



# Making Smart Investments in Afterschool: A Policy Primer for State and Local Leaders



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





# MAKING SMART INVESTMENTS IN AFTERSCHOOL: A POLICY PRIMER FOR STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS



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## The Afterschool Investments Project

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides federal resources for child care that support both direct services and quality enhancements. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care Bureau awards CCDF grants to states, territories, and Indian tribes. With nearly half of the children receiving services being of school or kindergarten age, CCDF provides significant funding for afterschool care in a variety of settings. The majority of CCDF dollars are used to provide subsidies to eligible low-income children under age 13. A portion of CCDF funding is also used for quality improvement initiatives such as professional development and technical assistance with the goal of building the capacity of states to deliver quality services including programs before and after-school, during summers, and on school holidays.

To support state efforts to provide quality afterschool opportunities, the Child Care Bureau awarded a technical assistance contract on out-of-school time to The Finance Project and their partner, The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. The Afterschool Investments project provides technical assistance to Child Care and Development Fund grantees and other state and local leaders supporting afterschool efforts. The goals of the project include:

- Identifying ways that states and communities are using Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy and quality dollars to support out-of-school time programs, and sharing these practices and approaches with other states;
- Identifying administrative and implementation issues related to CCDF investments in out-of-school time programs, and providing information and context (about barriers, problems, opportunities) as well as practical tools that will help CCDF administrators make decisions; and
- Identifying other major programs and sectors that are potential partners for CCDF in supporting out-of-school time programs, and providing models, strategies, and tools for coordination with other programs and sectors.

To meet these goals, the Afterschool Investments project:

- Develops state profiles of afterschool resources, policies, and issues;
- Creates tools and materials to support the development and sustainability of afterschool efforts; and
- Provides technical assistance at meetings and conferences around building state collaborations for afterschool.

For more information about the project or to submit a request for technical assistance or information, contact The Finance Project at (202) 587-1000 or by email at [afterschool@financeproject.org](mailto:afterschool@financeproject.org), or visit <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>.



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## Introduction

Across the nation, a variety of stakeholders, including law enforcement, educators, business leaders, and policymakers at all levels of government, are recognizing the value of afterschool programs and taking significant steps to expand access to quality programs. A wide array of issues brings stakeholders together around the importance of afterschool. These issues include children's need to gain additional academic skills to pass high-stakes standardized tests, concern that sedentary behaviors such as watching television and playing video games are contributing to the growing health problem of childhood obesity, and support for enabling low-income parents to go to work.

In recent decades, a dramatic rise in the number of working parents has made the need for quality programs during out-of-school hours more critical than ever before. In 2001, for example, nearly 70 percent of children ages 0-17 had either both parents or their only resident parent in the workforce, compared with close to 60 percent of children in 1985. Employment rates have risen even faster among single parents, in part owing to federal welfare reform.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond keeping children safe and supervised during non-school hours, a growing body of research points to the important role that structured afterschool programs play in helping young people to succeed both academically and socially.<sup>2</sup> According to a 2002 analysis of Census data, 16 percent of children ages 5 to 14 regularly spend out-of-school time without adult supervision. Children who lack a safe, supervised afterschool activity may be at risk for a host of dangerous behaviors, including crime, smoking, drug use, and sexual behavior.<sup>3</sup>

Heightened interest in afterschool programs has led policymakers to find public and private resources to support these efforts. Over the past decade, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the Child Care and Development Fund, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and other federal funding sources have provided billions of dollars to states

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<sup>1</sup> *Trends in the Wellbeing of Children and Youth* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, P. A. Lauer, M. Akiba, S. B. Wilkerson, H. S. Apthorp, D. Snow, and M. Martin-Glenn, *The Effectiveness of Out-of-School-Time Strategies in Assisting Low-Achieving Students in Reading and Mathematics: A Research Synthesis* (Aurora, Colo.: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2004), at <http://www.mcrel.org>; and National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> *Afterschool Programs Fact Sheet* (Rockville, Md.: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, 2001).





for afterschool programs. In addition, states, cities, and private foundations are allocating more funds to support afterschool programs.

