

THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILD CARE

October 23, 1997

"I hope that this conference will be the beginning of a national dialogue about how best to care for all of America's children and will make a valuable contribution to our effort to improve child care in this country."

-- President Clinton, July 23, 1997

Today, the President and First Lady are hosting the first-ever *White House Conference on Child Care*. The day-long conference will address the need that America's parents have for safe, affordable child care for their children. Millions of Americans, struggling to be both good parents and good workers, rely on child care and after-school programs to care for their children for part of each day. Exploring the roles of both the public and private sectors, the Conference is intended to begin a dialogue on three of the most pressing child care issues -- availability, affordability, and assuring safety and quality.

Clinton Administration Commitment to Strengthening Child Care. President Clinton has worked to improve and increase funding for child care. Under President Clinton's leadership, federal funding for child care has increased by nearly 70%. The 1996 welfare reform law increased child care funding by \$4 billion over 6 years to provide child care assistance to low-income working families and parents moving from welfare to work. A percentage of these funds are set aside for efforts to improve the quality of child care. To ensure that children in child care are in safe and healthy environments, the President also launched the Healthy Child Care America Initiative. And because the Department of Defense child care system has become a model of employer-sponsored child care and after-school programming, the President asked the DOD to share its expertise and lessons learned with the civilian child care community.

During President Clinton's time in office, funding for Head Start has increased by 43%. This funding will continue to expand until it reaches the President's goal of serving 1 million children by the year 2002. The President also initiated the Early Head Start Program to expand the proven benefits of Head Start to low-income families with children age three and under.

To expand the benefits of after-school care, the President has, among other things, supported and signed the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act to fund after-school programs; called for an increased number of community schools that stay open longer and provide valuable resources to families and communities; and published a guide on *Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centers*.

Clinton Administration Commitment to America's Working Families. This Conference builds on the President's record of helping America's working families. To take a few examples, the President fought for passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act to allow workers to take unpaid leave when their families need them. And he signed into law the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act to extend important new protections for an estimated 25 million Americans who move from one job to another, or who have pre-existing medical conditions. And in August 1997, the President signed the Balanced Budget Act which included \$24 billion for the Children's Health Initiative -- the single largest investment in health care for children since 1965. President Clinton has also fought to expand economic opportunity for working families, including a \$500 per-child tax credit for children under age 17 -- helping 27 million families with 45 million children. The Administration also expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit to give 15 million families tax relief, and increased the minimum wage by 90 cents.

Conference Program and Participants. During the morning session, experts will discuss why child care matters both to our children's development and to the economy, and will examine the state of child care in this country. The panelists for this first session are: Ms. Ellen Galinsky, Families and Work Institute; Ms. Michelle Seligson, National Institute of Out-of-School Time; Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin; Secretary of HHS Donna Shalala; Governor James Hunt, North Carolina; Dr. Valora Washington, W.K. Kellogg Foundation; and Patty Siegel, California Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The afternoon session will highlight promising efforts around the country and discuss how all members of the community can meet critical child care challenges. Panelists are: Major General John G. Meyer, United States Army; Representative Jane Maroney, Delaware State Legislator; Dr. Susan Aronson, American Academy of Pediatrics; Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan, Diocese of Brooklyn; Ms. Beatriz Otero, Calvery Bi-Lingual Multicultural Learning Center; Mr. John J. Sweeney, AFL-CIO; and Mr. Doug Price, FirstBank of Colorado.

Broad Participation Across the Country. The entire conference will be broadcast by satellite to over 100 locations in over 45 states across the country, as well as to several Federal agencies. Satellite conferences will be co-hosted by regional federal agencies, local officials, and children's and other organizations.

The White House Conference on Child Care

Talking Points

- **On Thursday, October 23, the President and First Lady will Host the White House Conference on Child Care** in the East Room of the White House, bringing together parents, caregivers, business and labor leaders, child care experts and others.
- **President Clinton has called child care “the next great frontier” of public policy.** At the National Governors Association Annual Meeting, President Clinton said, “The First Lady and I have worked on [child care] -- she, particularly -- for a long time. We think every child should have access to quality child care, and we think it's the next great frontier if we're going to make sure all Americans can succeed at home and at work.”
- First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton recently wrote, “If you’re a working parent, chances are that you have to struggle to find affordable, quality child care. Like millions of others, you know just how important child care is to your family’s well being and to your ability to work without worry. Yet for too long, parents across the country have struggled with too little information, too few choices and too much anxiety.”
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- **Interest is so great, the conference has expanded beyond the White House. Several Cabinet Secretaries will be hosting working sessions:** sessions will be held at the Department of Health and Human Services hosted by Secretary Shalala, at USDA hosted jointly by Education Secretary Riley and Agriculture Secretary Glickman, and at the Department of Labor hosted by Secretary Herman.
- **The conference proceedings will be watched across the country.** More than 85 Satellite Conferences will be held across the nation, convening community leaders to watch the White House Conference and participate in discussions on child care.

