free food and transportation, are unusually high.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care benefits from a core of parents who are not only actively involved with their caregivers, but also look for ways to contribute their time and efforts to the overall organization. The program recently re-established a Parent Advisory Board with three key responsibilities: to evaluate services, improve parent-provider communication, and organize parent activities.

Meeting Family Needs

Focusing on prevention and early intervention, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care offers individual therapy, parent-child therapy, parenting groups, child socialization groups, and more comprehensive assessments depending on the needs of the child and family. For example, the "supportive" care for a highly stressed family could include child care services, transportation to and from child care, individual child therapy, monthly parent visiting, and case management. The program views intensive therapy as a vital component of family support; approximately 10 percent of the children in the program utilize individual and family therapy provided by licensed social workers.

Due to the high number of families under protective services, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care commonly refers children and families to other agencies in the community for additional services. The program's aim is to identify issues and refer families to services before problems become too hard

to handle. The program encourages communication among the different caregivers working with the family to ensure that they all reinforce the same messages. Part of this effort involves providers of social services consulting with caregivers to make them aware of the social worker's efforts, and informing the caregiver how to work with the child.

To further meet the needs of its constituency and facilitate understanding and communication between parents and caregivers, the program has recruited Spanish-speaking and Haitian caregivers.

Staff

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care is run by a program manager overseeing six staff coordinators who focus on supporting about 60 home-based caregivers. Two full-time licensed social workers help caregivers meet the non-child care needs of their families by delivering or arranging for additional support services. The half-day preschool employs four part-time teachers responsible for the school year-based program. Two secretaries and six part-time drivers further support service delivery.

Coordinators ensure that caregivers are up to date with licensing regulations and that they use developmentally appropriate curricula. The central staff also works with caregivers to support and mediate parent-caregiver communication, caregiver-child relationships, and child-to-child interactions.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care screens potential caregivers, and many stay with the program for a long time. The program primarily recruits new caregivers through word-of-mouth from other caregivers. In response to growing immigrant populations and children with special needs, more proactive efforts are made to recruit caregivers with specific skills, ethnic backgrounds, and language abilities. Half of the central staff lives in the Cambridge/ Somerville area, and many caregivers are able to communicate with the families they serve in their native tongue.

Professional Development

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care's program manager attributes the high rate of staff retention to the skill-building and career progression opportunities provided by the program. The program's professional development includes monthly workshops, which both caregivers and parents may attend, covering a variety of topics, some standard and some chosen to meet a group's expressed needs.

Through a unique collaboration with Bunker Hill Community College, caregivers and parents may take classes which count toward their early childhood education degree. The program hires instructors and provides on-site courses with curricula approved by Bunker Hill, and the college gives attendees credit for taking these courses. In addition, the program helps caregivers obtain their Child Development Association (CDA) credential via its monthly workshops, on-site courses, and in-service training or by helping them find training in the community. Its CDA support group helps candidates pull together their portfolios for accreditation and set individual goals. Instructors observe caregivers and give them feedback while peers offer support.

Training for Family Support

Cambridge/Somerville's primary means of training for family support is monthly workshops in response to needs identified by caregivers. Communication between parent and child or parent and caregiver are perennial workshop topics. Other workshops address the issues and unique concerns of

specific groups, such as how to work with teen parents or families affected by HIV/AIDS. The workshops succeed in giving caregivers new insights, but also teach them to trust their own knowledge in caring for children and to respect the views of parents who know their own child best.

Although some of the courses offered through Bunker Hill Community College and the Child Development Association (CDA) training may not train directly for family support, such training increases the knowledge and authority of caregivers and thereby enables them to communicate with families more effectively. Similarly, in order to achieve CDA credentials, caregivers must demonstrate numerous competencies, one of which involves working effectively with families.

Challenges and Next Steps

The decentralized nature of family child care delivery means there is one primary contact at each site for both child care and family support. This simplifies family support in some ways, but when working alone, it is difficult for caregivers to balance attention to the children with attention to families. Family support efforts may take a back seat to the demands of children, many of whom require special attention due to abuse or neglect at home.

Meanwhile, the organization as a whole must compete with for-profit child care centers that drive down its reimbursement rates. At the same time, state contracts now include more spaces for "supportive" care, which means caregivers have more challenging children in their homes.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care's program manager comments that part of providing family support is knowing how and when to access outside services. Although it takes time, coordination, and a willingness for different agencies to really work together and understand each other's goals and capabilities, caregivers require this sort of information to better identify family needs and match them to available services. Collaborating with state agencies remains a challenge, however, as some refer children long after an issue is apparent, making successful intervention more difficult.

A final challenge is to encourage more "professionalized" practice, involving such elements as caregivers earning degrees and receiving ongoing training, without creating a business-like atmosphere in the home or sacrificing the informal, family-like feeling that can make family child care homes so effective. Despite these challenges, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care is proud to provide job opportunities and training to the community and plans to continue its emphasis on prevention and increase its parent education offerings.

**Community Family Development, Inc.
Poughkeepsie, New York**

Community Family Development, Inc. (CFD) is based on the philosophy of providing support and assistance to families. Reflecting this philosophy, CFD brings together a wide range of services for families: child care, health and food services, parenting education, a teen parent program, transportation to and from school for older children and teen parents, resource and referral services, and on-site counseling. The center serves children from six weeks up to age 12, enabling all siblings in a family to attend the same child care center, thus solving a logistical problem for parents who work or are in school. It also has an on-site kindergarten and teen parent program.

Program Contact	Linda Sella, Program Director
Location	69 Mill Street (north site)/260 Mill Street (south site) Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 Phone: (914) 471-5301 Fax: (914) 471-6992
Number of Sites	Two (across the street from each other)
Year Program Began	1971
Number Served	65 children/115 families
Population Served	African-American, Caucasian, Jamaican, Latino; low- to middle-income families; predominantly single parents, some teen parents
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to 12 years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants 1:4; toddlers 1:5; preschool 1:7; school-age 1:10
1995 Budget	\$909,000
Primary Funding Sources	New York Department of Social Services, City of Poughkeepsie (Community Development Block Grant), United Way, parent fees

Points of Distinction

- Meets community needs: Community Family Development (CFD) meets community needs by providing child care for low-income families; nearly 97 percent of the participants receive subsidies.
- **Collaborates with the school district:** CFD and the school district work together to provide child care: public school teachers teach half-day kindergarten in CFD classrooms, then CFD teachers provide extended-day child care in the afternoon. The program also runs a teen parent program in collaboration with the school district, offering child care, parent education classes, and support groups.
- **Promotes staff development:** CFD covers 50 percent of tuition fees for staff members attending a post-secondary institution. The program offers career opportunities for local residents, especially those without college degrees: the program recruits classroom aides from the community and promotes them after they gain some experience.

Community Family Development, Inc.
Poughkeepsie, New York

Program Background

Community Family Development (CFD) opened in 1971 as a child care center offering comprehensive services to children and families. Social services funding dwindled after about 10 years, however, rapidly reducing CFD's extensive services. The cuts affected the center's support services, education programming, staff training and wages. Director Linda Sella began at the center in 1984, and has succeeded in raising the necessary funds to allow the center to operate at a full-service level again.

A 22-member volunteer Board of Directors composed of four parents and other members of the community creates CFD policy, has fiscal responsibility for the center, and oversees the program's staff. To meet its goal of making quality services available to the community, CFD recently merged with another local child care program. As the director notes, the merger took place in an environment of limited child care funding, where not every center was going to survive. The merger, which is the genesis of CFD's north and south sites located across the street from each other, enabled the centers to cut some costs through consolidation while maintaining the caliber of its services.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The city of Poughkeepsie is culturally diverse, economically depressed, but actively trying to improve conditions for residents. To combat a high unemployment rate, the city has initiated several training programs and even opened a computer center in a mall for walk-in computer training. The African-American community shows its commitment to those growing up in the city through a program in which male residents act as mentors for young men. CFD's participants are representative of the larger community. The majority of the families are African-American and English-speaking. Many families earn low incomes and are headed by single parents; 97 percent receive child care subsidies.

Collaborations

Community Family Development collaborates with the Poughkeepsie public school system. The school district pays kindergarten teachers to teach the public school's half-day kindergarten curriculum in CFD classrooms and the CFD teachers provide child care for the rest of the day. The on-site kindergarten enables children to remain in one location for the day, a convenient arrangement for parents who work or are in school. CFD also collaborates with the school district in the delivery of a teen parent program. The school district teaches pregnancy prevention and CFD offers child care and parenting education classes.

The center collaborates with many other community organizations and agencies, including the state's family services and child protection agencies, the Child Development Council (a resource and referral agency), the YMCA/YWCA, and local universities and colleges. In addition, CFD writes joint grant proposals with other local child care centers to expand their services to more families.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Community Family Development's brochures describe it as "a center where children and families can find support and assistance for successful living." CFD is based on the philosophy that family-centered child care provides the continuity between home and center that children need for healthy development. The program focuses on the family and brings together a range of services: child care, health and food services, parenting education, transportation, and resource and referral. By understanding family circumstances, CFD aims to help build family stability. On-site social workers provide counseling to families.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

A noteworthy feature of CFD's services is its approach to working with parents whose children need developmental services. CFD uses a team approach in which parents are encouraged to bring friends, relatives, and others important in the child's life to discuss a child's development with the center's teachers, social workers, and family specialists. The parent-team conference often starts with asking parents how things are going at home; answering this question helps parents identify concerns themselves. Then the team can offer suggestions to help parents resolve problems and parents can feel that they are collaborating instead of facing a formidable group of experts. CFD's goal is for parents to trust program staff members and staff competency, making it easier to work with families and to identify and arrange for the services children need.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

CFD's team of three parent educators holds classes on parenting issues and life skills management. Its social worker runs informational support groups for parents on topics for which parents identify a need. Some groups focus on issues that concern all parents, such as toilet training, discipline, and sibling rivalry; other groups are aimed at smaller groups of parents dealing with specific issues such as grief. The teen parent program offers an eight-week, two-hours-per-week Baby and Me class with mandatory attendance for mothers to receive free child care. "Parents' Night Out" offers informal parent education and support in a fun setting, attracting parents who might not be excited about so-called "parenting classes."

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Community Family Development fosters relationships among parents through its parent support groups. By matching parents with similar interests or concerns in groups, the program facilitates the development of peer support systems. CFD's Parents' Night Out provides respite care for children in the evening so parents can socialize. Recognizing that the program's teen parent population was very isolated, CFD introduced field trips especially for teen parents in order to encourage relationships among them. The program organizes fun activities for families throughout the year; they often involve meals and are quite popular.

Having parents on the Board of Directors also encourages parent networks. Parents who are on the board share information with other parents and help them understand how the program works, what it is doing, and why.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Community Family Development calls itself a "parent-owned center." To encourage parents' active involvement and sense of personal influence on the program, CFD regularly asks parents to tell staff members and administrators what they want the center to do and be. In addition, parents elect the 22-member Board of Directors which includes four of their peers; thus parents have a direct impact on the policy and decisions affecting the center and its services.

Meeting Family Needs

A major issue for parents with children placed at CFD is trying to establish economic self-sufficiency. Parents cannot afford to give up child care, since that affects their potential to find a job or enroll in training programs; at the same time, the program cannot afford to provide child care without receiving payment. To help families struggling to pay for child care, the program has developed a scholarship fund using money from the United Way, the city of Poughkeepsie, and federal block grants to pay for child care. In return for these scholarships, parents must report back to CFD on the status of their employment. Staff members comment that sometimes the program seems like an employment agency, the two are so closely linked.

To help simplify the lives of working parents and ease transportation concerns, CFD provides transportation to and from the public schools for school-aged children as well as teen parents and provides many services on site. For example, speech therapists come to the center to work with children who need extra help, and the school district carries out developmental screening at the center. In response to the busy schedules of parents, the program offers parent education and support groups in the evenings, during parents' lunch hours, and at other times convenient for them to attend. The center often provides food at activities so parents do not have to rush home to prepare a meal. A CFD social worker does occasional home visits in addition to providing individual support and arranging support groups. The program also refers families to other community agencies when necessary.

Initiated five years ago, the teen program at CFD offers special classes and activities for teen parents and the child care necessary for them to finish school. The program serves between 10 and 16 teen-headed families at any given time.