Despite increased visibility and funding for afterschool programs, states and localities face a number of challenges in providing quality programs to all children who need this service:

- There is often little coherence or connection among the agencies serving school-age children, and therefore limited capacity to think strategically about long-term viability of afterschool programs.
- Some children and youth, particularly in low-income and rural communities, may not have access to affordable afterschool programs.
- Many programs struggle with limited funding, poorly trained leadership, low staff compensation, inadequate facilities, and lack of a clear mission.

This brief provides concrete ideas for state and local policymakers about how to address three key challenges: state and local system-building, promoting access to programs, and improving program quality. It provides examples of promising practices from around the country and details how state and local policymakers can shape policies to better support afterschool programs.

## Afterschool Investments State Profile Series

Many of the promising state and local afterschool initiatives highlighted in this brief are described in the Afterschool Investments State Profile Series. The State Profiles provide key data and descriptions of the afterschool landscape and are designed to serve as a resource for policymakers, administrators, and providers. To learn more about afterschool initiatives in your state or to search a national database of initiatives, see <http://nccic.org/afterschool/statep.html>. In addition, The Afterschool Investments National Profile, available at <http://nccic.org/afterschool/nationprofile.pdf>, provides a national summary of federal funding trends and state afterschool initiatives.







## State and Local System Building: Coordinating State and Local Financing Systems to Support Afterschool

The afterschool landscape features a range of diverse programs that occur in many types of settings and use a variety of approaches. Programs are frequently funded and monitored by different state and local systems and, in some cases, by private entities. The major federal funding sources supporting afterschool programs promote varied goals and outcomes, including substance abuse prevention, juvenile delinquency prevention, workforce development, and academic supports for students in failing schools (see text box on pages 7 and 8).

With limited resources and increased demand for afterschool services, many states and communities are seeking new ways to coordinate their resources to expand program capacity. Increasingly, this means that the provision of afterschool services is being driven by collaborative efforts of multiple partners, including government agencies, foundations, universities, schools, and communities. Partnerships can help communities to maximize and diversify their funding, expand the populations that they serve, introduce new activities and services to their existing repertoire, and implement sustainability strategies.

Afterschool system-building efforts take many forms and may occur on a state or local level. This section highlights two common strategies that support creative and expanded financing options: (1) interagency partnerships and (2) public-private partnerships.



## Major Federal Funding Sources Supporting Afterschool Programs

A range of federal funding sources, typically administered by state agencies, support afterschool programs. State and local partnerships (interagency, public-private, or both) may consider how to maximize and coordinate use of the following major sources of federal funds.<sup>4</sup>

**Child Care Funds:** The federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a block grant funded at \$4.8 billion in FY05 and allocated by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides subsidies to low-income families to support care for children under age 13. Federal dollars also support state quality improvement initiatives, including an earmark specifically targeted toward improvements in the quality of school-age care.

**TANF Funds:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is another HHS program, providing cash assistance and work supports to low-income families. Funded at \$16.5 billion in FY05, its major goals are to help individuals move from welfare to work and to strengthen two-parent families. Up to 30 percent of a state's TANF allocation may be transferred to CCDF. Funds may also be spent directly on afterschool programs.

**Education Funds:** A range of funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Education support afterschool initiatives. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC), funded at \$999 million in FY05, supports community learning centers that provide students with a broad array of academic enrichment services, community services, and cultural activities. Other major federal funding streams, such as Title I and Safe and Drug Free Schools, can also support afterschool programs. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed in 2001, adapted existing funding sources and created new opportunities for afterschool programs. For example, NCLB requires that supplemental education services be available to low-income children attending schools that do not meet minimum performance standards. Afterschool providers may become eligible providers of supplemental services.

**Workforce Development Funds:** Title 1 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) provides funding to programs that focus on preparing young people for employment opportunities. WIA funds serve older low-income youth (ages 14–21) who face barriers to employment, such as offenders, homeless youth, and school dropouts. WIA funds are allocated by the federal Department of Labor.

<sup>4</sup> For detailed information on how these funding sources can support afterschool programs, see The Finance Project's Out-of-School Time funding series, online at: <http://www.financeproject.org/irc/ost/funding.asp>.



**AmeriCorps:** AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs that engage more than 50,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. Administered by the Corporation for Community and National Service, AmeriCorps provides trained, dedicated volunteers to public agencies, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations, including those serving children during out-of-school hours.