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES CHILD CARE PROVIDER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

October 23, 1997

Today, President Clinton announced a National Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund as well as an outreach plan to let child care providers know that they may be eligible for Pell Grants. Too many child care providers currently do not have the training our children deserve and are not rewarded with higher compensation when they do have training. The measures announced today will help improve the quality of our nation's child care by helping caregivers get training and raise their pay, and thereby supporting efforts to recruit and retain them.

New National Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund: The National Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund will provide more than \$300 million in scholarships over five years to up to 50,000 child care providers annually -- helping the more than half a million children they care for.

Up to a \$1,500 Scholarship and Higher Pay For Continued Service: The Fund will provide scholarships of up to \$1,500 to current and future child care providers who agree to remain in the field for at least one year after receiving assistance. These providers will earn increased compensation or a bonus when they complete their course work, provided by some combination of the Fund and the provider's employer.

Public-Private Partnership: The Fund will receive at least \$250 million in Federal funds over five years, with every four dollars of Federal funds matched with at least a dollar of private, local or State funds. States will have flexibility in designing their programs, and can provide scholarships for students working toward a state or national credential, certificate, or Associate, B.A. or B.S. degree. States cannot use the Fund to substitute for existing efforts. States also cannot provide scholarships to employees or child care providers that are not licensed or registered.

Modeled on Successful Programs: The Fund is modeled on the North Carolina T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, a bipartisan program that has been shown to work. Participants in T.E.A.C.H. complete an average of 18 credit hours per year and receive an average 10 % increase in their wages. They have less than a 10 % turnover rate, compared to the statewide rate of 42 %. The President's Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund is also modeled on the Defense Department's model of tying pay raises to increased training, which has helped to make the Department of Defense child care system one of the best in the world.

Builds On Pell Grants: While not limited to those eligible for Pell Grants, the scholarships build on Pell Grants for those eligible, by covering any costs not covered by Pell, including tuition and fees, books, supplies, transportation, and child care expenses. For example, a typical caregiver in a child care center earns \$12,000 a year. Attending a community college half time, with total costs of \$3,000, this individual would be eligible for a \$1,350 Pell Grant in 1997-98. The Fund will then provide additional monies. All applicants must first apply for Pell Grants before receiving a Child Care Provider Scholarship.

Actions To Help Child Care Workers Take Advantage of Pell Grants, the New Lifetime Learning Tax Credit and Other Financial Aid: Many child care providers are not aware of other financial aid that is available now. Today, the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services jointly sent a letter to child care providers in all 50 states, providing them with information on the aid already available to current and future child care providers, including Pell Grants, the new Lifetime Learning and HOPE Tax Credits, and loans.

Builds on the President's Actions to Make Higher Education Universal and Lifetime Learning the Standard: Today's initiatives build on President Clinton's historic achievements to promote opportunities for lifelong learning, including winning the largest increase in Pell Grants in more than 20 years, creating HOPE and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits, expanding College Work Study, creating the Direct Lending program that lets students repay their loans as a share of their income, and creating AmeriCorps National Service program to enable young people to earn money for college while serving their country.

PRESIDENT CLINTON SENDS NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION AND PRIVACY COMPACT TO CONGRESS

October 23, 1997

Today, President Clinton transmitted the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact to Congress. The compact will facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to the sharing of criminal history information for purposes other than ongoing criminal investigations. The vast majority of child care providers are caring people who have dedicated their lives to teaching and nurturing children. But one tragedy in child care is too many, and background checks are one important way to ensure that the people watching our children are fit for this responsibility.

Current Limitations on Information. Many states currently have laws prohibiting release of criminal history records for purposes other than ongoing criminal investigations -- such as in connection with background checks for employment or licensing. This means that a child care agency wishing to do a nationwide check to determine whether a potential child care worker has a criminal history will not be able to gain direct access to all states' records but instead must go to the FBI for information. FBI records, however, are not nearly as complete as states' own records because state reporting of criminal dispositions to the FBI is wholly voluntary. In addition, FBI checks can take weeks or months to complete because of the total volume of FBI records and the FBI's nationwide criminal responsibilities.

Effect of the Compact. Under the compact, each ratifying state would agree to release its own criminal history information to other ratifying states for any purpose authorized by the receiving state's law. This means an agency wanting to do a nationwide check for a purpose authorized by state law need not rely on incomplete FBI records, but may gain access directly to other states' complete criminal records. The only role played by the FBI would be to give the requesting agency a list of the states in which the individual has a criminal record (information which the FBI would have in complete form), so that the agency can access those states' records directly. In this way, the compact will vastly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of nationwide criminal background checks.

One Step in Ensuring Safety of Child Care. A background check is only a first step in assuring that our children are cared for safely. Many people who are unsuited to be child care providers are never arrested or convicted of a crime; most child abuse cases, for example, are not prosecuted in criminal court. A recent study by the American Bar Association's Center for Children and the Law found that personal interviews and reference checks are essential tools in checking the credentials of caregivers.