Staff

Director Linda Sella and the assistant director (who also acts as family support coordinator) manage a staff of 31 child care teachers. Each classroom has a lead teacher, teacher assistant, and aide. A support staff of nine delivers services for CFD's comprehensive program: a bus driver provides transportation to and from child care, the kitchen staff prepares meals, a part-time social worker offers mental health support, and a community health outreach worker based out of CFD supports families throughout the county and arranges services to meet their needs.

Community Family Development is committed to recruiting local residents as teachers; employing teachers from the community tends to make families more comfortable and meaningful connections more likely. CFD teachers are ethnically, culturally, and economically representative of Poughkeepsie. Classroom aides do not have formal qualifications aside from a high school degree, but are offered in-service training while working. Because they share a common background and are able to understand families' values, methods of communication and child rearing, and the difficulties they face, these teachers are highly valued. Lead teachers have at least

a two-year degree in early childhood education. All teachers are encouraged to continue their education, and the program has a clear career ladder. The director believes CFD's good staff retention rate is related to the program's career opportunities; moreover, to attract and maintain a qualified staff, CFD also pays a competitive, higher-than-minimum-wage salary.

Professional Development

All teachers receive at least 15 hours of internal training annually. The director explains that when the program decided it needed to bring in people from the community as staff in order to build beneficial relationships with families, the program anticipated the need to train them. A CFD priority became to design and deliver as much in-house training as possible; otherwise, lack of transportation and the cost of training would be too great an obstacle for these local teachers. CFD's in-service training focuses on improving teachers' skills through sessions on child development, curriculum, and parent-teacher conferences. In addition, the program will pay 50 percent of teachers' tuition at post-secondary institutions; some take advantage of this to earn their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. To help teachers gain the CDA, the local Head Start has recently opened its CDA training to the community.

Training for Family Support

Training for family support is done on-site by Community Family Development's part-time social worker. CFD includes parents in some of these workshops, recognizing that they, too, can benefit from the training content. The workshops have discussed communication with parents and multi-cultural issues. CFD recently hosted a conference on family issues, inviting local public school teachers.

Challenges and Next Steps

Community Family Development is finding that a growing number of families are under increasing stress. From drug use to the poor quality of public schools, the need for augmenting family support resources continues. The teen parent program is especially challenging, as many of the young women leave their homes when they become pregnant and thus lose the support and structure that the family provides, leaving more roles for CFD to try to fill. Moreover, this program is in jeopardy due to financial difficulties. CFD must follow strict regulations associated with teen parent funding. For example, if the mother is suspended from school, she will not receive her child care subsidy for the days she is out of school. CFD teachers then must consider what is best for the family and in many cases decides to accept the child in the center without payment.

CFD would like to incorporate more home visiting into the program in the future to provide more in-depth, individual family support. The program also notices more young fathers involved in raising their children and would like to start a support group for them. There is also some discussion about CFD becoming a community child care training site to provide hands-on training for home-based caregivers. Finding adequate space and funding for additional programs like this is a challenge.

Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care Fort Worth, Texas

Serving primarily dual-career families, the Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care serves as a training model for family-centered care. To meet community needs, support families, and model effective practices, the Community Lab School offers a parenting education program, a professional development training program for teachers, training and observation rooms, a model family child care home for training, and a resource and referral department. Among other innovative approaches to child care, children are placed in multi-age groups and have the same teacher and classmates for several years, building a feeling of family in the child care setting.

Program Contact	Mary Cutliss, Program Director
Location	2700 Meacham Boulevard Fort Worth, TX 76137 Phone: (817) 831-5050 Fax: (817) 831-5070
Number of Sites	One
Year Program Began	1993
Number Served	Up to 120 children/about 80 families
Population Served	Predominantly Caucasian, some African-American, Asian, Latino; mostly dual-parent, middle-income families
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to kindergarten-age
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants 1:4; toddlers 1:5; preschool 1:10
1995 Budget	\$552,784
Primary Funding Sources	Parent fees, foundation grants, CACFC (food program), Child Care Management Services

Points of Distinction

- **Builds community capacity:** The Community Lab School serves as a model of family-centered child care. Early childhood professionals in the community, outside center administrators, and local center- and home-based caregivers take advantage of training sessions and opportunities to observe at the center.
- **Minimizes stress for working parents:** The program strives to meet parents' needs and implement their suggestions. The center's dry cleaning drop-off service, take-home meals, and on-site sale of postage stamps and snacks, as well as on-site speech, vision and play therapy, are ways the program meets its goal of making parents' lives less stressful.
- **Promotes staff development:** Through activities such as journaling, in which staff members keep a record for themselves of what they have experienced and learned, the Community Lab School focuses on reflective practices for teachers as they work to understand families and implement the center's family support philosophy.

Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care Fort Worth, Texas

Program Background

In 1990, the First Texas Council of Camp Fire, Inc. recognized the need for an in-depth training program to promote high-quality child care. In order to involve the community and ensure that the program would meet its actual child care needs, the Camp Fire organization elicited input from community leaders and concerned parents. This group evolved into the Family Support Network, a collaboration of 37 members from nonprofit and for-profit child care centers, an independent school district, a junior college, universities, and government agencies. Then in 1991, the United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant County, the primary funder of Camp Fire's traditional programs, asked Camp Fire to conduct a feasibility study on the development and funding of a comprehensive child care training program. A Camp Fire strategist, together with the Family Support Network, led the effort to design the Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care (hereafter referred to as the Lab School). The Fort Worth Camp Fire Boys and Girls, part of the United Way, oversees the Lab School; parent tuition fees are the program's primary funding source.

Today, the Lab School is a state-of-the-art family-centered child care center. It has a parenting education program, a parent resource and lending library, a professional development training program for teachers, training and observation rooms, a model family child care home setting for training, and a resource and referral department. The Lab School models programs designed to enhance traditional child care services. The higher teacher-to-child ratio provides more individualized attention. Some children have the same teachers and classmates for several years through the school's "continual care" program, which promotes stable, long-term relationships. The center also has two family-grouped, multi-age rooms that put three-, four-, and five-year-olds together.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Located approximately 30 miles west of Dallas, Texas, Fort Worth's population is extremely varied both culturally and economically. Although Fort Worth has a diverse population, with Caucasian, Latino, and Asian citizens, middle-class white families make up the majority of program participants. Many are dual-parent, dual-income families employed by some of the major corporations headquartered in the area.

Collaborations

The Lab School collaborates with several outside organizations to provide programs aimed to simplify parents' lives. It arranged for a dry-cleaning vendor to operate an on-site drop-off and pick-up service and schedules swimming lessons for children at a local YMCA. The center also collaborates to deliver on-site speech, vision, and play therapy. As a model family support program, the Lab School serves as a training and observation site for hundreds of child care teachers, college and high school students, administrators, educators, parents and civic groups who visit the center each year. The program allows researchers and students to carry out projects with the children. The program is a founding member of the Family Support Network, a cross-agency community group that meets monthly to discuss child care issues, strategies to improve the quality of child care in the community, and a community development plan for family support.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

According to the Lab School's brochure, "The Family-Child Care Center is a family-friendly place where parents are genuinely welcome and understood." This statement is based on the Lab School's philosophy that strong, healthy, productive parents will engender these same traits in their children. Therefore, the program works to form partnerships with parents to provide family support and an environment that not only enhances the children's growth and development, but also promotes the well-being of the whole family. Teachers understand that parents are the most important people in a child's life and honor the beliefs and lifestyles parents want for their children.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Maintaining positive relationships between teachers and parents is one of the center's primary goals. The program incorporated four design features into the center to facilitate effective partnerships between parents and teachers: a parent resource and lending library allows parents and teachers to share information with one another; a comfortable parent lounge provides space for parent-teacher conferences (teachers may also leave notes to parents in families' individual mail boxes located in this room); the family services coordinator's office is by the center's front door, making her highly visible to parents and letting her easily see and interact with families on a daily basis; and classroom observation areas allow parents and teachers to monitor children's behaviors, see developmentally appropriate curricula in action, and observe relationships between children and teachers.

Because positive relationships with parents help teachers support families, teachers sometimes attend parent education sessions with the parents of their students, which may lead to parent-teacher discussions on how to work together. A special seminar called "Parents and Providers as Partners" offers to teach parents and their caregivers opportunities to learn how to cooperatively create a consistent, nurturing, and stimulating environment for the child for whose upbringing they share responsibility; it also aims to enhance parenting skills and lessen the stress and guilt parents often feel when dependent upon child care. Parent-teacher relationships are also a source of emotional support for parents who have come to confide in the staff and seek counsel on personal matters, such as marital issues or job frustrations.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

The Lab School gives parent education a high priority, teaching child development and parenting skills to improve the functioning of the family unit as a whole. Every six weeks the program distributes *Hand in Hand*, a newsletter containing child development articles, parental skill-building information, and news about center activities. The program arranges brown bag lunch parenting seminars during the lunch hour on a range of timely topics. Related articles in *Hand in Hand* follow, as well as a parent-child event based on the topic of the lunch. The Lab School also offers six-session parenting courses twice a year covering topics such as child development, coping with stress, and balancing work and family. The center also makes parenting and child development information available via its parent resource and lending library.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

To offer parents the opportunity to learn from and support each other, the Lab School offers dinner groups to address parenting issues. Parents also participate in the program's parenting courses and seminars, giving them the opportunity to develop mutually beneficial relationships with each other.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

The Lab School strives to involve parents in the planning and implementation of its activities and programs. The center works with parents to discover a level of participation that works best for them, one that balances their desire to be involved with their child's care with the other demands on their time. Together, parents and teachers work out mutual goals and activities in the best interest of their child, and teachers often invite parents into their classrooms to take part in family activities.

Parents' needs and opinions influence all of the Lab School's programs and policies. The center has two decision-making committees, the Family Services Committee and the Fundraising Committee, which involve ten to twelve parents as representatives of their children's age group. The Family Services Committee meets monthly to plan special events and discuss what the center should do for families. The Fundraising Committee searches for non-budgeted revenue sources to support center activities. These committees may form sub-committees to carry out specific tasks such as organizing an event or forming a community advocacy group. The Lab School encourages parents to volunteer on committees and thus increase their sense of responsibility for the center.

Meeting Family Needs

The Lab School aims to show that the successful delivery of services to families optimizes the mental health of parents and, in consequence, of children. A family services coordinator works closely with the families and refers them to various types of medical and mental health assessments, counseling, and other services in the community. The program offers its facilities to any family who needs therapy.

The Lab School also demonstrates that child care centers can provide screening services for children experiencing developmental delays. Students from local universities conduct on-site developmental screenings and answer parents' questions. One of the center's teachers is certified to provide free vision and hearing screenings. The Easter Seals Society recently provided speech and language screening at a minimal cost to parents. The program notifies parents of any free clinical testing available in the community and is investigating scheduling on-site inoculations via a mobile medical unit.

The program also offers parents services meant to reduce stress in their daily lives and attempts to accommodate the busy schedules of dual-career families. On-site services include: aerobics classes for parents and exercise classes for parents and their children; a one-day dry cleaning service; sale of snack foods for the drive home; take-home meals prepared by the center staff, which parents can purchase in the evening to warm up when they get home; a mail drop box along with the sale of postage stamps; and a Parents' Night Out one night per month, freeing parents to go out while leaving their children at the center. Teachers are available to accompany children to scheduled lessons so that parents can stay at work. They also offer flexible parent-teacher conference times to make them convenient for parents and schedule parent education classes according to parents' availability. Surveys are conducted to obtain suggestions from parents about services that would make their lives a little easier.

Staff

The Lab School's staff of 22 reflects the diversity of the community. The director and assistant director/family support coordinator manage classroom teachers and the support staff. Each classroom has a lead teacher, assistant teachers, and part-time assistants (often college students). Lead teachers have two- or four-year degrees in early child development or comparable experience. Other teachers either have or are working on their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Clerical, maintenance, and kitchen staff members provide further services. The program considers commitment to family-centered practice a prerequisite in hiring its staff. The center's staff retention rate is quite high; in fact, most have worked there since the center opened.

Professional Development

The Lab School offers in-house workshops on child care basics such as health and safety, child development, and classroom management. In addition to providing two inservice days per year, the center also has monthly staff meetings focusing on topics chosen by teachers. Teachers participate in area professional development conferences as part of their ongoing training. Besides training its own personnel, the Lab School is a training ground for home child care and for teachers and administrators. Outside providers may participate in Lab School training courses and study how the center applies child development and curriculum theory via classrooms equipped with observation areas.

