



# **Vital Links For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Toward a Quality Future for Oregon*

**2001-2003**

Report to the Governor  
and Legislature

## **Acknowledgment**

The Oregon Commission for Child Care would like to acknowledge the many individuals who work with children in early child care and education settings throughout the state. The Commission commends those professionals who are committed to caring for children, who actively seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge and development, and who make the benefits of their training available to others in the field. Their commitment is helping create quality child care environments that will yield a quality future for our state.



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# OREGON COMMISSION FOR CHILD CARE

*Provider/Trainer – Governor*

*Provider - Governor*

## **Robi Ingram-Rich, Chair**

1261 Hide-a-Way Lane  
Lake Oswego, OR 97034  
W: 503-494-2715  
F: 503-494-2721  
ingramr@ohsu.edu  
*Medical - Governor*

## **Cynthia Hurkes**

Douglas Co. Child Care R&R  
815 SE Oak Street  
Roseburg, OR 97470  
W: 541-672-7955  
F: 541-947-2302  
ccrrp@rosenet.net  
*ResourceReferral – Governor*

## **Rep. Rob Patridge**

*House Republican Whip*  
PO Box 1161  
Medford, OR 97501  
W: 503-986-1450  
rwpatridge@aol.com  
*Representative - Speaker*

## **David Barenberg**

8602 SW 61st Ave.  
Portland, OR 97219  
W: 503-588-6550  
F: 503-399-4863  
dbarenberg@orlocalgov.org  
*State/Local Govt. - President*

## **Aleta Johnson**

1900 NE Bear Creek Rd. #171  
Bend, OR 97701  
W: 541-312-5274  
F: 541-383-3763  
aletaj@aol.com  
*Consumer - President*

## **Kitty Piercy**

1371 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Eugene, OR 97402  
W: 541-342-6080 ext.18  
F: 541-342-6088  
kitty.piercy@pphssso.org  
*At-Large – Governor*

## **Senator Bev Clarno**

P.O. Box 7970  
Bend, OR 97708  
W: 541-986-1727  
bevclarno@aol.com  
*Senator - President*

## **Judie Johnson**

AFS/Staff Development Unit  
4074 Winema Place NE #200  
Salem, OR 97305  
W: 503-378-5707 x242  
F: 503-373-1057  
Judie.Johnson@state.or.us  
*State/Local Govt. - Speaker*

## **Vicki Sarazin**

7401 SW Washo Court  
Suite 50  
Tualatin, OR 97062  
W: 503-692-3235  
F: 503-692-5254  
vicki@sarazinassociates.com  
*Tax/Legal - Governor*

## **Gabriela Downey**

Oregon AFSCME  
123 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Suite 505  
Portland, OR 97232  
W: 503-239-9858  
gdowney@europa.com  
*Labor-Speaker*

## **Rep. Deborah Kafoury**

House Democratic Whip  
P.O. Box 17736  
Portland, OR 97211  
W: 503-986-1418  
dkafoury@teleport.com  
*Representative - Speaker*

## **Renee Sherman-Krause**

3426 Timberline Drive  
Eugene, OR 97405  
W: 541-687-5936  
F: 541-485-4359  
ReneeSherman@aol.com  
*Consumer – Speaker*

## **Jacqueline M. Esteves**

536 S 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Coos Bay, OR 97420  
W: 541-269-  
57babysit@gte.net

## **Lisa Kopetski**

48903 Cayuse Rd.  
Pendleton, OR 97801  
W: 541-276-1634  
F: 541-276-1634  
lkopetsk@oregonrail.net

F: 503-947-1210  
marc.overbeck@state.or.us



February 2001

Dear Governor Kitzhaber and members of the Oregon Legislature:

I am pleased to submit this report on behalf of the Oregon Commission for Child Care on the current status of child care in Oregon.

Over the past two years, the Commission has worked hard to listen to child care stakeholders, to reach out to parents, child care providers, and employers, and to ask state agencies what they are doing to contribute to the availability of safe, quality, and affordable child care. The Commission conducted a series of public hearings throughout Oregon to hear what these groups had to say about the state of child care.

In this report we offer you:

- A look at the history of the Commission and its accomplishments
- A powerful sense of why child care is important to Oregon's future
- A snapshot of child care in Oregon today
- Our assessment of how Oregon is doing in the areas of
  - safety and quality
  - making child care accessible throughout the state
  - child care affordability
- Recommendations for the short-term and the long-term

We hope that this report will stimulate your thinking and inspire you to action.