**Juvenile Justice Funds:** Funds from the Department of Justice fund violence prevention programs that may be held in afterschool settings. For example, The Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention fund collaborative, comprehensive, community-based delinquency prevention efforts. States may use these grants to fund a wide range of prevention programs relevant to afterschool, including mentoring, gang prevention, substance abuse prevention, and youth development.

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Funds:** The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at HHS supports afterschool programming that aims to prevent youth substance abuse. The Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, for example, funds community-based strategies to prevent underage use of tobacco and alcohol, as well as involvement with illegal drugs. Afterschool programs may be an appropriate setting for substance abuse prevention services.

**Obesity Prevention Funds:** The problem of childhood obesity is receiving increased attention from policymakers. A range of funding sources, including the Preventive Health and Services Block Grant, supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (part of HHS), and the Carol M. White Physical Education program, funded by the Department of Education, can support afterschool programs that educate children about nutrition and physical activity.

**Federal Food and Nutrition Funds:** A range of federal funding sources, supported by the Food and Nutrition Service at the Department of Agriculture, fund the provision of snacks and meals to school-age children. For example, the Child and Adult Care Food Program reimburses providers for snacks served to low-income children in before- and afterschool programs.

For more information on federal funding sources supporting afterschool, see the "How to Get Money" section of <http://www.afterschool.gov>.



## Interagency Partnerships: Maximizing Federal Funds through Interagency Collaboration

In an era of tight budgets, state or local agencies administering varied funding streams that support afterschool may find it cost-effective to coordinate their efforts. For example, agencies may coordinate data collection, hold joint staff trainings, or streamline confusing or contradictory regulations that govern how providers operate.

Interagency collaboration can also entail using separate funding streams in more synchronized and flexible ways:

- One of the most common financing strategies is to wrap separate categorical funding streams together. In this practice, also known as “braiding,” an agency may administer separate funding sources jointly to support more seamless delivery of service.
- Another strategy, typically used at the state and county levels, is to blend more flexible pots of money into one funding pool to support statewide systems reform.
- Another state-level strategy is to make categorical funding streams more flexible by removing, reducing, or aligning requirements or regulations that may impede collaboration efforts.<sup>5</sup>

Although states do not have the authority to alter some regulations attached to federal funding streams, they can make many decisions regarding eligibility and the types of services offered, with state legislative or state agency approval.

Some states and localities have sought to make it easier for programs to integrate funding from the 21CCLC program and federal child care funds. For more information about the rationale for increased coordination, a discussion of the challenges involved, and emerging strategies regarding coordination between these two programs, see the Afterschool Investments publication CCDF and 21CCLC: State Efforts to Facilitate Coordination for Afterschool Programs, available at <http://nccic.org/afterschool/CCDF21CCLC.pdf>.

The following are promising examples of efforts to blend, braid, and otherwise align state or local use of federal funding sources for afterschool:

- **Marshalltown, Iowa: Blending 21CCLC and CCDF Funds for Afterschool**  
When the Marshalltown, Iowa school district received a 21CCLC grant, the district blended these funds with child care dollars to support coordinated afterschool efforts at three elementary school sites that had previously established school-age care programs. Funds supported the salaries for site directors responsible for overseeing coordination between the school-age care and 21CCLC recreation components. This district no longer receives 21CCLC funds, but continues its school-age care program.

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<sup>5</sup> Sharon Deich, *A Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships for Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, January 2001).



■ **Wyoming: Braiding Funds to Support 21st Century State Incentive Grants**

In 2002, **Wyoming** leaders, through the state-level Wyoming Youth Development Collaborative, created a new grant program, the 21st Century State Incentive Grant (21st Century SIG), to encourage community collaboration around youth services. Spearheaded by the Department of Education and Department of Health, state officials combined four separate funding sources to implement the program: 21CCLC, the Governor’s allocation of the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, a federal SAMHSA State Incentive Grant, and state tobacco settlement dollars. The funds are being used to prevent alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and abuse among youth ages 12 to 17



through before and afterschool activities, including during summer recess periods. By aligning the overlapping goals of the four funding streams, the new grant program has encouraged communities to collaborate across systems to build a community-wide continuum of care. To date, 26 Wyoming communities have created community collaboratives and community advisory boards to oversee and coordinate this and other funding sources at the local level. For more information, see <http://sad.state.wy.us/21SIG/>.