Training for Family Support

Most of the Lab School staff members did not receive formal family support training in the early childhood education programs they attended prior to employment. Therefore, the center developed its own family support training. This training is based on input from a full-day inservice workshop for teachers to discuss the meaning of family support and a meeting with parents to learn their perceptions of family support. Two subjects for training are how to communicate openly with parents and how to increase parent involvement. The Lab School is in the process of developing a training program to help other centers learn from their successes with family-centered practice. This training program covers five areas: financing a family care center; delivering effective auxiliary services for family child care centers; methods for interfacing with community-based services; family support through family child care; and marketing the family support center.

Challenges and Next Steps

One of the Lab School's greatest challenges is to develop ways for other child care centers and family child care homes, especially those which serve low-income and minority populations, to use or adapt its family support system. To that end, the program plans to document its methodology and successes and use this information in educational seminars given at the model center.

The center's family support philosophy keeps evolving, and the program continuously evaluates and refines services and operations. (The director has fine-tuned the center's budget and structure to make the program financially feasible and replicable at other sites.) Once the program's model is fully-developed, the Lab School plans to reproduce its family-focused programs in three centers. To support these centers, the program will provide a mentoring system, test adapted curricula, and modify the family support components to suit home-based care.

Outside consultants are studying the Lab School's family support approach in an extensive longitudinal research project comparing the effects on children, families, and teachers of traditional, accredited child care centers and family child care homes that do and do not incorporate family support programming.

**The Family Farm
Chapel Hill, North Carolina**

The Family Farm is a model child care home which offers teen parents family-centered child care. The Family Farm is actually a working farm where a small group of children have the opportunity to participate in farming activities and play with homemade toys. The program is dedicated to providing high-quality child care in a home setting and to training local caregivers in family child care practices. Designed to encourage pregnant teenagers and student parents to complete high school, the Family Farm's teen parent program offers child care that enables parents to attend school. The program also offers opportunities for teen parents to develop meaningful and supportive relationships with their children's caregiver, learn parenting skills, and strengthen their potential to be good parents.

Program Contact	Ann Fisher, Project Coordinator
Location	6407 Mill House Road Chapel Hill, NC 27516 Phone: (919) 933-9090 Fax: (919) 933-4501
Number of Sites	One home
Year Program Began	1994
Number Served	Eight children/four families (when fully enrolled)
Population Served	African-American, Caucasian, Latino; ranging from low- to high-income families; mostly single teen parents
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to 12 years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	1:5 at lowest; 5:8 at highest
1995 Budget	\$66,215
Primary Funding Sources	Orange County Partnership for Young Children and the North Carolina Smart Start Initiative

Points of Distinction

- **Models family support practices:** The Family Farm has a dual focus: to provide high-quality child care with an integrated family support focus and to train other home-based caregivers in the area to do the same. As a model program, the Farm gives members of the academic and professional child care communities surrounding Chapel Hill opportunities to observe its methods and participate in its activities.
- **Serves teen parents:** The Family Farm serves families headed by teenage parents, all of whom are enrolled in educational programs. Parents can earn academic credit for parenting classes taken at the Farm and for the time they spend involved in general child care. Parents receive instruction on basic concepts of child care and support in dealing with their often hectic family lives.
- **Employs a unique approach:** The Family Farm is a working farm that fosters environmental awareness and a sense of stewardship of the Earth through organic farming, recycling, and outdoor activities. All toys are made of natural materials and are handmade, modeling to parents that they need not buy expensive or synthetic toys to entertain their children.

The Family Farm Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Program Background

The Family Farm is a model family child care home designed collaboratively by HEARTH (a nonprofit agency), Central Carolina Community College, Child Care Networks, Durham Technical College, and the Family Child Care Association. The Family Farm project began in 1994 with funding from North Carolina's Smart Start initiative through the Orange County Partnership for Young Children, and was managed by HEARTH. HEARTH closed operations in October 1996 due to financial difficulties, but the Family Farm program was able to continue uninterrupted until January 1997, when the Orange County school system took over the administration of the program. These changes have been accompanied by a site move from the original farm location to a temporary site until space is found near Orange High School.

The description below is based upon the original Family Farm, where Ann Fisher was and continues to be the project coordinator as well as its primary caregiver. The Family Farm is a working farm complete with farmhouse, animals and a garden, encouraging children to spend time learning and exploring outdoors.

The Family Farm delivers family child care and in-service education for area caregivers. The Farm strives to demonstrate its beliefs that the home environment is the optimal setting for child care and that partnerships among caregivers, parents, and children benefit each person taking part in the child care experience.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The Family Farm is located in central Orange County near Chapel Hill, North Carolina. While Chapel Hill is a university town and some family incomes are quite high, the northern part of the county is rural and less well off. Some residents in the rural portion of the county lack basic amenities such as electricity. They must travel significant distances to reach certain public and health services, and transportation often is not easily accessible.

The Family Farm is open to both rural and suburban families and serves communities that are approximately 70 percent Caucasian. The other 30 percent consists mostly of African-Americans, with a small but growing number of Latinos. Families served by the Farm project are predominately headed by young single mothers. Program eligibility requirements include parent enrollment in either high school or post-secondary educational programs.

Collaborations

Collaborating with local area resource and referral agencies and other programs in the community, Family Farm's project coordinator is able to find the services needed by the young mothers and refer families to other local programs.

The Family Farm is an integral part of the Orange County Family Child Care Association (OCFCCA), a network of caregivers in the county with a goal of disseminating information to home-based caregivers. The Farm's project coordinator is also the president of the OCFCCA. The OCFCCA holds meetings and conducts workshops for county caregivers at the Farm.

The Family Farm's active relationships with local high schools, community colleges, and universities serve to help keep mothers interested in continuing their education and to help fill student internship and volunteer positions at the Farm. Many of the families at the Farm were referred to the program through local high schools, and the Farm now coordinates closely with these schools in the delivery of parent services.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Having identified the family and school as the two institutions central to a child's life, the Family Farm's program designers chose to develop a training model based on a caring home and family life. Using the home and family life as an educational framework, the program aims to "create many bridges between home and child care." The Family Farm works to integrate the core value of *respect*, for children, for parents and families, for caregivers and for the earth as well as the principle of *partnership* between parents and caregivers into all of its efforts. The program's handbook elaborates on these principles.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

The Family Farm encourages consistent and frequent communication between parents and caregivers. Each day as parents drop their children off at the Farm, they are asked to fill out a sheet summarizing how their child's morning has gone so far. Likewise, at the end of the day parents are able to review a "Splat Sheet" that tells them about the child's day at the Farm. These sheets help the coordinator establish a dialogue with parents. The coordinator compiles these sheets and may use them to find patterns in the behavior of mother or child. Sometimes this information is a topic in parent-caregiver conferences, during which both adults talk about a child's development, thus reinforcing the partnering approach to raising a child. The project coordinator also keeps an "affirmation journal" in which she, interns, volunteers, and parents can write supportive messages to each other. In response to parents' request for more interactive projects involving themselves and their children, the project coordinator sends home notes about activities the children engage in while under her care so that mothers can do them with their children at home.

The Family Farm's project coordinator aims to strike a balance between acting as a role model and being a confidante in her relationships with the young mothers participating in the program. She supports parents individually by going out to lunch with them to talk perhaps about such issues as the parent's educational progress or current issues in parent-child interaction.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

The project coordinator makes a concerted effort to support parenting skills by modeling positive parenting behaviors and hopes that parents learn from watching the family-like behavior involved in cooking meals and helping with homework at the Farm and try to do the same at home. Parenting classes are mandatory for teenage parents who receive subsidized child care. To maintain participation, these classes have been incorporated into a breakfast group that all parents attend. Rather than attend a formal session, parents discuss parenting topics in a more comfortable family setting.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Because most of the mothers participating in the Family Farm project are teen parents and have only limited opportunities for social interaction, meeting new people and making conversation, the program offers events such as field trips and other get-togethers which are often centered around meals. Every morning, parents have the opportunity to eat breakfast together with other parents and their children when they drop their children off. The intent is to provide programming that accommodates mothers' need to be a part of a community and to help them build supportive relationships among themselves.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parent involvement at the Family Farm takes several forms, from parents coming inside to fix breakfast for their children to signing the Parent Participation Agreement that puts in writing their commitment to be an active part of their children's care. Parents are also encouraged to voice their opinions of and desires for the program. Additionally, through the personal relationships that the coordinator develops with the young mothers, she works to help them feel confident about their potential to be great mothers, to finish school, and to find good jobs.

Meeting Family Needs

Parents at the Family Farm are grappling with the dual demands of being a mother and being young. The project coordinator tries to connect with these parents and develop supportive relationships with them. She will accompany a mother to meetings with teachers or the Department of Social Services if a mother asks her to. When the needs of the parents reach beyond the Family Farm, she refers them to other community agencies.

Staff

Ann Fisher is the Family Farm's project coordinator and primary caregiver. Involved with the Farm as an advisor since its inception, she took on her current role after the program's first year. The only full-time staff member, Fisher is supported by an assistant caregiver and numerous volunteers and interns from high schools, community colleges, and universities.

Under the new arrangement with the Orange County school system, Fisher will continue on a half-time basis doing administrative work and training and consultation. A full-time caregiver will be hired to run the daily hands-on aspects of the child care component.

Professional Development

Part of the Family Farm's mission is to train home-based caregivers to deliver high-quality, family supportive care. Until recently, the project coordinator and HEARTH's executive director conducted workshops for home-based caregivers at the Farm, and caregivers were invited to observe the Farm's day-to-day activities. Students from local academic institutions observed and interned at the Farm. Training for incoming volunteers and trainees is well documented in *The Family Farm Handbook for Students and Volunteers*, which they all receive.

The Family Farm annually sets forth goals for its impact on the community. For instance, each year, the program aims to help a specified number of home-based caregivers become registered with the state, gain accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), or complete their CDA. The Farm has grant provisions through its collaboration with Child Care Networks that help caregivers defray the cost of applying for family child care accreditation.

Training for Family Support

The major themes in the Family Farm's family support training are the need to communicate openly with parents and children and to respect the family and each family member. Training discusses both formal and informal communication and stresses the importance of developing a partnership attitude between parents and caregivers. The multi-ethnic, multicultural curriculum emphasizes the need to embrace families in their diverse forms. Workshops include topics such as "Family Rituals," intended to familiarize caregivers with the everyday rituals of family life, and "Caregivers as Parents," designed for those caregivers who care for their own child while they care for others. In addition, the Farm encourages caregivers who receive training from them to share their lessons and new ideas for projects with the parents of the children in their care, so that parents can use them at home with their children.

Challenges and Next Steps

The Family Farm faces a variety of challenges. One concern is that the Farm cannot accept all the young mothers that apply for program admittance. The project coordinator has made a deliberate choice to keep the program small to maintain the family feel of the child care home and the caliber of individualized care.

Another issue is "reaching" teenage parents. On a basic level, lack of transportation to and from the site can be an obstacle for these mothers. On a more profound level, successfully influencing young parents to make wise choices and take responsibility can be difficult, complex, and trying. For example, the project coordinator described her difficulty in engaging one mother in a meaningful relationship grounded in caring for her child. Instead, the mother focused on her social life and moved away from a supportive home environment to a high poverty, high crime area.

To enable more people to benefit from the Family Farm model, the project coordinator says the program is launching a set of satellite programs "to make ourselves bigger, but by extension rather than taking more children on site." With the goal of further validating the home-based child care model — and home-based caregivers — the Farm would provide training and collaborate with caregivers in the new satellite program. Like the original Family Farm, these homes would be open to observation and take student interns. The first satellite will be established.

**Gardner Children's Center
San Jose, California**

Gardner Children's Center, Inc. is a nonprofit organization providing subsidized child care and developmental services to ethnically diverse, low-income families whose parents are working, training, or on certified job search. The Center offers children a developmental curriculum, annual on-site health screenings, and enrichment activities such as field trips and swimming lessons. As a family-oriented center, Gardner's Parent Services Project responds to the self-defined needs of its working-parent population.