In the past two years, much research has been done on the development of the brain and the links between quality child care and a child's potential for success in life. It is now clear that the degree to which care for our children in their first years of life makes a tremendous difference for the health of our state in the decades to come. Quality child care is *the* vital link to a quality future for Oregon.

Quality child care promotes educational success.

Quality child care leads to public safety.

Quality child care strengthens families.

Quality child care enhances the workforce and the economy.

We dedicate this report to the children of Oregon, in whose care rests the future of our state.

Sincerely,

Robina Elaine Ingram-Rich, Chairperson



# Table of Contents

<b>Commission History</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>OCCC Mission and Vision</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Why Quality Child Care Matters</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Oregon’s Child Care Picture</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>OCCC Community Forums</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Quality</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Affordability</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Making the Business Connection</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>A Long-Term Approach</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2001 Recommendations</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>23</b>

# Commission History

The Commission for Child Care was established in 1985 by the Oregon Legislature. Since its creation, the Oregon Commission for Child Care—along with other child care advocates and organizations—has successfully advocated for or accomplished the following:

- 1987
  - State parental leave law
  - Tax credits for companies who assist with dependent care expenses
  
- 1989
  - State funded program for child care resource and referral
  
- 1993
  - Creation of the Child Care Division in the Employment Department
  - Mandatory registration program for family child care providers
  - Homeowner’s insurance coverage for family child care businesses
  
- 1996
  - Creation of “The Big Change” campaign promoting awareness of work/life programs
  
- 1997
  - Increased standards for health and safety requirements for family child care
  
- 1997-98
  - Collaborative Development of Employer Tool Kit for businesses providing how-to information on work/life programs
  
- 1998
  - Creation of an ad hoc committee on child care financing, focused on how making child care more affordable for Oregon’s working families
  
- 1999
  - In-home health and safety review visits for newly registering family child care providers



# OCCC Mission and Vision

In September 2000, the Commission for Child Care held a strategic retreat and planning session at the Silver Falls Conference Center, where it created a 10-year vision for child care in Oregon, inside of its statutory mission.

## OUR MISSION

*The mission of the Oregon Commission for Child Care is to advise the Governor and Legislature on the issues, problems, and solutions related to affordable, quality child care in Oregon; and to advocate for the availability of safe, quality and affordable child care.*

## OUR VISION FOR CHILD CARE IN OREGON

*By the year 2010, all families in Oregon will have access to safe, quality, and affordable child care.*

# Why Quality Child Care Matters

Each day, an estimated 13 million children in this country under age six spend all or part of their day being cared for by someone other than their parents<sup>1</sup>. The type of setting in which they are cared for makes a tremendous difference in what lies ahead for that child. Indeed, the degree to which we can ensure every Oregon child receives a quality care setting makes a tremendous difference for the future of our state in many areas.

## Educational Success

Recent studies have repeatedly proven that quality child care helps children develop well, enter school ready to succeed, improve skills and stay safe while their parents work. A study by the Carnegie Corporation noted that the first three years of life are critical to a child's brain development. Specifically, "the quality of young children's environment and social experience has a decisive, long-lasting impact on their well-being and ability to learn."<sup>2</sup>

## Workforce Productivity

Child care is critical to worker productivity. A lack of reliable, quality child care can cause workers to lose time from work and be less productive on the job. A 1990 study found that nearly one out of six mothers employed outside the home reported losing some time from work during the previous month due to some failure in their regular child care arrangements.<sup>3</sup> Similar studies have found even higher rates for low-income mothers.

## Public Safety

Many studies have linked quality child care with lower incidents of juvenile crime. A poll of police chiefs across the country found nine out of ten chiefs agreeing that a failure to invest in after-school and child care programs now would result in far higher costs later in crime prevention and incarceration.<sup>4</sup>

## Cost Savings for Government

Early childhood programs can result in significant cost savings in both the short- and long-term. One study of the long-term impact of a good early childhood program for low-income children found that after 27 years each dollar invested saved over seven dollars by decreasing the likelihood of illiteracy, unemployment, dependency on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity in later years.<sup>5</sup> A study of the short-term impact of the Colorado pre-kindergarten program found cost savings of \$4.7 million over just three years in reduced special education costs.<sup>6</sup>

# Oregon's Child Care Picture

Child care is an issue for most working families in Oregon. Sixty-one percent of children live in households where all parents are employed.<sup>7</sup> Of the approximately 580,000 children under the age of 13, nearly 210,000 or 36%, are in some type of paid child care arrangement.<sup>8</sup> This is a marked contrast to family life just 30 years ago.