■ **South Carolina: Aligning Funds to Support Care in Underserved Areas**

The **South Carolina** Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services have launched a pilot program that aims to increase the supply of care in underserved areas. The program dedicated CCDF and 21CCLC funds to start four afterschool programs at schools in rural and low-income areas with few or no afterschool activities. Each of the four sites is funded differently. State support has helped each site leverage local funding and in-kind support from local partners such as churches, technical colleges, and local businesses. Over time, the two departments hope to find ways to coordinate use of CCDF and 21CCLC funds at a single site. For more information, see <http://www.cisnet.org/cissc>.

**Issues to Consider**

- The impetus for interagency collaboration usually comes from above—by legislative edict or gubernatorial or mayoral order. Without prominent champions to prompt action, creating momentum to establish such a collaboration may be difficult. Similarly, interagency efforts typically require ongoing governance from a high-level collaborative planning body—such as an interagency work group, a state afterschool network, or a Children’s Cabinet—composed of senior officials from key agencies. Since interagency work groups exist throughout state and local government and address a range of policy issues, it is important that efforts around afterschool acknowledge or build upon similar efforts that support positive outcomes for children and families.

- While states can use a variety of federal funds to support afterschool programs, each federal funding program is designed to serve a particular purpose, and comes with its own set of rules and requirements. Understanding the different types of funds and their purposes and requirements is a critical first step in accessing and using these funds. Successful collaborations can connect and support the multiple philosophies and priorities that lead to the creation of separate agencies and funding streams in the first place.

### Public-Private Partnerships: Expanding Support for Afterschool

Public-private partnerships provide valuable avenues for broadening the base of financial support for out-of-school time programs and services, and can provide new leadership for these initiatives. Private sector participation typically goes well beyond financial contributions and includes new leadership and technical support for addressing the needs of children and their families.

Effective public-private partnerships share several key characteristics:

- Representatives from federal, state, or local government come together with business, philanthropy, and community partners around a common agenda.
- All partners contribute time, money, expertise, or other resources.
- The partners work together toward common goals or objectives.
- The partners share decision-making and management responsibilities.

In some cases, public-private partnerships act as intermediary bodies that collect and distribute funds to afterschool programs. Intermediary organizations may also provide training and technical assistance and coordinate public education efforts. Promising examples of public-private partnerships include the following:

- **DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (CYITC): Leveraging Funds to Support Youth Programs** This partnership was formed in 1999 with the goal of linking public and private resources and providing technical assistance to programs serving children, youth, and their parents in the **District of Columbia**. CYITC funds community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide out-of-school programs for children and youth of all ages and parent centers. CYITC leverages public dollars for private investment in CBOs. After three years of operation, CYITC had helped secure funding for programs that served an average of 20,000 children, youth, and parents. In addition, CYITC convenes District agencies, DC Public Schools (DCPS), and the philanthropic community to plan and coordinate the city's summer programs for children and youth. In partnership with DCPS and the Department of Human Services, CYITC supports the Transformation Schools and Neighborhood Places initiatives to link CBO programs to the collaborative effort to improve student performance at targeted public schools. For more information, see <http://www.cyitc.org/cyitc/>.