Program Contact	Frederick J. Ferrer, Executive Director
Location (Administration)	611 Willis Avenue San Jose, CA 95125 Phone: (408) 998-1343 Fax: (408) 998-0534
Number of Sites	Two; plus four licensed family caregivers
Year Program Began	1973
Number Served	208 children total
Population Served	Predominantly low-income, single parent families; 74% Hispanic, 19% Caucasian; 7% other minorities
Age Range of Children	Two years and nine months through sixth grade
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Preschool 1:8; family child care 1:6
1995 Budget	Approximately \$900,000
Primary Funding Sources	Federal, state, and local funding; parent fees; United Way

Points of Distinction:

- **Utilizes the Parent Services Project model:** Gardner's Parent Services Project (PSP) is based on parents' self-defined needs. Each fall, parents and staff members meet on "Parent Wish Night" to generate a menu of services and activities developed collaboratively by parents and the agency staff. Parents have requested such services as health care resources, parent respite care, mental health workshops, cooking nights, bingo games, community service referrals, training in parenting skills, and social gatherings. PSP coordinators support parents in organizing these activities; parent participation in all activities is by choice.
- **Promotes child health:** Gardner arranges for on-site health screenings and immunizations for all uninsured children through a well-established local clinic. If follow-up visits are recommended, Gardner staff assists families with referrals and "walks them through" the next steps toward ensuring their child's good health. Through Gardner's efforts, 100% of all children at the center are current in their immunizations. Gardner attributes this rate to using a local clinic that is well established and trusted among members of the community.
- **Encourages community involvement:** Representatives from the corporate sector, as well as representatives from local schools and the police department, serve on the Board of Directors. Gardner also relies on volunteer support from many teens in the neighborhood, who look to Gardner as a place both to work and grow.

Gardner Children's Center San Jose, California

Program Background

Since 1973, Gardner Children's Center, Inc. has been operating to provide subsidized child care and developmental services to low-income children in Santa Clara County, CA. Originally a program of model cities, Gardner was funded through the Department of Social Welfare. Then, in 1973, Gardner became totally funded by the State Department of Education. In 1985 Gardner received a grant from the United Way to expand its programs, and in 1987 it became a full member of the United Way Agency. Recently, Gardner received a grant to become a Parent Services Project (PSP) site. The PSP is a nationwide effort to use child care centers to provide support services to low income families. Central to the philosophy of the PSP model are the concepts of parent involvement and empowerment.

Currently, Gardner oversees three programs: (1) a center-based full-day program for children ages two years and nine months through pre-kindergarten, serving 48 children; this includes before- and after-school care and full-time care during summers and holidays; (2) a before- and after-school child care program, located on two San José elementary school sites, for families in all income ranges up to grade six, serving 140 children; (3) a network of four licensed caregivers who offer child care to infants, toddlers, and school-age children in their homes, serving 20 children. Gardner contracts with these caregivers, monitors them, and provides them with resources and materials.

A sliding fee scale is applied to all programs; parents pay tuition based on a scale developed by the state Department of Education. Since program eligibility is based on family income and need, with priority given to children receiving protective services, followed by low-income families who are in training or employed, most families do not pay full tuition at Gardner; only 22% of the yearly budget is from parent fees.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The 1.6 million residents of Santa Clara County represent a diversity of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The median income of Santa Clara County, located in the heart of Silicon Valley, is high, as are the cost of living and the cost of child care. For the 300,000 families who earn less than the median income, this presents a challenge to finding affordable, quality child care. Gardner's mission is to serve the lowest income strata of the community, those who are employed or in training, but are still struggling to provide for their families. Approximately three-fourths of Gardner's families are Latino; another one-fifth are Caucasian, and the rest are Asian or African-American.

Collaborations

Gardner has a number of well-established community partnerships. It is one of nine agencies in the San Jose Child Care Consortium, a group that banded together to obtain funding for on-site mental health services. The Consortium contracts with a counseling agency to supervise a Ph.D. intern as a consultant to the staff; if parents, via staff members, request mental health services, the intern can either provide supervised counseling directly to the parent, or refer staff members to the appropriate agencies for help.

Gardner is a member of the Santa Clara County Training Consortium, an organization that obtains state funds to be used for staff development, in service training, and application fees for families interested in establishing family child care homes.

Gardner's latest collaboration is with four other agencies, who have banded together to form the Learning Community. Their purpose is to conduct an outcome evaluation that will look at the impact of child care on family income.

Gardner's relationship with the East Valley Community Clinic (described above), also a United Way agency, ensures that every child at the Children's Center is current on their immunizations, and has annual health, dental, vision, and hearing screenings.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

The Gardner Children's Center parent brochure states that "the overall program incorporates values of parent participation, economic self-sufficiency, education, and cultural sensitivity, in a cost-efficient manner by maximizing available resources, thereby enhancing the quality of family life." At Gardner, families are recognized for their strengths, rather than deficits. Parents are viewed as an integral part of the learning community and are respected for being the most important people in their children's lives.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Family support at Gardner is based on respect and inclusiveness. The administrator's desk is centrally located by the front door, making him accessible to parents as they enter and leave the building. Staff members and parents interact on a first-name basis, and the teaching staff makes it a point to be intimately aware of each family's home situation. Parent conferences are scheduled twice a year; however, informal parent meetings between parents and teachers occur on a regular basis. Parents report that they always feel comfortable discussing issues with teachers and that their needs are always addressed, either by the staff, or by referral to other agencies.

Strengthening Parent Knowledge and Skills

The Parent Services coordinators support parents in organizing the activities they choose. As described above, the annual Parent Wish Night generates a "menu of services" that are facilitated by the staff throughout the year. The activities that emerge from Wish Night reflect the specific needs and ethnic and cultural contexts of the families involved. A resource room at the Center contains materials on children's health, development and other relevant topics for parents.

Fostering Parent-To-Parent Relationships

Some of the events organized by Gardner parents are designed to promote a sense of community among Gardner families. In the past parents have organized adult-only activities such as dances, mothers' clubs, and fathers' breakfasts. Through these activities, parents discover that they have in common a concern about their children. They also discover the power of working in a group to improve their families' lives.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

The PSP model respects a parent's ability to know what he/she needs, and thus participants make their own choices about their level of involvement throughout the year. The metaphor of a "menu of services" implies that parents choose from the "menu" those programs that interest them. Some parents are drawn to the social gatherings, some to the celebrations, and some to the educational workshops. Thus, while all parents do not attend all events, most parents attend the events that are the most relevant to their family situation. Ideally, parent involvement in designing the programs helps ensure that PSP programs are culturally relevant and well-attended because the parents have a stake in them. According to the director, if an activity has low attendance, it was not a parent-generated idea.

Meeting Family Needs

The Gardner staff is closely connected with each family affiliated with the Center. They are available to provide support and referrals to all families requiring assistance beyond what the Center can provide. Parents are encouraged to work with the Parent Services coordinators on an individual basis to respond to urgent needs such as housing and medical care. Additionally, the Gardner Scholarship Fund is used to meet temporary or partial needs of parents in financial stress.

Staff

The Gardner Children's Center has a stable and experienced staff. The Center employs 25 staff members, including an Executive Director, a program coordinator, certified teachers and aides. The average Gardner employee has worked with the agency for seven years; some staff members have been there as long as 16-18 years. All teachers and the Parent Services coordinators have bachelor's degrees; some teachers also have a master's degree. Ten of the 18 staff members are Latino. Staff members are evaluated by the Executive Director and the staff member's direct supervisor annually. At that time, the staff member must articulate three goals for the next year, including one goal pertaining to training.

Professional Development

According to the Gardner Staff Development Plan, "all staff have personal development plans based on their job description and the training goal or goals identified during their annual performance evaluation." Salary increases based, in part, on the completion of additional college-level coursework are used to encourage staff members to pursue their education. Teachers can take day classes on early childhood education at a local community college; tuition for the courses is partly reimbursed through a state-funded program. The Center sends staff members to attend major professional conferences related to their stated goals. The staff attends seminars and workshops throughout the year on a range of topics from child development to computers in the classroom to nonprofit management. There are two inservice training days where the program closes for staff development; the staff develops an agenda for these two days. In the past, the staff has chosen to address such topics as working with challenging children, self-esteem issues in early childhood, and meeting individual families' needs. Finally, there is an annual staff retreat that provides the opportunity for developing good working relationships with other staff members, as well as for exploring specific issues in depth.

In addition to staff training, Gardner also offers training to other members of the community. Santa Clara University (SCU) places students at Gardner as part of their effort to offer "experiential education" across disciplines. In addition to placing student teachers at Gardner, SCU students use

Gardner as a workshop to get first-hand knowledge of the applied aspects of their discipline. SCU also provides tutorial services through the Eastside Project; approximately 100 students participate each year. Gardner benefits from the one-on-one assistance with families, and the additional help in the classrooms; the students earn course credit while obtaining valuable life experiences outside their university setting.

Training for Family Support

In addition to the activities described above, Gardner conducts ongoing training sessions that deal specifically with family issues relevant to the whole staff. The Executive Director uses conference videotapes and articles from professional publications (such as the NAEYC Newsletter) as a springboard for discussions on how to address the family support needs of Gardner families.

Challenges and Next Steps

In response to overwhelming community need, Gardner is launching a multimillion-dollar capital campaign to construct a new building of 26,000 square feet, which will accommodate 60 additional children for the Children's Center and house more administration for expanded off-site child care programs. The new space will allow for corporate partnerships to provide on-site job readiness and career development. Finally, with the new facility, Gardner will be able to extend health services to all family members, including check-ups, general health screenings, and basic health acquisition classes.

KCMC Child Development Corporation
Kansas City, Missouri

KCMC (Karing for Children is Our Main Concern) Child Development Corporation is the Head Start grantee for three counties in the Kansas City area and thus offers child care to a population encompassing rural towns and inner-city neighborhoods. Its eleven Head Start sites and three Full Start centers serve children from low- and middle-income families; 60 percent of families are headed by single parents. KCMC provides comprehensive child care and family support services, including health care services and parent education programs to over 2000 children and their families. It offers its own and other area teachers and caregivers training, technical assistance, and a resource room.

Program Contact	Dwayne Crompton, Executive Director
Location (Administration)	2104 East 18th Street Kansas City, MO 64127 Phone: (816) 474-3751 Fax: (816) 474-1818
Number of Sites	11 Head Start centers and three Full Start centers
Year Program Began	Head Start in 1970; Full Start in 1993
Number Served	2,000 children (877 directly through Head Start)
Population Served	African-American, Asian-American, Caucasian, Latino; low- to moderate-income families
Age Range of Children	Head Start — three- and four-year-olds; Full Start — two- to eight-year-olds
Staff-to-Child Ratio	1:10 for both Head Start and Full Start
1995 Budget	\$8 million
Primary Funding Sources	Head Start federal funding; combination of federal, state, county, and private foundation sources for Full Start

Points of Distinction

- **Adheres to a holistic family support philosophy:** KCMC embraces a family support philosophy which makes the family first priority and focuses on identifying and meeting the needs of parents and children.
- **Meets the needs of families ineligible for Head Start:** In addition to its eleven Head Start sites, the program has three Full Start centers. Full Start incorporates Head Start services into existing child care centers, offering full-day, year-round child care and educational programs to families ineligible for Head Start. It is funded through state, city, and private dollars.
- **Offers comprehensive on-site services:** KCMC provides families with an array of on-site services, including child care, educational programs for children and parents, mental health counseling, and dental and health care. Several staff members specialize in working with the families of children with disabilities in order to accommodate special needs children, who make up 10 percent of the enrollment.

KCMC Child Development Corporation Kansas City, Missouri

Program Background

KCMC (Karing for Children is Our Main Concern) Child Development Corporation was established in 1970 to provide quality child care for children in inner Kansas City neighborhoods. Today, as the Head Start grantee for three counties, KCMC Child Development Corporation (hereafter referred to as KCMC) serves children in urban, suburban, and rural communities. The program operates 11 Head Start centers and three Full Start centers (for two- to eight-year-olds); all sites provide child care and educational opportunities for children and parents. The program also has a home-based Head Start program available to families eligible for Head Start but without a Head Start center nearby: a family educator goes into the home and provides Head Start services, working one-on-one with the child and parent.

Directly and indirectly, KCMC serves approximately 2,000 children. KCMC supports its center-based teachers and caregivers (as well as about 250 home-based caregivers not under Head Start regulations) through training, technical assistance, and an on-site resource room full of materials related to child care. The program also coordinates reimbursements to caregivers from the federal Child/Adult Care Food program for serving nutritious meals and snacks.