	Ages 0 – 4	Ages 5 – 9	Ages 10 - 12
<b>Number of Children</b>	216,000	226,000	139,000
<b>% In Paid Care</b>	43%	40%	20%
<b>% Not In Paid Care</b>	57%	60%	80%

## Quality of Care Varies

Many parents report that they do not feel their children are receiving the kind of care they would like:

- ◆ 16% of children have parents who report their children do not always feel safe and secure
- ◆ 39% of children have parents who report their children do not always get a lot of individual attention
- ◆ 32% of providers are perceived by parents to be not always open to new information and learning<sup>9</sup>

## Many Families Receiving Public Assistance

Despite an economy that has been strong for over a decade, many Oregon families are still struggling to get out of poverty, and are receiving help in meeting increasing child care costs.

- Number of Children Whose Families Are Getting Help Paying For Child Care**
- ◆ 8,189 children ages 3-4 enrolled in head start (47% of those eligible)
  - ◆ 26,291 children ages 0-12 years receiving state assistance with part or all of their child care costs<sup>10</sup>

# **VITAL LINKS FOR CHILD CARE IN OREGON**

## **OREGON'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

Oregon's businesses are recognizing that child care is a workplace issue that impacts their bottom line. More Oregon employers are investing in child care for their workers as a strategy to recruit and retain a quality workforce. On-site child care centers are a practical solution for many large businesses, but not for all companies. Many employers have invested in resource and referral services to help their workers find quality child care arrangements, and some offer child care benefits as part of cafeteria-style benefit plans. Policymakers must maintain and enhance links to businesses in order to understand employer needs and respond in a way that can help both the business and the family in this area.

## **CHILD CARE DIVISION**

The Child Care Division, part of the Oregon Employment Department, is the state agency responsible for the regulation of child care facilities in Oregon and the recipient of most federal funds for childhood care and early education. Developing performance contracts with partner agencies around measures to increase the safety, quality, and availability of child care and expanding its links with the child care industry will ensure a key and supportive role for the Division in building Oregon's child care system.

## **ADULT AND FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION**

Part of the Department of Human Services, AFS plays a crucial role in assisting working families to become self-sufficient. Lack of child care is the most often stated reason for low income individuals to leave the workforce. AFS' Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) program provides critical child care subsidies for over 12,500 low income families each month, impacting over 25,000 Oregon children.<sup>11</sup> Maintaining child care support for low income working families child care can help break the cycle of poverty and despair for tens of thousands, including child care providers who themselves rely on such payments to make ends meet.

## **OREGON CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL NETWORK**

Oregon began building a system to provide child care resource and referral services to make child care services accessible to all Oregon families in 1989. Today, Oregon's child care resource and referral network forms the backbone of the child care system, providing services to all 36 counties through 16 agencies--each with a unique service delivery area. While each agency tailors its services to reflect local need, a technical assistance office located in Salem helps to coordinate and make coherent the services of the individual agencies. Within the past year, the resource and referral system has been expanding its capacity through the use of technology and by offering more services to businesses.

## **CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION**

Housed at Portland State University, the Center promotes the quality of child care in Oregon by creating, maintaining, and evaluating the statewide training needed to professionalize the staff in the field of childhood care and education. The center currently administers successful projects such as the statewide mentoring program for child care providers, and maintains the Professional Development Registry (PDR). Working with the local child care resource and referral agencies, the Center has the opportunity to provide a vital link in making statewide training available in communities in a way that best suits providers' needs.

## **COMMISSIONS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Each of Oregon's 36 counties has a Commission on Children and Families, which receives federal funds as well as state and local dollars. All 36 commissions use their resources to strengthen communities' ability to increase the quality of life in the community. Many local commissions operate programs directly. Local commissions have begun strategic planning for children 0-18 that includes a 0-8 plan for children. These county plans and the planning efforts leading to them can form the core of a strategic and comprehensive approach to childhood efforts around care and education, safety, and health.