- **PlusTime New Hampshire: Coordinating State Investments in Afterschool Programs** This statewide organization was established in 1991 with federal child care dollars from the **New Hampshire** Department of Health and Human Services. The Department acted as the fiscal agent for PlusTime NH for six years, after which the organization became an independent nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status. PlusTime NH, which began as a coalition of representatives from established youth programs, is now an intermediary organization offering training, technical assistance, policy development, and funding assistance for afterschool programs across the state. The organization manages and administers both public and private funds: It manages Out of School Matters!, a Nellie Mae Education Foundation grant providing funding for middle school programs, and also coordinates New Hampshire’s 21CCLC program. Through a memorandum of understanding with the state Department of Education, PlusTime NH can conduct a joint request for proposals process for these two funding streams and ensure their coordination. Housing the state’s 21CCLC coordinator and advising the Governor’s Kids Cabinet maintains PlusTime NH’s ties to public agencies, while its diverse board of directors is charged with securing funding from a range of private partners and donors. For more information, see <http://www.plustime.org>.
- **The SOAR Opportunity Fund: Pooling Diverse Local Funding Sources for Common Goals** The SOAR Opportunity Fund is a public-private partnership among the Seattle and King County, **Washington**, governments and corporate, private, and public foundations. It was established in 2000 to increase funding for early care and afterschool programs. The Opportunity Fund employs a three-pronged approach of pooling, aligning, and matching funds. Some partners contribute to a shared pool of funds, which are then awarded to jointly chosen school readiness, family care, and afterschool initiatives. Private members of the Opportunity Fund who do not participate in the pooled fund make individual awards to projects that align with the Opportunity Fund’s goals and priorities. Recipients of these awards are also eligible for the third type of funding, matching awards from the city and county. The Opportunity Fund’s approach has resulted in over \$10 million in grants to early care and afterschool programs. For more information, see <http://www.philanthropyNW.org>.
- **Community Schools Rhode Island: Local Stakeholders Collaborating to Support Community Schools** Community Schools Rhode Island is an initiative sponsored by the United Way of **Rhode Island** to develop community schools in Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and West Warwick. Its primary strategy has been to support the creation of high-quality, enriching programs for middle school youth during and after school. The initiative stresses collaboration between schools and community organizations to support academic achievement and positive youth development. The United Way has committed over \$1 million to this initiative, which was matched by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. The Rhode Island Department of Education, the





Department of Human Services, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and Brooks Pharmacy have also committed resources to this initiative. For more information, see <http://www.uwri.org/csri.cfm>.

## Bringing It All Together: State and Local Afterschool Networks

State or local afterschool networks bring together a diverse array of public, private, and community stakeholders to provide the coordination and guidance necessary to frame a broad vision for ensuring success for afterschool programs. They strengthen peer-to-peer relationships and bring stakeholders at all levels together to build public will and influence public policy.

In particular, afterschool networks have become a vehicle for bringing together high-level policymakers and private funders, as well as grassroots leaders (teachers, parents, community advocates) interested in improving outcomes for children and youth through out-of-school time programs. Networks provide a means for joint planning; sharing resources and best practices; building bridges to and between federal, state, and local initiatives; and forging partnerships to develop comprehensive afterschool policies. Networks may also be a natural forum for statewide discussions about system-building, access, and quality.

The C.S Mott Foundation supports states interested in establishing strong statewide afterschool networks, recognizing the value of this model in developing balanced and diversified funding that will grow and sustain high-quality programs over the long term. To date, 31 states have received funding from the Foundation to build the capacity of their networks: **Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Washington,** and **Wisconsin**. For individual descriptions of these state networks, see [http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/about\\_statewide\\_network/index.html](http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/about_statewide_network/index.html).

In addition to states receiving assistance from the C. S. Mott Foundation, a number of states have emerging networks striving toward similar goals. These include **Utah, Tennessee,** and **New Jersey**. Several cities, including New Orleans, Louisiana; Norwalk, Connecticut; Pasadena, California; and Providence, Rhode Island, are forming similar networks on a local level. Finally, The National League of Cities (NLC) has recently supported eight cities in developing coordinated leadership around afterschool.<sup>6</sup> For more information, see <http://www.nlc.org/IYEF/>. NLC has also developed the Afterschool Policy Advisors' Network (APAN), a new peer learning network of municipal officials and staff now available to help cities and towns utilize their leadership to support afterschool programming and local policy development.

<sup>6</sup> These cities are Charlotte, N.C.; Fort Worth, Tex.; Fresno, Calif.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Lincoln, Nebr.; Spokane, Wash.; and Washington, D.C.





## Governors' Summits on Extra Learning Opportunities

In July 2003, the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, with support from the C.S. Mott Foundation and the Wallace Foundation, awarded funds to 13 states—**Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming**—to conduct governors' summits on extra learning opportunities (ELOs). Summits have focused on a number of goals, such as engaging business partners at the state and local levels, building support among new state leaders, and creating statewide networks to support ELOs.