KCMC is responsive to the child care needs of communities. In the late 1980's, the program began to extend the hours of selected Head Start centers, which normally offer half-day care during the school year, in order to deliver full-day care on a year-round basis. In 1993, KCMC launched a pilot program known as Full Start in existing child care centers. The program offers comprehensive services to low- and moderate-income families that do not meet the stringent family income guidelines of the Head Start program.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The Kansas City metropolitan area is unique in that inner-city neighborhoods, suburban communities, and small rural towns are within a few minutes' drive of one another. The population is diverse, with many African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latinos in urban locations and predominantly Caucasians in the suburbs and more rural communities. KCMC's participants reflect the variation found in its service area. By law, KCMC's Head Start centers focus exclusively on low-income families; Full Start centers serve both low- and middle-income families. In addition, 10 percent of KCMC's enrollment is set aside for children with special needs. About 60 percent of the participating families are headed by single parents.

Collaborations

For Full Start to be financially viable, KCMC had to convince Head Start officials to let the program mix federal funds with other public and private dollars. As a result of this arrangement, all families receive the same services, but Head Start dollars cover services only for families eligible for Head Start, and other public and private funds pay for services for families ineligible for Head Start. With Full Start, resources in existence in the community (United Way, Dept. of Social Services, city and state government, etc.) have been brought together to meet family needs. While Full Start centers are managed by their sponsoring agency, KCMC provides staff training and technical assistance.

KCMC worked with Penn Valley Community College and community funders to establish the Francis Child Development Institute, which designs and delivers training to the early childhood community. KCMC was primarily involved in developing training designed specifically for caregivers with little or no early childhood expertise, particularly home-based caregivers in the urban core.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

The KCMC philosophy, Karing for Children is our Main Concern, is the cornerstone that guides KCMC's work. Recognizing that parents and other family members are the primary educators of children and strongly influence them, KCMC concentrates on family strengths. It tries to bring out qualities and capabilities that bolster parents' spirit of resourcefulness and resolution to meet challenges. It is also moving to make all sites "family-friendly," by designing different spaces for parents to concentrate on job development, learn about community resources, and relax and network with other parents.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Teachers and other staff members have an open, supportive attitude to all parents, even those who have only small amounts of time to participate. They recognize that with welfare reform, parents may not have as much time to spend at the centers. Parents can visit at any time as their schedules permit. The program emphasizes communicating and interacting with parents, learning from them, and taking their perspective. Staff members recognizes that challenges do arise in parent-program relationships but strive toward resolution, a process that can foster growth.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

In KCMC's home-based programs, teachers go into homes for 1.5 hours a week to work directly with parents, offering education and support. In the center-based programs, individual portfolios are done for the children, which help parents understand the development of their child. When the portfolios are discussed with parents, teachers are able to learn, too, about parent perceptions regarding their child's development. KCMC encourages continued parent involvement at home by giving parents "home bags" every month which contain educational and nutritional ideas to help parents nurture their children.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

KCMC offers monthly parent activities at many different times during the day and night in order to fit parents' schedules. It frequently reimburses parents for transportation and child care costs incurred in order to attend or provides free child care on site. These activities give parents opportunities to work together and build supportive friendships.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

KCMC has a "total family" approach which aims to include parents, as well as other family members and outside caregivers, in activities pertaining to their child's care, development, and education both within and outside of the classroom. The program's parent involvement coordinator and staff give parents and other key people in a child's life a wide range of volunteer options in the hopes that they will find an activity that interests them and that they are comfortable doing. For example, some parents assist in the design of classroom curricula and activities, some volunteer regularly in the classroom, and others may put together menus for the food service program or help

maintain a center's grounds. Parents are involved in program planning at the center level and also have opportunities to join a higher-level policy council at the agency level.

Meeting Family Needs

KCMC family advocates work closely and cooperatively with parents to assess family strengths and challenges, evaluate family needs, and, with the family, jointly develop an agreed-upon plan to support all members of the household. Family advocates help families resolve personal, financial, and medical issues and gain access to needed services in the community such as parenting skills workshops, job training and placement, and health care. The program's overall goal is to improve families' physical and emotional well-being and economic self-sufficiency.

KCMC's expanded Head Start hours enable the program to meet the child care needs of families struggling to get off or stay off of welfare, parents holding down two jobs, and those involved in job training and education programs.

Ten percent of KCMC's enrollment is open to families of children with special needs, who often have difficulty finding quality child care. The program's disabilities staff, consisting of the parent involvement coordinator, a disabilities specialist, a mental health coordinator, and paraprofessionals, provides assessments, free screenings, and referrals. KCMC also enables special needs children to participate in center activities by providing a physical environment that has been adapted to meet their needs via ramps and other special equipment.

Staff

KCMC's central office houses technical and support personnel who provide services to specific assigned centers. Executive director Dwayne Crompton manages the full spectrum of KCMC's child care centers and programs. A director of education develops educational programs and coordinates education specialists. Education specialists are assigned to individual Head Start centers, work closely with the center staff on curriculum development, and provide technical support to teachers. A coordinator of social services supports the family advocates who deliver supportive services to families enrolled in the program. Service coordinators and assistants educate parents about ways to participate in the program; they also train Full Start and Head Start staff members, as well as other child care teachers in the community.

KCMC hires, trains and supervises the entire staff of its 11 Head Start centers. Each Head Start classroom has a lead teacher and teacher assistant; additionally, classrooms share a teacher assistant. Lead teachers have a bachelor's or associate's degree in early childhood education. Many teacher assistants have earned the Child Development Association (CDA) credential or are in the process of doing so. The staff retention rate varies from 5 to 15 years.

Professional Development

KCMC provides ongoing professional development opportunities. Once a year it offers training to acquaint staff members with KCMC policies, procedures and practices. The program collaborates with the Head Start staff of two school districts in Missouri (Kansas City and Independence) to organize Head Start grantee/agency-wide workshops and convey KCMC's vision, philosophy and strategy. In-service training is continuous throughout the program year; the program frequently brings in consultants to share their expertise in specific topics.

To help the staff better understand and utilize the broad set of support services available within KCMC programming — which increasingly rely on community partnerships and collaborations — KCMC has introduced training focused on inter- and intra-agency teamwork and collaboration building. The program plans to expand its training offerings related to these issues. KCMC is in the process of refining its training portfolio and has run focus groups representing all staff levels, from directors to middle-management to teachers, in order to gather suggestions on how to make future training more effective.

In addition to in-house training, KCMC also encourages staff members to pursue formal training, whether general course topics or CDA training, and offers tuition reimbursement. Staff members are also encouraged to take advantage of local, state, and national conferences. Each year KCMC pays for selected staff members to attend the national Head Start conference.

Training for Family Support

The family advocates charged to work directly with the families convene weekly with the various staff members providing services to families to discuss issues of concern, make presentations on an array of topics, and evaluate staff skills and performance. Discussion topics range from how to recognize and enhance different adult learning styles to how to increase parent involvement in program activities. KCMC offers other staff development sessions at least once a month on subjects such as cultural diversity and leadership styles and draws from national resources such as Head Start's manual, *Engaging Parents*, in its training sessions.

Challenges and Next Steps

Integrating family support with child care presents many challenges. One is that the process of identifying family needs and then developing a service plan to meet those needs requires families to be open and upfront and staff members to be creative and flexible. Describing this process as a "progressive state of involvement," KCMC coordinators advise staff members to maintain their focus and awareness of their own and others' roles and responsibilities: successful interventions and outcomes depend upon working well together.

Another challenge is coordinating teams and maintaining communication despite the size of the organization and the geographical distance between sites. KCMC views good leadership skills as the route to smooth teamwork and clear communication program-wide. Furthermore, the central office staff strives to provide strong supports for the program's many child care sites, minimizing centers' sense of isolation and helping teachers resolve issues efficiently with qualified partners.

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program Napa, California

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program demonstrates its commitment to family support through the use of the Parent Services Project (PSP), a program based on the philosophy that healthy parents rear healthy children. Los Niños serves many "at-risk" families and families having children with special needs. To meet the needs of all families, Los Niños offers a variety of programs ranging from career training for parents to a full-inclusion program for disabled children. Los Niños strives for an atmosphere of trust and understanding where its population of predominantly low-income Latino parents work in partnership with child care teachers.

Program Contact	Betty Koufos, Program Director
Location (Administration/ Child Care Center)	1510 Myrtle Avenue Napa, CA 94558 Phone: (707) 257-2844 Fax: (707) 257-1766
Number of Sites	Two (child care and infant centers at different sites)
Year Program Began	Child care center in 1975; infant center in 1992
Number Served	Child care center - 60; infant center - 12
Population Served	Predominately Latino, also African-American, Caucasian, and Native American; low- to middle-income and teen parents
Age Range of Children	Child care center — two to five years; infant center — birth to two years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Child care center 1:8; infant center 1:4
1995 Budget	Child care center \$342,000; infant center \$44,000
Primary Funding Sources	California Department of Education, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, other state grants and private foundations

Points of Distinction

- **Offers extensive programming for parents:** Using the Parent Services Project (PSP) model, Los Niños Child Development and Family Program aims to build on family strengths and offers parents a variety of social supports, opportunities for program involvement, parent education classes, and job skills training to encourage the development of healthy families.
- **Involves parents in governing boards:** Two Parent Advisory Boards (one for the child care center and one for the infant center) set all policy for the program's family support and parenting components and participate in the centers' fiscal decisions. The boards also act as liaisons between program administrators and parents, facilitating a two-way flow of information.
- **Focuses on communication:** Staff members focus on positive communication with families. Spanish is the primary language at both centers, and, showing the program's commitment to effective communication, two-thirds of the staff members are bilingual.

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program Napa, California

Program Background

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program (hereafter referred to as Los Niños), established in 1975, is part of the Napa County Council of Economic Opportunity (NCCEO), a community action agency that includes area Head Start programs, food banks, and homeless shelters. The program's child care center serves children of working parents or parents enrolled in job training or other education programs. Its infant center, which began as an independent operation in 1992, cares for children of teen parents who remain in school. The NCCEO oversees both centers; program director Betty Koufos and the program's Parent Advisory Boards contribute to policy decisions and manage center operations.

Primary funding for the child care center comes from California's Department of Education (DOE). Though the infant center also receives funds from the DOE, it further relies on funds for families on public assistance, county federal block grant funds for teen mothers who are not on public assistance, and a state program called Greater Avenues to Independence (GAIN), which encourages teenage mothers to stay in school by paying for their child care.

Parent Services Project (PSP)

Recognizing the benefits of greater parent involvement, the Los Niños staff decided in 1986 to implement the Parent Services Project (PSP). PSP integrates family support services into child care centers, schools, and other programs that serve families. The PSP philosophy, which is now integral to the program at Los Niños, maintains that healthy parents rear healthy children and that parents are partners with teachers in the care of their children. PSP helps teachers to decrease parents' feelings of isolation and to find the resources necessary to meet family needs; it encourages family involvement, strong interpersonal relationships, and good communication skills in a family-centered environment. PSP aims to promote a sense of competency in parents through parent education classes, job skills training, and decision-making and leadership workshops. It also offers respite child care and activities that foster peer group support. Although PSP is a national program, the centers administer it independently. The child care and infant centers each have their own PSP coordinator who oversees parent and family activities. Parents control all PSP funds, which the centers must raise themselves.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Napa is a suburban community in one of California's premier wine-producing regions. Although tourism generates a good deal of revenue, other industries in the area are economically depressed. Los Niños serves low- to middle-income families and a predominately Latino population (the primary language for many families is Spanish). Another third of the families are Caucasian, and about 10 percent are from African-American or Native American backgrounds. The child care center is open to all children, including children of parents with a medical incapacity or children in "at-risk" family situations. It also accepts special needs children, most of whom have physical disabilities, in its full-inclusion program. The infant center serves teen parents and requires them to remain enrolled in school.