## TYPES OF REGULATED CHILD CARE FACILITIES IN OREGON<sup>12</sup>

Type of Facility	Family Child Care Home	Group Child Care Home	Child Care Center
<b>Definition</b>	A facility located in a building constructed as a single-family residence, that may care for no more than 10 children at any time.	A facility located in a building constructed as a single-family residence, that is certified to care for no more than 12 children at any one time.	A facility that is certified to care for more than 13 or more children that is not a building constructed as a single-family residence.
<b>Maximum # of children who can be cared for</b>	10	12	--
<b>Number of facilities</b>	Approximately 7,100 facilities throughout the state.	Approximately 200 facilities throughout the state.	Approximately 1,000 facilities throughout the state
<b>Number of children</b>	Approximately 50,000 children under the age of 13.	Approximately 7,300 children under the age of 13.	Approximately 70,000 children under the age of 13.
<b>Regulation</b>	Family care facilities register with the Child Care Division	Group homes are licensed and inspected yearly through the Child Care Division	Child care centers are licensed and inspected yearly through the Child Care Division
	Only those facilities registering for the first time after January 1, 2000 receive a health and safety review visit.	Group homes must pass inspections by the Child Care Division, as well as a sanitation inspection.	Child Care centers must pass inspections by the Child Care Division, as well as local fire and sanitation inspections.
<b>Notes</b>	Rules governing family child care homes were updated by the Child Care Division within the last two years.	Rules governing group child care homes are in the process of being updated by the Child Care Division.	Rules governing child care centers are in the process of being revised. They have not been updated since 1988.

## NON-REGULATED CHILD CARE

<b>Listed Providers with Adult and Family Services (AFS)</b>	Providers not registered or certified with the Child Care Division, who are listed with AFS to receive child care subsidy payments. These providers must comply with standards set by AFS and require records checks on criminal history and child protective services history.
<b>Pre-school programs</b>	Programs that are primarily educational in focus and provide care to children 30 months old or older and under six years of age, for less than four hours per day.
<b>Certain family child care programs</b>	Family child care programs that care for less than 3 children, or care for children for less than 70 days in any calendar year, or care for children from only one family.
<b>Programs operated by a school district, political subdivision, or government agency</b>	Programs such as teen parent and part-time preschool programs run by school districts fall into this type of care.
<b>Programs run as a parent cooperative for no more than four hours per day</b>	Such programs are few in Oregon. They generally require that each parent participates in the program by volunteering for a selected number of hours per week or per month.
<b>Programs that are primarily supervised training for a child in a specific subject area</b>	Programs such as children's dance, music, or swim lessons.
<b>Programs that provide care while the children's parents remain on the premises and are engaged in non-work activity</b>	Programs such as short-term child care at athletic clubs, at malls while parents are shopping, while parents are searching for employment, or while parents are undergoing substance abuse treatment or medical care.
<b>Programs that operate on an occasional basis (70 days or less in a calendar year) by a person or organization not ordinarily engaged in providing child care</b>	Programs such as summer day camps.

# OCCC Community Forums

**Gold Beach**                      **Eugene**                      **Pendleton**  
**Jacksonville**                      **Salem**  
**Bend**                      **Portland**                      **La Grande**  
**Astoria**                      **Prineville**

To help accomplish its mission, the Commission for Child Care conducted a series of community forums across Oregon from 1999-2000. These forums were held in conjunction with OCCC business meetings, and designed for the public to let the Commission know about the most pressing child care issues in a given community. Participants included business members, education officials, parents, child care providers, state and local government agency representatives, community organizations, and other advocates for children.

The following is a summary of the major issues that were brought before the Commission:

- ◆ Provider retention
- ◆ Provider compensation
- ◆ Ability for child care to meet the needs of a more diversified population
- ◆ Child care supply not adequate in rural Oregon
- ◆ State support for locally developed quality initiatives
- ◆ Child care affordability for parents
- ◆ Need for child care to be a higher statewide priority for policymakers
- ◆ Expansion of student block grant program
- ◆ Better publicity of child care assistance programs
- ◆ Collaboration among child care stakeholders
- ◆ Financial assistance for middle-income families
- ◆ Increasing training requirements for providers
- ◆ Shortage of training for providers, particularly in rural Oregon
- ◆ Making information on where to find child care more available
- ◆ Increasing capacity of resource and referral agencies
- ◆ A common understanding of what quality child care looks like
- ◆ Updating old regulations of child care facilities



# Safety

In 1999, Oregon was one of just a handful of states that had no regulation of family child care. The 1999 Legislature approved health and safety review visits for newly registering family child care providers.