Many successful governors' summits have sought to engage new partners who will be instrumental in determining the state policy role for ELOs. Summits often incorporate the following elements:

- Enjoy direct gubernatorial involvement and support;
- Bring together a broad range of stakeholders, including state, local, elected, public, private, youth, education, and agency representatives;
- Provide a forum where specific state actions, policy solutions, and next steps can be discussed and clearly articulated; and
- Showcase innovative ELOs and promising practices.

Eleven additional states—**Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin**—were selected to receive \$10,000 each to host ELO summits from fall 2005 through summer 2006.



### Issues to Consider

- All partners need to be actively involved in defining the goals and agenda of a public-private partnership or network. Collectively defining goals gives all partners ownership and increases the likelihood that they will stay committed over the long run, despite inevitable differences of perspective and opinion. Likewise, if the goals are held firm, the partnership can be flexible in how those goals are accomplished, which will help the partnership evolve in the face of change. To learn more about how to develop a common agenda for emerging partnerships, see the Afterschool Investments publication *Creating a Vision for Afterschool Partnerships*, available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool/visioning-tool.pdf>.

- An effective governance structure is essential for the successful management of the partnership or afterschool network. Effective governance structures define the roles that partners will play and ensure that all partners understand and accept these roles. Such mutually agreed-upon guidelines can prevent miscommunication and establish a process in which all partners are respected for their unique contributions. The forthcoming Afterschool Investments publication provides information on the design and function of effective afterschool network governance structures, highlighting the experiences of state and local networks, across six key domains: (1) vision, (2) structure and leadership, (3) broad representation and participation, (4) decision making and accountability, (5) communication, and (6) measuring results.



## Promoting Access to Afterschool Programs

The demonstrated benefits of afterschool programs are lost to children who do not have access to such programs. Despite the existence of a large dedicated federal funding source for afterschool programs, the U.S. Department of Education's 21CCLC program, which serves more than 1.2 million elementary and middle school students in high-need communities, access to afterschool programs remains inconsistent. Minority and low-income parents are far more likely than their white or higher-income counterparts to report that they are unsatisfied with how their children spend out-of-school time, that they worry about how their children are occupying their time, and that it is difficult to find interesting, age-appropriate, and affordable activities for their children.<sup>7</sup>

Policymakers have a number of opportunities to help ensure that afterschool programs are available to school-age children, regardless of income or neighborhood. These strategies include (1) assessing the supply and demand for care, (2) building provider capacity through grants and loans, (3) using child care subsidy policies strategically to promote access, and (4) connecting parents to programs in their area.

<sup>7</sup> Ann Duffett and Jean Johnson, *All Work and No Play: Listening to What Kids and Parents Really Want from Out-of-School Time* (New York, N.Y.: Public Agenda, 2004).



## Assessing the Supply and Demand for Care

While measures of the extent to which demand for afterschool programs exceeds supply vary widely (some studies have found programs with an abundance of underutilized slots, while some determine that only one slot exists for every three children desiring afterschool programs), a 2005 RAND analysis of surveys and polls, estimates, and enrollment and attendance data did reach one clear conclusion: the afterschool field needs more precise estimates of where and when the supply of programs fails to meet demand.<sup>8</sup> Assessing the landscape is a key step toward ensuring the availability of afterschool programs. Quantifying existing programs, describing the children they serve, and estimating the needs and preferences of those not being served enables policymakers to target resources where they are most needed. Providers, in turn, can work together to fill gaps, avoid duplication, and identify prospective clients.

States and localities have undertaken the supply and demand estimation processes in a number of ways, ranging from grassroots efforts to administer neighborhood surveys to legislative orders to create detailed maps of statewide funding and demographic data. The data have also been used in a variety of ways, including targeting parental outreach, promoting best practices, and identifying training and technical assistance needs. More information, including a framework for conducting the estimation process and lessons learned from the field, is available in the Afterschool Investments publication *Estimating Supply and Demand for Afterschool Programs: A Tool for State and Local Policymakers*, available at <http://nccic.org/afterschool/SupplyDemand.pdf>. In addition, the President and First Lady's Helping America's Youth Initiative has created a community assessment tool that can help identify needs, resources, and action strategies. This tool is available at <http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov>.