Collaborations

Los Niños collaborates with a local child care resource and referral agency to offer parent education workshops, which are open to families participating in the program and the general community as well. The resource and referral agency takes care of advertising and finding a workshop leader, and the program provides classrooms for the workshops and child care for participants. Los Niños also collaborates with Napa Valley Community College: Students volunteer and observe at the centers, and faculty members conduct training for center staff members and parents.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

As stated in its parent handbook, Los Niños believes "each parent can maximize the benefits of the program for their child and themselves by becoming involved in center activities, talking with staff members, making suggestions, and attending parent meetings and social events." To involve parents effectively, Los Niños strives to treat parents as partners rather than clients. Los Niños's family support philosophy is based on "doing things *with* families rather than *for* families." Recognizing that the attitude of teachers and caregivers is a critical part of building partnerships with families, the program hires those who are committed to the whole family, can interact in a wholesome manner, and are sympathetic to parents' needs.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Based on parent suggestions, teachers at Los Niños developed a daily information form and check list given to families once a week to tell them how their children are doing at the center. In addition to this formalized means of communication, teachers assert that one of the best ways to support parents is simply to listen to them. The program builds an environment of trust in which teachers care for children and, when possible, help parents work through their personal problems. Parent-teacher relations are greatly enhanced by the fact that so many teachers can speak the parents' native language of Spanish. Parents of a child with special needs are encouraged to invite important extended family members to create with the staff the development plans for the child.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Los Niños offers parent education classes and support groups in both English and Spanish. The program develops classes and forms groups based on feedback from parents. For example, a group of men may be interested in a particular topic, or a group of grandparents may ask for their own support group. Classes such as the workshop on positive discipline discuss common problems, enable parents to share real-life examples, and work out ways to deal with them. At first few parents took advantage of these classes; the director realized that many families did not attend because they were afraid to talk about what goes on in their homes. Teachers confronted that issue by positioning themselves as there to help, not to pass judgment.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

A primary objective of PSP activities is to give parents an opportunity to build support networks. For example, after some teen parents, who are often isolated from their peers, indicated a desire to spend more time with other teen parents, the program started an aerobics class with free child care to encourage relationships among them. Based on parent interests, Family Fun Activities such as potlucks, movie nights, picnics and craft and cooking classes have also given parents opportunities to develop relationships with each other. The Parent Advisory Boards are other important peer resources for parents, with board members communicating with other parents to ensure that

everyone has a chance to be heard; discussion among parents often generates new PSP activities. The board is also responsible for operating a Parent Option Fund through which money generated via fundraising or grants is available to parents who apply for a loan, an idea originally suggested by parents. The board evaluates loan applications, decides how much money to advance, and sets the terms of repayment.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Los Niños is mandated by the state Department of Education to have parent policy committees, which they have had since their inception. Los Niños follows a partnership approach that seeks out parents' opinions and asks them to participate in program governance. The program's Parent Advisory Boards are self-governing groups open to all interested parents which set all PSP policy and control funds coming into the centers from grants and fund-raisers organized by parents. PSP's focus on developing parents' leadership skills has enabled the boards to evolve into governing bodies. PSP's exercises in decision-making skills prepare parents to agree upon group activities, choose subjects for workshops, and make specific recommendations for program and facility improvements. Teachers and other staff members are no longer viewed as intermediaries whose job is to find ways to make parents' suggestions happen; instead, parents assume as much responsibility as possible for implementing ideas.

Meeting Family Needs

Activities at Los Niños reflect the practical needs of the participating families. For example, staff members developed programs for teen parents wanting career training. They help provide local transportation for activities and provide respite child care to let parents run errands or simply have some time to themselves. Because the centers have restrictions against sick children in the centers, the program started a "Get Well" program that pays for in-home care for mildly ill children. This allows parents to avoid missing work or school.

Los Niños also strives to serve families who traditionally find it difficult to place their children in child care. The centers reserve space for children of parents with a medical incapacity or families with "at-risk" situations such as physical abuse in the home or a parent addicted to drugs or alcohol. In 1995 the child care center began a full-inclusion program that provides care for children with physical disabilities and behavioral problems. The active environment of the center proved too stimulating for children with behavioral disorders, however, and now the center tailors its special education program specifically to children with physical disabilities. These children go the center half-days throughout the week and are included in activities with their peers.

Staff

Los Niños has one program director. Each center has an assistant director who oversees lead teachers and teacher assistants and a PSP coordinator who facilitates PSP activities. Other employees include kitchen help, office assistants, and support staff. The program tries to hire teachers with degrees in early childhood education and child care experience, as well as backgrounds similar to the families they serve. Because Spanish is the first language of many families in both centers, 10 of the program's 15 teachers are bilingual. The program has a high staff retention rate, with most teachers working at the centers five years or more. The director attributes this stability to good communication and strong, open relationships among staff members.

Professional Development

Los Niños has access to the many trainers on the NCCEO staff; the NCCEO also refers staff members to trainers outside its organization. Parents are included in some of the teacher training on curricular or health issues, such as CPR training. In addition, each center has weekly staff meetings in which outside trainers come in to conduct workshops, frequently on topics for which teachers identify a need. Past workshops have focused on such issues as developing communication skills, working with people from diverse backgrounds, and implementing full-inclusion strategies. Resource specialists and teachers from the County Special Education program also provide training on developing plans for special needs children.

Training for Family Support

The PSP coordinator at Los Niños organizes joint parent-teacher family support training based on suggestions by parents and teachers. Topics of training include how to improve communication among parents and staff members, encourage parent participation, and manage successful meetings. Training has also focused on understanding diversity and working with different leadership styles.

Challenges and Next Steps

Implementing the PSP philosophy of doing things with people instead of for people has been a challenge for Los Niños. For some teachers, it was difficult to step back, give parents control, and let them make decisions for the centers. Because teachers feel accountable and, sometimes, a need to be the authority, it can be hard to accept their position in terms of the PSP philosophy. However, they are learning not to feel threatened by input from families and to follow their lead.

Los Niños's teachers try to avoid being judgmental, a particularly challenging goal given some of the choices that families make. Dilemmas faced by teachers include such incidents as a parent who appeared under the influence of drugs showing up to drive a child home. In such situations, a teacher must decide whether to intervene and how. The impact of drugs can be disheartening: teachers have become close to children and have seen their progress, only to have a family drop out of the program, beyond reach. Dealing with teenage parents presents its own set of challenges, one being that it is difficult to get them actively involved. Teachers must convince these 15- and 16 year-olds (who have their own set of interests) that their input is important and that doing program evaluations is worthwhile.

Because the centers are parent-governed, program success depends on the quantity and quality of family involvement, which is a challenge as parents are busy and sometimes do not buy into the importance of their involvement. Los Niños hopes parent participation will grow; program staff members believe this will occur through parents watching and being encouraged by other involved parents and seeing the impact they can have in molding the program.

**Pacific Oaks Children's School
Pasadena, California**

Pacific Oaks Children's School was founded in 1945 by seven Quaker families. Today, it encompasses seven programs in two Pasadena locations. It is best known for its emphasis on rich learning environments, self-esteem building, choice-making, and a commitment to anti-bias education, the hallmarks of the Pacific Oaks College curriculum. Pacific Oaks's commitment to parent involvement has generated its nickname of "Pacific Oaks Parent-Children's School."

Program Contact	Yolanda Torres, Director
Location (Administration)	714 West California Boulevard Pasadena, CA 91105 Phone: (818) 397-1363 Fax: (818) 577-6145
Number of Sites	Two
Year Program Began	1945
Number Served	200 children
Population Served	Upper-middle and middle-class families within a 15- to 20-mile radius of the campus; well-educated parents; 40% minority population
Age Range of Children	3 months to 9 years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infant-toddler 1:4; two-year-old program 1:3; preschool 1:7; kindergarten 1:10; school-age program 1:8; full-day care 3:7
Number of Staff Members	33 teachers
1995 Budget	\$1,048,504
Primary Funding Sources	Pacific Oaks College and Children's School tuition combined

Points of Distinction:

- **Makes a commitment to anti-bias education:** The primary goal of Pacific Oaks is to provide the educational conditions in which all children are able to like who they are and, at the same time, to promote each child's comfort and respect for differences in others.
- **Offers art as an integral part of the curriculum:** The Art Studio, staffed by professional artists-in-residence and teachers, nurtures the creative spirit in each child. The program introduces art as a language recognizing verbal and non-verbal symbols as vital to development.
- **Focuses on conflict resolution in all programs:** Pacific Oaks Children's School introduces conflict resolution in the infant/parent program and it continues to permeate the curriculum through grade three. From the earliest ages, children are encouraged to base their resolutions on words, not actions. By ages three and four, teachers seldom have to settle disputes, if they arise.
- **Involves parents in program:** In keeping with the commitment to emergent curricula throughout the program, topics for parent meetings arise from parenting issues raised within the group. Periodic "Town Hall" meetings are conducted at which parents meet with the Board of Directors and focus on their questions and concerns.

Pacific Oaks Children's School Pasadena, California

Program Background

Pacific Oaks was founded in 1945 by seven Quaker families committed to the notion that children are the hope of our future. By 1959 the school had grown and the Pacific Oaks College was established to meet the growing demand for teachers trained in the Pacific Oaks curriculum.

Today, the Pacific Oaks Children's School operates seven programs, each designed to meet the diverse child care needs of its families. Program schedules vary from a few hours twice a week, to half-day kindergarten, to full-day, year-round child care. Additionally, the school operates a school age child care program from ages five to nine years. To further accommodate the needs of working parents, this program expands to full-day during school vacations. All programs approach parents with the same attitude of openness and respect.

Most parents at the school pay full tuition; some scholarship money, however, is available. Children who are awarded a scholarship in the Infant/Toddler/Parent program are guaranteed the scholarship through the third grade. Currently, the School, in conjunction with Pacific Oaks College, is launching a one-million-dollar endowment campaign, exclusively for tuition scholarships.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Pasadena is a culturally diverse community and the school attempts to recruit a population that is representative of the community. However, 63% of the families affiliated with the school are Caucasian, middle- and upper-middle class, two-parent, well-educated families. Approximately 37% of the school's population are minority students; this includes many biracial/bicultural children. The Director feels that if more scholarship funds were available, the school's population would be more economically diverse, but high tuition rates limit the number of low-income families able to attend the school. Cognizant that the high cost of the program limits its economic diversity, the School attempts to diversify its population through its scholarship endowment fund.

Because of the high expectations for parent involvement, all children entering the Infant/Toddler/Parent program must be living with at least one parent (as opposed to extended family, foster care, etc.). Approximately 40% of all children entering the Infant/Toddler/Parent program continue at the school through third grade. Attrition peaks in the kindergarten year, as many children leave to attend the public schools.

Collaborations

Over the years Pacific Oaks has established relationships with a variety of organizations that have served to enrich the lives of the families affiliated with the school. The most long-standing relationship continues to be with Pacific Oaks College. Since 1954 the College has provided the school with students who are in training to become preschool and elementary education teachers.

In an effort to diversify the parent population from an economic standpoint, the Children's School works closely with Child Care Information Services to assist with state-funded vouchers for child care for children through age four (pre-kindergarten).

Two collaborations have developed in order to meet the needs of the school's special needs population. The school has a relationship with the Pasadena School District so that children age three and above who have an identified special need can obtain off-site services such as speech therapy. Secondly, the school contracts with a private consultation group to examine how the school is responding to its special needs children and their families. The group reviews the school's special needs plans bimonthly and makes recommendations both for ways to improve the services within the school, as well as suggestions for agencies outside the school that might be able to better address an individual family's issues.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

The overriding philosophy of the Pacific Oaks Children's School with regard to family support is openness. It is crucial to the success of the school that parents feel welcome at all times; parents' participation in most parent programs, however, is voluntary. According to the program brochure, parents are asked "to get involved, with the freedom to choose where and how they want to participate." The Director suggests that the name of the school should be the Pacific Oaks Parent-Children's School, to make it clear that the school is for the entire family, not just the children in isolation. Above all, the key to adopting a family support philosophy is hiring teachers who like relating to parents.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

There are several institutionalized mechanisms that attempt to build strong parent-school relationships. At the beginning of each school year, head teachers conduct home visits to each child in order to begin the ongoing relationship with the child and his/her family. Parent conferences and full developmental summaries of each child are prepared twice a year. Additionally, parents of the infants and toddlers have weekly group meeting with their children's teachers; parents of children ages four and older have monthly parent meetings.