While a strong proponent of these visits in 1999, the Commission wanted to ensure these visits did not become “inspections” which could be a tool to further reduce the supply of family child care. The visits were supposed to be a helpful resource to providers, and not punitive.

*The state’s pilot of health and safety review visits to family care providers has been a tremendous success.*

The Child Care Division has worked hard to develop these visits as a useful resource for family child care providers. While originally skeptical of new procedures that sounded like “inspections”, many veteran providers have told the Commission that they believe the review visits would make them better providers and increase their credibility with parents.

Although nearly half of those providers visited did not pass the review initially, over 97 percent of family child care providers passed their review on the second visit.<sup>13</sup> Members and staff of the Commission have ridden along with child care specialists on health and safety review visits. The vast majority of family care providers receiving the visits that have been in contact with the Commission were extremely positive in their characterization of the visits.

Investigation of complaints against providers is another area of children’s safety where Oregon has made progress. Prior to 1999, only those complaints deemed most serious could be investigated due to inadequate staff. As a result of new child care specialist positions funded by the 1999 legislature, over 90% of complaints received are followed up on.<sup>14</sup>

One area where Oregon is still catching up is the regulations for child care facilities. While the regulations for family child care homes were updated in the current biennium, the Child Care Division is still working on updated rules to govern group home facilities and child care centers. The Commission is supportive of the Division’s efforts to update these rules to take into account new medical knowledge and other research that has been conducted over the past decades since the rules were revised.

## Safety Recommendations

- ◆ **Continue funding new efforts established by the 1999 Legislature:**
  - *Health and safety reviews in new family child care homes*
  - *Investigations of all serious citizen complaints*
- ◆ **Expand on-site health and safety review visits to *all* registered family child care homes**

# Quality

While all the research points to quality child care as an essential ingredient to the success of individuals, many studies have shown that far too many children are receiving poor quality care that jeopardizes their development and well-being.

One question that perennially receives much attention is “just exactly what is quality child care?” In November 2000, the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership published *A Packet of Scales for Measuring Quality From a Parent’s Point of View*. This excellent work identified a number of variables key to the perception of quality in child care from a parent’s perspective. Three key variables are worth mentioning:

- ◆ The degree to which a child feels safe and secure in care
- ◆ The degree to which a caregiver is open to new information and learning
- ◆ The degree to which a child is perceived to get a lot of individual attention.<sup>15</sup>

Turnover in the child care industry can play a major role in impacting all of these variables. The average Preschool Teacher in 1998 earned \$7.31 per hour, with entry level Teacher’s Aides for centers earning on the average \$6.73 per hour.<sup>16</sup> Low child care wages contribute to high turnover in the child care industry, which undermines the caliber of services children receive. High turnover also leads to poor care, emotional difficulties and other problems for children.

Increasing the quality of child care is not a short-term issue. In addition to the need to raise provider compensation to a “working wage” is the need to expand training requirements for providers as well as make training more available.

Many initiatives of the past few years have yielded promise for impacting the quality of child care in Oregon, including:

- ◆ Oregon’s Child, Everyone’s Business
- ◆ First by Five
- ◆ Statewide Mentoring Project
- ◆ Development of the Professional Development Registry (PDR)

*Use increased federal funds to impact quality in Oregon, applying lessons learned from child care initiatives of the past five years.*

Governor Kitzhaber’s Work Group on Accessible, Affordable Child Care recommended that increases in Child Care and Development Block Grants funds be dedicated to promote quality and payment of adequate rates to child care providers.<sup>17</sup> Oregon should use increased federal funds to apply the lessons of these efforts. The governor has earmarked some of these federal funds in his 2001-2003 Recommended Budget for investments to promote safety and quality. This trend of using additional federal money to invest in quality should continue.

# Accessibility

Accessibility of child care refers to both the existing supply of child care in a given area as well as the appropriateness of care for the population that needs serving.