**THE PRESIDENT URGES SERVICE AS A STRATEGY
IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS
The White House Conference On Child Care
October 23, 1997**

Today, at the White House Conference on Child Care, President Clinton announced steps to use community service to strengthen after-school programs.

Helping Communities Link Service and After-School Programs. To enable more communities to use community service to enrich their after-school programs, the President announced actions by the Corporation for National Service's new To Learn and Grow Initiative, a public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to and enhancing the quality of after-school programs through service. The initiative will:

- Release a "How-To Manual" that shows after-school programs how they can use service to strengthen their efforts (prepared by the Corporation for National Service with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College); and
- Provide training and technical assistance to after-school programs that want to use national service and volunteers to help meet their needs.

Building on What Works. Today, communities use both volunteers and those engaged in full-time service commitments such as AmeriCorps to extend the reach and improve the quality of many child care and after-school programs. These individuals work alongside child care providers, educators, and community-based professionals across the country. Two-thirds of national service programs supported by the Corporation for National Service, including AmeriCorps, address the needs of children and youth, many in child care and after-school programs. The To Learn and Grow Initiative will build on this experience to show programs across the country how to use volunteers and others engaged in service to provide better care to more children.

Young people can also benefit from serving others after school hours. For example, Big Brothers/Big Sisters committed at the Presidents' Service Summit that its mentors would participate with young people in service projects. In addition, the Corporation's Learn and Serve program supports service-learning programs across the country, where young people serve and then reflect on that experience. The To Learn and Grow Initiative's manual and training activities will guide after-school programs in incorporating service into their activities.

Successful Programs Exist. Successful programs where service strengthens after-school programs today include Jumpstart AmeriCorps, where AmeriCorps members get needy children and their families ready for school; Columbia University's Community Impact program, where AmeriCorps members provide educational enrichment, mentoring, and tutoring for youth from K-3rd grade in collaboration with the YMCA; the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program in St. Paul, Minnesota, which pairs seniors and middle school students in after-school programs with 900 children in K-3rd grade; and the Sheridan Family Resources Center in Colorado, where AmeriCorps members tutor at-risk youth, run after-school and summer camp programs, and help youths and senior citizens have access to health services offered by school-based and community clinics.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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For far too long, America's families have faced this problem alone. Now it is time to move this issue to the top of our country's agenda. We have a special opportunity to do that when the President and I host a White House conference on child care on October 23. We hope that this conference will begin an honest national discussion about child care and build on promising efforts already underway in states and communities.

Here are some of the questions we need to answer -- as individual parents and as a nation: How can we ensure that children in care are safe from harm? What are the best ways to make the hours children spend in care as stimulating and nurturing as possible? How can we do a better job of valuing the important work of child care professionals? How can we encourage employers to provide child care benefits to their employees, a practice that makes sense not just for children, but for the corporate bottom line, as well? How can we put into practice what research tells us -- that when children participate in good after-school programs, they do better in school, don't engage in risky behavior and thrive? And how can we genuinely support parents who choose, often at significant economic cost, to stay at home with their children?

When I was a working mother with a young child, my friends and I shared these concerns. Today, when families are under even greater stress, I continue to worry about how we can meet the challenge of strengthening child care for American families. The President and I believe it will take parents, businesses, child care providers, experts, advocates, and officials at all levels of government working together to ensure that children get the care they need to learn and grow, that parents have peace of mind while on the job, and that employers can count on responsible, attentive workers. I hope you will join in this important discussion.



The First Lady's Letter will be appearing in a number of magazines this month.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILD CARE AGENDA

I. OPENING SESSION

II. PANEL DISCUSSION: THE CHALLENGE: AVAILABILITY, AFFORDABILITY, AND ASSURING SAFETY AND QUALITY CHILD CARE

The President and First Lady will moderate this session.

Part 1: Why Does Child Care Matter? This panel will address: the relationship between quality child care and children's healthy development, particularly in the earliest years of life; the importance of good after-school programs for youth; and the need for child care given dramatic changes in the workforce and economy.

Part 2: How Are We Doing in Meeting the Challenge? This panel will provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of child care in communities across the country and will also look at this question from the unique perspectives of parents and child care providers.

II. WHITE HOUSE LUNCHEON AND WORKING SESSIONS AT FEDERAL AGENCIES

During the White House luncheon, Secretaries Shalala, Herman, Riley and Glickman will host working sessions at several agencies.

III. PANEL DISCUSSION: LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS

The Vice President and the First Lady will moderate this session. State and local officials, along with representatives of the military, business, health, labor, and faith communities, will highlight promising efforts around the country and discuss how all members of the community can address the challenges of assuring safe, affordable child care for working families who need it.

IV. SOUTH LAWN RECEPTION

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