The Director states, however, that the most natural and important way for promoting good relations with parents is the informal, daily contact with staff. Teachers try to project an attitude of availability and accessibility toward parents. The Director's office is centrally located so that parents can easily drop by to share their issues and concerns. Coffee is served before and after school each morning so that parents can come early and observe their children, talk to other parents, and touch base with the teachers.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Parent education occurs formally and informally at Pacific Oaks. Regularly scheduled parent meetings occur for each age group; their purpose is to discuss issues of relevance to the group, such as discipline, nutrition, or sleeping problems. School-wide parent education meetings are held monthly; topics for these meetings are generated by program staff. Informally, teachers work daily with parents to increase their understanding of developmental issues specific to their child.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Pacific Oaks Children's School firmly believes that parents need to form a community of peers. To encourage parent-to-parent connections, coffee is provided every day both before and after school. Parents are encouraged to take time to talk with other parents and find shared interests, both for their children, and themselves. Throughout the year the school sponsors events that are designed to bring parents together: big school-wide cleanup days, grandparent days, and holiday parties all serve to promote parent interaction. Parents of children in the infant/toddler program are encouraged to form a babysitting cooperative as a way of starting to form a support network for the families.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parents are expected to become involved with the school; in the two-and-one-half hour meeting for prospective parents, the expectations for parent participation are clearly articulated. The nature of the program demands a high level of parent involvement on a daily basis, but there is also a formal mechanism for parent to have a voice within the school. Two representatives from each classroom serve on the Parent Board. It is the Board's duty to support the school as well as serve as a liaison between parents and the director. The head of the Board is an active member of the interview team for hiring new teachers.

Meeting Family Needs

Because parents are so much a part of the daily operations of the school, family needs are met on an individual basis. Additionally, two aspects of the program work to assist common concerns of many Pacific Oaks families. First, the growing demand for high quality surround care is met by the before and after school programs offered to Pacific Oaks families. Second, collaborations with private consultants and the Pasadena School District with regard to special needs ensure that families whose children need special services are well-served by the program.

Staff

Pacific Oaks' thirty-three staff members have been recruited from the local community colleges, state universities, and from practicum students from Pacific Oaks College. Teachers are hired by an interview team consisting of the head of the parent association, the parent representative and head teacher of the classroom in which the teacher will be placed, the director. Eight head teachers have a master's degree; all other head teachers have a bachelor's degree; assistant teachers have 12 to 20 units in Early Childhood Education; aides have 3-6 units. Historically, staff retention has been problematic, largely due to the practice of hiring Pacific Oaks students who stay at the school for a few years and then leave to teach in the higher-paying public sector.

Professional Development

Because of the school's affiliation with Pacific Oaks College, the Children's School staff benefits from six free units per year for continuing professional development. Teachers are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to take courses at Pacific Oaks College; approximately 50% of the teachers are enrolled at any given time. Staff is also encouraged to participate in NAEYC and its regional affiliate, and to present at annual conventions; the school releases staff members to attend the conferences, and reimburses the expense of attending conferences. Parents raise \$5000 annually for staff development. In house, professional development is conducted via bimonthly head teacher meetings. Teachers generate the agenda,

which might include a range of topics from general developmental issues to individual case studies to a specific family's situation.

Training for Family Support

While some workshop and training sessions are offered by outside speakers, the majority of family support training is conducted informally through conversations with the director and other staff members. Hiring good staff is the key to a successful family support component. If teachers are well-grounded in developmental issues, they are better able to support parents of young children. Therefore, Pacific Oaks Children's School strives to hire teachers who are articulate enough to talk about developmental theory and skilled enough to translate that theory into practice. Teachers at Pacific Oaks are encouraged to treat all families with compassion, humbleness, appreciation, and tolerance. The Pacific Oaks students who intern at the Children's School get first-hand experience working with parents, an experience that the Director feels is crucial but missing in many teacher-training programs.

Challenges and Next Steps

Communication continues to be a challenge for members of the Pacific Oaks community. The director feels that communication is both taking the time to work through issues, and knowing the right time to have the conversation. Secondly, building trust with teachers continues to be an issue at the school. Because retention rates are low, staff members do not stay long enough to build the relationships that help strengthen the school as a whole. Furthermore, because many of the staff members have been recruited as college graduates, they do not have the life experiences that the director feels are essential to understanding families. Attracting educated people with a broad range of interests is essential to successful implementation of a program that uses emerging curriculum. In the next few years, the school hopes to round out its teaching staff to include more experienced educators from a variety of disciplines, all sharing a common enthusiasm and respect for children and their families.

Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support Atlanta, Georgia

Founded over 100 years ago, Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support is now a multi-center child care network based on the philosophy that "quality affordable child care empowers families and strengthens communities." The program serves many low-income families and works to involve parents heavily in the development of programs and policies. Committed to improving the quality of child care in the area, Sheltering Arms offers training programs which enable early childhood professionals in the community as well as its own staff members to receive training.

Program Contact	Elaine Draeger, Executive Director
Location (Administration)	350 Techwood Drive Atlanta, GA 30313 Phone: (404) 523-ARMS Fax: (404) 523-9952
Number of Sites	12 centers in Atlanta and surrounding area
Year Program Began	1888
Number Served	1,600 children
Population Served	Predominately African-American, also Asian-American, Caucasian, Latino; primarily young, single-parent, low-income families
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to five years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants 1:4; toddlers 1:6; preschool 1:8-10
1995 Budget	\$5,526,517
Primary Funding Sources	Georgia Department of Education, United Way, parent tuition fees, Georgia Department of Family, and Children's Services

Points of Distinction

- **Employs a full time family support coordinator:** Sheltering Arms shows its commitment to family support by having a full-time family support coordinator at each center who assesses the needs of families and connects them with resources in other community agencies. The coordinator also organizes parent education programs and social activities for families and leads professional development sessions for staff members on ways to improve family support.
- **Focuses on training:** The program's IN TRAINING staff development and consulting unit develops and delivers workshops and curriculum materials designed to help entry-level staff members earn the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. IN TRAINING provides its services to Sheltering Arms staff members and other teachers in Georgia and neighboring states.
- **Involves parents and community members in an advisory committee:** Each center has an advisory committee made up of half parents and half community volunteers that works closely with the program director, family support coordinator, and instructional lead teacher to develop programs and policies for the center.

Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support Atlanta, Georgia

Program Background

Founded in 1888, Sheltering Arms is a community service organization that started when a group of prominent women in Atlanta recognized the need for affordable care for the children of women working in the cotton mills. From its beginning, the program focused on working with the family as well as the child; today it offers affordable child care and family support to families in urban and suburban Atlanta. A Board of Directors composed of 30 people representing the civic and corporate community oversees the entire organization, and a centralized executive group regulates activities at the program's 12 centers. Three advisory committees facilitate communication between the executive offices and individual centers. Each center has its own advisory committee composed equally of parents and community volunteers that works closely with the center's director, family support coordinator, and instructional lead teacher to manage center activities.

The program is also committed to improving the quality of child care in the community. Its IN TRAINING program provides workshops and curriculum materials to Sheltering Arms' entry-level staff members and early childhood professionals in the community working toward their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. IN TRAINING evolved as the staff saw a need for on-the-job training and invited teachers outside Sheltering Arms to participate. The program has grown from primarily a community service to a source of income that covers the cost of training Sheltering Arms' staff.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Sheltering Arms' child care centers are located in Atlanta and surrounding towns. Atlanta has a thriving industrial economy, and several large corporations have built headquarters there. The city has a diverse racial and ethnic population with a strong African-American history. The majority of the participating families are African-American, though many other racial and ethnic populations are represented. Consistent with the focus of its founding mothers, the program provides services to low-income families. Although almost all parents are employed at least 20 hours per week, nearly three-quarters of the families served earn less than \$18,000 per year. Sheltering Arms serves predominately young parents (the majority are under 25 and many are teenagers) and single-parent families; however, there is an increasing number of grandparents providing primary care for their grandchildren who place children at Sheltering Arms.

Collaborations

Sheltering Arms collaborates with local colleges and technical schools by accepting their students as interns. Instructors from local colleges sometimes provide training to program staff members, and Sheltering Arms' trainers have offered training in collaboration with area college instructors at state-sponsored training workshops. Sheltering Arms' centers often collaborate with local organizations to provide activities for children and families. For example, one center arranged for a free parent-child swim night every week at a local YMCA.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Sheltering Arms has a clear mission statement which describes the role of the organization to "provide a support system responsive to families and their changing needs." Explaining this mission, Sheltering Arms offers the following definitions: "Support is providing a foundation to build on, a foothold. It is responsiveness to needs, both articulated and unarticulated. "Sensitive means to attend to feelings. It is to show positive regard towards someone...demonstrating genuineness, warmth and empathy. Changing needs means the ongoing process of personal growth and development, [an] individual journey of becoming and learning."

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Family support at Sheltering Arms is based on developing personal relationships with parents in order to identify and respond to individual family needs. Family support coordinators keep a contact log with a page for each parent, and after each contact with a parent they make a note in the log. At the end of a week or two, the coordinators flip through the book to get a sense of how much they have interacted with parents and whether they had significant conversations. If they have not touched base with someone in a while, they make a mental note to mention a parenting class or upcoming field trip the next time they see that parent.

Teachers and family support coordinators also serve as a source of inspiration for parents by showing that they believe in them and giving them reasons to be optimistic. This is especially important when working with young parents in school or entry-level jobs. From their perspective it seems to take forever to meet goals; staff members try to give them hope and encouragement in their day-to-day life and help them take a long-term view.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

The family support coordinator at each center works to involve parents through seminars, conferences, meetings, socials, volunteer opportunities and a center newsletter. When families enroll in a center, they complete an assessment indicating the parent education topics of most interest to them. Many parents take advantage of the program's educational offerings, which cover topics ranging from child development to money management. Additionally, Sheltering Arms uses Parents as Teachers (PAT), a parent education program designed to enhance child development and academic achievement through activities such as home visits, parent education classes, and developmental screening.

Sheltering Arms has a new model teaching center that includes a room called the "family place" designed specifically for parenting classes and parent-teacher conferences. It also contains a library of resources and materials for parents to check out. In addition, teachers often serve as resources to parents on such subjects as the location of the nearest library, the dates for kindergarten registration, and the process for obtaining a driver's license. Teachers also use informal "personal visits" at the center or in a child's home as a way to share information with parents and find out what supports parents need.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Because the program serves so many parents who are young, isolated, and in need of social supports, many of the program's family support efforts revolve around social events that encourage relationships among parents. For example, a center might offer lemonade when parents come to pick up their child, creating an opportunity for parents to stand around and chat. The goal of these informal activities is to help parents build peer support networks. Relationships between parents are also built by their participation in many parenting sessions.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

In order to increase parents' sense of ownership of a center and their participation in it, Sheltering Arms offers parents a wide range of volunteer and leadership opportunities. Each center has an advisory committee, composed of parents whose children attend the center and community volunteers, that works closely with the management staff to develop policy and programs for the center. The committee also searches for innovative ways for a center to garner additional funds, goods, in-kind services, and contributions of time and insight from people in the community. In addition, each center has a parent group that facilitates the flow of information between the overall organization and parents at individual centers. Parent groups also organize social activities and plan parent-run fundraisers, which generate about \$2,500 per center per year.

Meeting Family Needs

Sheltering Arms stresses the importance of being aware of parents' wants and needs and of being flexible and adapting activities to meet those needs. Teachers realize that many parents have very little discretionary time to spend at the center, and they try to make it clear to parents that their first priorities should be taking care of their family and maintaining their employment. The program provides opportunities for involvement that do not require the parent's physical presence, such as bringing items to the center, taking projects home to work on, and helping plan events. Offering a large choice of activities and scheduling activities at multiple times are other ways that Sheltering Arms attempts to facilitate parent involvement.

Sheltering Arms works in partnership with other agencies and organizations to meet the needs of children and their families before a crisis develops. The close relationships with families fostered by the various family support and involvement activities described previously enables the staff to see the needs of families and make sure that they get appropriate help.

Staff

Sheltering Arms has centralized management with a decentralized front line. The main office houses the executive director, the directors of operations, training, and family support, a finance manager, and administrative assistants. Each center has its own management team made up of the director, family support coordinator, and instructional lead teacher all supporting the lead teachers, teacher assistants, and aides in each classroom.

Teachers have a high school degree and experience in the field. Many of them have backgrounds similar to the families they serve. While this can be problematic — teachers

and parents have the same time constraints, they are young and have young children, and they are not in a high paying job — it also encourages empathy. The program's career progression track and professional development opportunities encourage a low staff turnover rate, which is 7 percent overall.

Professional Development

Professional development is one of the program's primary goals. Because Sheltering Arms is a large organization with multiple sites, professional development includes training for management staff members on team work and communication between centers. Sheltering Arms' IN TRAINING program provides workshops and curriculum materials, organized around Child Development Associate (CDA) competencies, to its own entry-level staff and early childhood professionals in the community working toward their CDA credential. Sheltering Arms offers agency-wide training at its main office during the work day and finds substitutes so that teachers can participate. Teachers can choose which sessions to attend and work at their own pace. In addition, each center offers training to its own staff, and teachers who have completed training at the main office are encouraged to offer workshops at their own center. Individual centers also have staff meetings once a month with time reserved for training.