*Last year, Oregon had 21 child care slots for every 100 children under the age of 13*

Oregon has set a benchmark of having 25 child care slots for every 100 children under the age of 13 years by the year 2010. The supply of child care in Oregon for the year 2000 was estimated at 21 child care slots per 100 children.<sup>18</sup>

The Commission for Child Care has found that there continues to be a need for all types of child care statewide—with a persistent need for specific areas of care that include infant/toddler care, special needs care, extended hour/odd hour, sick child care and school age care. Infant and toddler care, which generally costs more than care for older children because of staff/child ratio requirements, is in short supply in both suburban and rural parts of Oregon.<sup>19</sup>

During the community forums, parents consistently spoke about the need for more care for children with special needs. In areas of the state with larger Hispanic populations, the Commission heard that more culturally appropriate and bilingual care providers were needed.

Over the next two years, the Commission plans to work closely with the Inclusive Child Care project to identify specific ways to ensure that *all* families have access to quality child care, including children with disabilities and other special needs.

*Resource and referral agencies are key to linking parents to available child care.*

Oregon's child care resource and referral network plays an important role in connecting parents with the child care they need and providing customized training at the local level for providers to meet the demands of a changing population. The 16 individual resource and referral agencies are the community-level "eyes and ears" of parents looking for quality child care. Since the inception of the resource and referral system in 1989, these agencies have helped thousands of Oregon parents find child care that meets their work and family needs. The network has recently undertaken an initiative to reach out to businesses and provide more assistance around work/family issues. The Commission strongly supports the Governor's plans to increase the capacity of the statewide resource and referral system through the allocation of new federal funds.

## Accessibility Recommendation

- ◆ Increase funding for Oregon's child care resource and referral system to increase its capacity to link providers with families and provide employers with needed assistance.

# Affordability

Currently, child care is not affordable for many Oregon families. Quality child care is even less affordable.

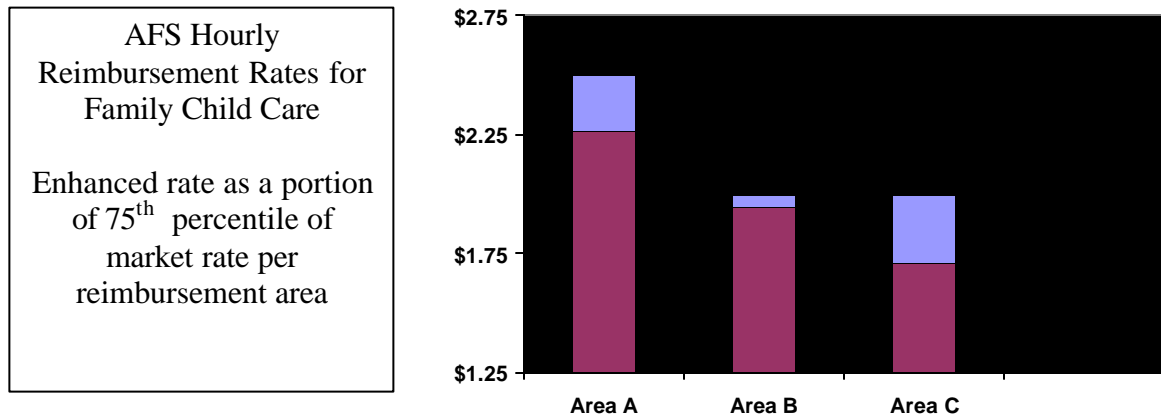
- ◆ Average annual cost of toddler care in child care centers \$5,199
- ◆ Gross earnings of a minimum wage earner \$13,520
- ◆ Cost of child care for a toddler as a % of minimum wage 38% <sup>20</sup>

*Oregon's Benchmark: 70% of families spend less than one-tenth of their family income on child care*

## Working Parents Receiving Public Assistance

Oregon's largest child care subsidy program is administered by the Adult and Family Services Division (AFS) of the Department of Human Services. Approximately 12,500 low-income families are currently receiving some type of child care subsidy through AFS.

The September 2000 Oregon Child Care Market Rate Study found that AFS reimbursement rates to child care providers have not kept up with current market rates for child care.<sup>21</sup> The implication of this finding is that it is more difficult for low-income families to find quality child care settings for their children. Many families on public assistance turn to non-regulated, or "underground" care, where the provider will accept a relatively low rate of payment but may not offer care that is safe or healthy for the child. AFS is to be commended for paying "enhanced" rates for certain providers who meet identified training requirements. Even these rates, however, fall significantly below the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of rates charged by providers in a given area.<sup>22</sup>