Training for Family Support

Sheltering Arms' family support training builds on the family component of CDA competencies, as well as Georgia's own set of competencies (based on the CDA competencies) that focus on relationships with parents and families. All training materials incorporate a family support philosophy that builds on family strengths and forges relationships between staff members and parents. Staff members learn curriculum theory and also discuss ways to communicate information about curricula contents to parents and how parents can contribute to curricular activities. Family support coordinators from each center meet once a month for family support workshops and bring information back to their centers. Examples of workshop topics include how parent involvement is more than physical presence, how to develop relationships and partnerships with parents, and how to help parents who are upset or in a crisis.

Challenges and Next Steps

Sheltering Arms faces difficulties typical of a large, multi-site agency. One issue involves managing a staff of 260, a challenge met with management support teams set up at all levels of the organization to prevent feelings of isolation. To encourage and enable the exchange of information and ideas between centers, the program groups the 12 centers into support teams of three center directors and three family support coordinators who meet regularly. Distance is another management issue. With centers geographically dispersed, assembling center-based personnel for a centralized meeting requires much effort. As distance also can be a cause of miscommunication, Sheltering Arms focuses on developing friendly relationships among the staff, as well as open, honest, and frequent communication, to prevent conflicts among centers or staff members.

Parent involvement can be unpredictable and sporadic, and directors must set staff expectations. They tell teachers to be glad when parents come and are involved in the center, but not to be disappointed if they do not. They advise teachers not to depend on parents for words of appreciation, but to find their motivation from another source.

The growing number of grandparents raising their grandchildren is an issue that requires more attention in the coming years. Presently there are about 30 grandparents who are primary caregivers of children enrolled at Sheltering Arms. The program plans to create and adapt family support services to meet this group's unique needs, offering classes and activities specifically for grandparents.

Webster Child Care Center
Webster Groves, Missouri

With a focus on respect for children and families, Webster staff members work to understand each family's unique circumstances and values and to provide appropriate support in accordance with the wishes of parents. Working in partnership with the public school district, Webster implements Parents as Teachers (PAT). This program teaches parents about early childhood development, takes teachers into the homes of the families they serve, provides children with developmental screening, and facilitates staff members and parents working together to raise children. Webster Child Care Center provides an innovative intergenerational program which benefits both children and seniors by collaborating with a retirement community.

Program Contact	Sonia Hartman, Executive Director
Location	624 Lohmann Forest Lane Webster Groves, MO 63119 (located on the grounds of Laclede Grove Retirement Community outside St. Louis) Phone: (314) 968-3189 Fax: (314) 968-0132 [PAT's national office can be reached at (314) 432-4330]
Number of Sites	One
Year Program Began	1973; PAT implemented in 1994
Number Served	165 children
Population Served	Primarily Caucasian, 12% minorities; about 25% lower-income, 25% upper- and 50% middle-income backgrounds
Age Range of Children	Six weeks through six years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants/toddlers 1:3; preschool 1:9
1995 Budget	\$1,000,000
Primary Funding Sources	Parent tuition fees, United Way, local churches, grants, and private donations

Points of Distinction

- **Uses the PAT program:** Webster Child Care Center uses the Missouri PAT model to provide family support and involve parents in their children's education. PAT gives families information on child development, teaches effective parenting skills, involves home visits, and advocates a "team relationship" between parents and caregivers.
- **Collaborates with the school district:** Webster Child Care Center is involved in a pilot project with the local public school district which makes PAT services available to families at the center. The collaboration enables the school district to meet its state-mandated quota for contact with families by including families involved with PAT at Webster. Webster receives the funding from the school to support these contacts. Without this collaboration, the center would not receive funding to implement its PAT program.
- **Offers an intergenerational program:** Located on the grounds of a retirement community, Webster Child Care offers an intergenerational program through which children visit residents on site and seniors volunteer time in classrooms, providing mutually beneficial experiences for both.

Webster Child Care Center Webster Groves, Missouri

Program Background

Webster Child Care Center was founded in 1973 by an ecumenical network of local churches who saw a need for quality child care for low-income and other working parents. The center's connection to area churches remains strong, and representatives from some of the founding churches still serve on its Board of Directors or give monetary support. Webster Child Care is managed by a 21-member Board of Directors composed of six parent representatives and other members of the community. Parent tuition fees account for a substantial portion of the center's funding; other funding comes from the United Way and the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS). The latter provides care for children in protective services and children from families in the DFS's "Futures Program," which offers subsidies to parents who are in job training or continuing their education.

Webster Child Care is located on the grounds of the Laclede Grove Retirement Community, which is administered by the Lutheran Health Care Association. The center's intergenerational program focuses on enabling the young and the elderly to spend time together and form relationships. Small groups of children from the center visit residents in the nursing home, the Alzheimer's unit, and apartments on the campus. Many residents visit the center on a regular basis and volunteer their time in classrooms.

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, which originated in Missouri, is designed to enhance children's development and academic achievement through parent involvement. PAT's philosophy states that parents are the first and most influential teachers of their children and that children are better prepared socially and academically when their parents are self-confident and competent. Its services include parent education for families with children from birth to age three, home visits, free developmental screenings, and programs for developmentally delayed three- and four-year-olds. Missouri is the only state to mandate parent education and family support programs in every school district; PAT participation, however, is voluntary.

Realizing that services would be enhanced if relationships with parents were stronger, Webster Child Care Center implemented PAT in its Infant, Toddler, and Twos program in 1994. PAT was attractive to the center because it unified the center's programming components and added home visiting. Teachers believe PAT improves the quality of child care because it encourages communication between teachers and parents, which leads to a trusting relationship. Teachers remark that PAT's parent education program helps reduce some parental stress and increase the pleasure associated with parenting.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Webster Groves is a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. Because Webster Child Care Center is located just off a major highway, it draws families who commute from St. Louis and the surrounding suburbs. The majority of families come from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, and many have professional careers. The center is able to serve lower-middle-class and low-income families via a sliding scale tuition system, scholarships and subsidies. About 25 percent

of participants receive such help. Families represent diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as different family arrangements. About 12 percent of the children are minorities, a reflection of the demographics of the area.

Collaborations

Webster Child Care Center is involved in a pilot collaboration with the Webster Groves Community School District in which they share PAT resources and funding. School districts are mandated by the state to provide PAT services to a certain number of families each year; the district receives funding based on the number of families it serves. Webster involves families in PAT and receives reimbursement from the school district. By counting the families involved in PAT at Webster, the school district is able to meet its quota for involvement with families. This partnership is mutually beneficial: Schools gain increased access to families of young children and the center offers more comprehensive services to families.

Webster Child Care is located on the grounds of the Laclede Groves Retirement Community, and the two entities collaborate in an intergenerational program. Structured weekly activities include residents visiting children at the center and children visiting residents where they live. On a less formal basis, children and seniors have many opportunities to interact when they pass each other while going for walks. This collaboration enables children to build relationships with grandparent figures (and vice versa) and has the added benefit of providing extra help in classrooms in the form of senior volunteers.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

In the literature offered to parents, Webster Child Care describes its family support philosophy: "We feel strongly that day-care need not be viewed as a 'necessity' for parent and child, but a positive experience that can enrich both the family and the community." The PAT program is based on the premise "that parents are THE most important people in the lives of young children." These principles guide the center's relationship with families. The center also stresses directly to the children the need to show respect for their parents, teachers and each other.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

The home visiting of PAT enables teachers to better understand families, see connections between the home environment and children's behavior, and identify the support each family needs. Although the center strongly encourages home visits, the teachers offer alternate forms of parent-teacher meetings to meet the work schedules and preferences of parents. Depending on the age of the child, parents are invited to participate in a minimum of 3-5 personal and home visits per year, 4 parent workshops at the center per year, and several "mini-visits" entailing observation of the child in the classroom. Every effort is made, through questionnaires and personal contacts, to make all services easily accessible to parents.

The center varies teacher schedules to facilitate parent-teacher communication. One teacher may open the center one day and close it the next, thus enabling each teacher to cross paths with each parent at one time or another and establish a dialogue.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Teachers explain the center's developmentally appropriate curriculum to parents at an orientation meeting. They inform parents about child development and discuss developmentally appropriate behavior and activities. All classrooms at the center are equipped with observation windows so that parents can watch and learn from what happens in their child's classroom.

Every family enrolled in the center is eligible for parent education classes, home visits, and developmental screening for their child. Webster Child Care has both "personal visits," informal conferences which take place in the classroom, and home visits; these give parents and teachers the opportunity to discuss a child's daily activities and development in a setting comfortable to parents. Parent education classes are offered in four three-hour sessions a week and are open to parents and staff members. A small fee to cover the cost of child care is associated with these classes.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

The center's parent meetings help build a positive rapport among parents. Teachers attempt to introduce parents to other parents of children in their child's class and parents who live in different communities. Potluck suppers and other activities let parents get to know one another in an informal setting and are popular. Many parents develop solid friendships and become sources of support for their peers.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

The Parents' Organization, a group run entirely by parents, meets regularly to plan and carry out programs on such topics as CPR, parenting skills, health and safety. The group also sponsors special activities for families and teachers. As stated in Webster's parent handbook, parents are always welcome at the center — to participate in activities, to stay with their child, to join them for lunch, or to share hobbies and interests with their child's group. This open door policy and volunteer opportunities heighten parents' participation in their child's experience at Webster.

Meeting Family Needs

Through PAT, Webster Child Care offers developmental screening and programs for developmentally delayed three- and four-year-olds. Screening does not occur at the center, but at a central location for the entire community's PAT participants. Services for children with special needs, such as speech therapy, are offered on-site.

Center activities such as parent meetings take parents' busy schedules into account and often occur around breakfast or supper, giving parents a chance to relax, spend time with their family, and receive information at the same time. This flexibility leads to a high rate of parent participation. The center also provides free child care during any parent activity, making it easier for parents to attend.

Staff

The majority of Webster Child Care's 40 teachers have either a bachelor's or associate's degree in early childhood education; the rest have compensating experience. The center tries to hire teachers who are committed to the PAT philosophy; many have backgrounds similar to the

families they serve or have children of their own, giving them a special empathy for the working parents they support. Each infant/toddler classroom is staffed by three co-teachers; the preschool classrooms have two co-teachers and share an aide who goes back and forth between the rooms.

Professional Development

The program gives staff development a high priority, and Missouri requires teachers to have at least 12 hours of early childhood education training each year. Many teachers take advantage of outside conferences and guest speakers, and the center allows teachers time off to go to training sessions. Webster Child Care also does in-house training in the form of workshops or in-service days. It occasionally collaborates with other centers to fund consultants to conduct specialized training on topics such as the values of different cultures. For teachers wishing to take college courses, Webster helps with tuition.

Training for Family Support

To participate in PAT activities, teachers must have at least 60 hours of college credit or five years' experience in the early childhood education field. They also must participate in a special five-day PAT training course called "PAT in the Child Care Center," which leads to certification as a parent educator. The curriculum focuses on understanding child development from birth to three, increasing teachers' reinforcement of the parent's role as teacher, and familiarizing teachers with the various resources available for parents and children. Currently, over two-thirds of Webster Child Care staff members are trained parent educators.

Webster Child Care also provides family support training via weekly staff meetings, during which teachers informally discuss pertinent topics such as being respectful of families. Other family support training occurs during in-service days, which in the past have focused on building relationships with parents and effective communication with families.

Challenges and Next Steps

Implementing PAT in the Webster Child Care Center has been a challenge due to lack of direct funding and limited time. The center constantly faces the question of how to improve the program without overburdening the teachers. PAT often means teachers must work harder and longer for the same amount of money, though seeing positive results is some compensation.

Webster Child Care has had to adapt PAT in the child care setting. For instance, PAT requires the child to be present during home visits and parent-teacher meetings. Yet the center opted not to enforce that rule rigidly, because it is sometimes unproductive to talk about a child or certain issues in front of the child. The child's presence may also distract the parent and change the parent-teacher dynamic. However, the center is making an effort to include children more frequently.

Webster Child Care plans to continue collaborating with the public schools and to increase recruitment for PAT.