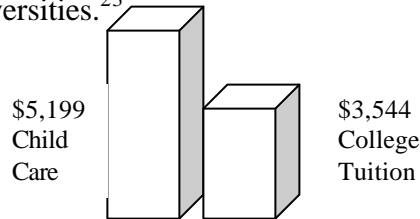


Over 25,000 Oregon children are at risk of not having a safe and affordable child care setting

Additionally, the co-pay required for AFS clients continues to be a vital link to child care affordability. In March 2000, AFS reduced the required co-pay amount for many of its clients and replaced its “step function” means of determining co-pay with a “continuous curve” that was more proportionate to the amount of additional income a family earned. These positive moves are in jeopardy of being turned back in the 2001-2003 state budget. Such a move would impact over 25,000 Oregon children from low-income families who are most at risk for educational failure, unemployment, and juvenile delinquency.

## Student Parents

In 1998, the cost of child care for a toddler was nearly 50% greater than the cost of college tuition at Oregon’s major public universities.<sup>23</sup>



Oregon currently maintains a program to assist low-income students who are pursuing a two-year or four-year degree with their child care expenses. Called the Student Block Grant Program (SBG), this program has made a difference for hundreds of low-income college students who otherwise would not have been able to get a degree. Currently, about 250 students per month receive assistance through the SBG program. The waiting list to access the program is over 900 families long, and approximately one year in duration.<sup>24</sup>

## Tax Policies

The 1997-98 Child Care Financing Task Force recommended that the Working Family Tax Credit be made refundable. This credit provides tax relief to low and moderate income families, however, the lowest income families with no tax liability are not able to access this credit. The Task Force concluded that if Oregon wants to assist low-income families with dependent care expenses maintain employment and stay off public assistance, this credit must be made refundable. The 1999 Legislature undertook an effort to make the credit refundable, but a bill to do so was stuck in a conference committee when the legislative session ended.

### Affordability Recommendations

- ◆ Adjust the AFS child care reimbursement rate and parent co-pays to reflect current market rates and the Oregon Benchmark on child care affordability
- ◆ Expand access to quality child care for student parents by increasing size of Student Block Grant program
- ◆ Make the working family child care credit refundable

# Making The Business Connection

In 1987 the Oregon Legislature passed a law giving Oregon employers a tax credit for assisting employees in meeting their dependent care needs, including child care. There are three ways this credit can be used:

- 1) **Information and Referral Services.** An employer can contract with a variety of agencies throughout the state for referral services for their employees, including child care, elder care, and special needs care. Information and referral services can provide employees with information on providers in their area and education on choosing quality care. Employers can receive a tax credit equal to 50% of the amount paid for such services with a maximum amount of \$2,500 per employee assisted in each taxable year.
- 2) **Dependent Care Assistance.** Another tax option is to provide assistance to employees in the form of cash payments or vouchers for dependent care. Employers are eligible for a 50% tax credit of the amount paid or up to a maximum of \$2,500 per employee assisted in each taxable year.
- 3) **Dependent Care Facility.** A third option is a provision of the law permitting employers to acquire, construct, reconstruct, renovate or otherwise improve property to be used primarily as a dependent care facility serving employees' dependents. An employer may operate the facility alone, contract with others to operate the facility, or collaborate with others on a jointly owned and operated facility. The tax credit that may be taken is equal to the smallest of the following:
  - 50% of the cost paid
  - \$2,500 times the number of full-time equivalent employees
  - \$100,000

Despite the existence of the credit for over a decade, no more than 25 employers have ever taken advantage of it in a single calendar year. The Child Care Financing Task Force of 1997-98 concluded that a full-scale marketing effort should be made to businesses to promote awareness and use of the credit. This credit is set to expire in January 2002.

## Making The Business Connection Recommendations

- ◆ Seek to extend life of Employer Tax Credit for Dependent Care, possibly exploring new ways to market and target the credit for greatest use and need.
- ◆ Expand Commission for Child Care by adding two business representatives to develop a broader dialogue with Oregon's business community around employer involvement in child care.

# A Long-Term Approach

Realizing a vision of making safe, quality, and affordable child care accessible will not happen overnight. But it is something the Commission is serious about, and this is why we have set it as a goal for the year 2010.

## Measuring Performance

To realize the vision, we will have to know where we are, and develop indicators that will show us the progress Oregon is making toward the vision. The Commission has begun working with the Child Care Division and the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership to agree on meaningful, measurable indicators that will accomplish this purpose. By July 2001, the Commission will have adopted performance indicators in the areas of safety, quality, accessibility, and affordability, and will work to influence others to operate their programs with an eye toward impacting these measures.

## Encouraging and Adopting Innovation

While Oregon has a proud history of innovation, we should not hesitate to look to others for examples of how to achieve safety, quality and affordable child care for our families. Groups such as the *Enterprise Foundation* are currently researching tax credit policy in various states—and looking to apply the lessons of affordable housing to the arena of child care. *Stand For Children* is looking at models for promoting quality child care and enhanced provider compensation such as the WAGE\$ program in North Carolina in developing their Oregon Cares initiative. These kinds of innovative looks at child care in Oregon should be encouraged wherever possible.

## Raising the Profile of Child Care

Quality child care must be seen and understood by policymakers and the public as a vital link to a quality future for Oregon. Organizations such as United Way have taken steps to make child care a national issue. Parents, child care providers, and other advocates should take it upon themselves to see that political candidates and elected representatives understand the importance of investing in quality child care.

The above strategies are long-term in nature. In the meantime, the Commission suggests some key short-term steps to start Oregon on the right path to realizing the vision.

# 2001 Recommendations

## **POLICY AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2001**

- **Continue funding new efforts established by the 1999 Legislature:**
  - *Health and safety reviews in new family child care homes*
  - *Investigations of all serious citizen complaints*
- **Expand on-site health and safety review visits to *all* registered family child care homes**
- **Increase funding for Oregon's child care resource and referral system to increase the capacity of the network statewide**
- **Adjust the AFS child care reimbursement rate and parent co-pays to reflect current market rates and the Oregon Benchmark on child care affordability**
- ◆ **Expand access to quality child care for student parents by increasing the size of the Student Block Grant program**
- **Make the Working Family Child Care Credit refundable**
- **Extend the Employer Tax Credit for Dependent Care**
- **Expand the Oregon Commission for Child Care Commission by adding two business members**



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Carnegie Corporation of New York. (September 1996) *Years of Promise: A Comprehensive Learning Strategy for America's Children*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation.

<sup>2</sup> Carnegie Corporation of New York. (August 1994) *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation. Executive Summary.

<sup>3</sup> S. Hofferth, K. Shauman, R. Henke, and J. West. (1998). *Child Care and Early Education Program Participation of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers* (NCES 95-824). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Fight Crime/Invest in Kids. (November 1, 1999). "Give Priority to After-School Programs and Child Care, Not Metal Detectors in Schools, Police Chiefs Tell Lawmakers" (Press Release). Charlotte, NC. Poll conducted by George Mason University Professors Stephen Mastrofski and Scott Keeter.

<sup>5</sup> L.J. Schweinhart and D.P. Welkart. (1992). *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

<sup>6</sup> Colorado Department of Education. (1993). *Colorado Preschool Program Child Progress in Years 1-3: Summer 1989 through Summer 1992*. Denver, CO.

<sup>7</sup> Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. (September 2000). *Child Care in Oregon and Its Counties*. Albany, OR.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Data gathered by the Center for Population Research and Census at Portland State University for the 1998 Oregon Population Survey.

<sup>10</sup> Head Start and subsidy data gathered by the Head Start Collaboration Project, Oregon Department of Education, and Adult and Family Services Division, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Subsidy data gathered by Adult and Family Services Division.

<sup>12</sup> Source data from Oregon Employment Department, Child Care Division

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> A. Emlen, P. Koren, and K. Schultze. (November 2000). *A Packet of Scales for Measuring Quality Child Care From a Parent's Point of View*. Portland, OR: Portland State University and the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Workgroup on Accessible, Affordable Child Care. (November 1998). *Report to the Governor*. Salem, OR.

<sup>18</sup> Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. (September 2000). *Child Care in Oregon and Its Counties*. Albany, OR.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> D. Grobe and C. Pratt. (September 2000). *2000 Oregon Child Care Market Rate Study*. Oregon State University Family Policy Program. Corvallis, OR.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. (September 2000). *Child Care in Oregon and Its Counties*. Albany, OR.

<sup>24</sup> Program data gathered by Adult and Family Services Division.

## **Final Notes of Thanks**

The Oregon Commission for Child Care would like to thank the Oregon Employment Department for its support for the since 1993, and its contribution to child care in Oregon.

The Commission also thanks the many other state and local agencies listed in this Report for their contributions toward the Vision of safe, quality, and affordable child care for all Oregon families.