Keeping their own data needs and resource availability in mind, policymakers can learn from the following examples:

- **Illinois: Assessing Needs to Develop a Strategic Plan for Comprehensive Services**

In 2001, a task force mandated by the **Illinois** state legislature and co-chaired by the superintendent of education and secretary of human services was charged with conducting an assessment of afterschool services in Illinois, including identifying the number of children and youth served in afterschool programs; the number and location of children and youth who need but are not served by afterschool programs; and the funding streams that support afterschool programs. The task force presented a comprehensive strategic plan to the legislature in November 2002, recommending a comprehensive system of out-of-school time services that would disseminate best practices, link programs, and increase community capacity.

- **New Mexico: Tracking Public Investment in Afterschool Programs**

In its 2003 session, the **New Mexico** state legislature enacted a joint memorandum commissioning a detailed assessment of afterschool programs in the state to gain a



<sup>8</sup> Susan Bodilly and M. K. Beckett, *Making Out-of-School Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2005).

complete and accurate picture of the level of public investment. The Children, Youth, and Families Department and the departments of Education, Labor, and Health were directed to identify dollars being expended to support local community, school, or nonprofit organizations that operate out-of-school time programs. An advisory committee conducted a study detailing overall purpose; key activities, participants served, and federal and state dollars invested for each program and issued a summary report and recommendations to the Legislative Education Study Committee in January 2004. The report outlined the state's multidepartmental resources for direct child care services, workforce development, substance abuse prevention, 21CCLCs, tutoring services, and meal and snack reimbursements, totaling over \$42 million.

■ **Montana: Cataloging Resources to Improve Supply and Quality**

The **Montana** Out-of-School Time Project, an initiative developed within the Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network, seeks to improve the supply and quality of school-age care for children statewide. The project has catalogued school-age care resources, including grant information and financial and technical assistance opportunities and developed a map to document the current supply of school-age care. In addition, the Project is in the process of building a statewide database of licensed and unlicensed school-age care programs, adapting current models for financing school-age care programs, and establishing and building community partnerships to increase public awareness.



**Issues to Consider**

- State or community leaders may consider developing a new entity, such as an advisory committee or task force, to carry out supply and demand studies. Alternatively, they may draw on the existing capacity of local resource and referral agencies. In either case, they will need to support qualified staff who can carry out a thorough study of an area's supply and demand for afterschool.
- Because some stakeholders may hesitate to commit their limited resources to a study, it is important to convey clearly the potential of supply and demand statistics to inform future investments and direct resources to communities most in need. When supply and demand studies are driven by multiple stakeholder groups, it is beneficial for all stakeholders to understand clearly how the resulting data will be used and disseminated, particularly if funding decisions and resource allocations will be tied to the data. Engaging partners early in the process can help ensure that the data collected will be useful to as many stakeholders as possible.

- Afterschool and school-age care initiatives encompass a wide range of program structures and provider types. Policymakers estimating supply and demand should define in advance which programs they will include in their scope of afterschool services and develop surveys adaptable to different styles of programs.
- Using data that has already been gathered can simplify the process. Existing studies that weren't necessarily focused on school-age child care can still provide valuable data, as can information collected by the Census and state or local government.

### Building Provider Capacity through Grants

Policymakers can ease the financial hurdles providers face when beginning a new program or expanding their services to additional children or a new population. Some state child care subsidy agencies use CCDF quality funds to support providers interested in expanding services. Examples of state grant programs include the following:

- **Vermont: Aligning Grantmaking to Encourage Program Coordination**

The **Vermont** Child Care Services Division (CCSD) has targeted assistance for school-age child care by providing mini-grants for expansion and enhancement of school-age programs and providing support to public schools to develop before- and afterschool programs and to coordinate programs with those funded by 21CCLC funds. For its 2004 grant cycle, CCSD piloted a mutual grant-making process in coordination with the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS). AHS manages awards on behalf of the Vermont Children's Trust Fund, a public-private partnership that promotes community-based prevention programs. CCSD and AHS discovered that while many organizations were applying for both types of grants, their applications were often not coordinated, and applicants from the same community were sometimes unaware of each other's plans. In response, they agreed to pilot a coordinated grant-making system to reduce duplication of efforts and align their awards. They will use the pilot results to revise and continue the process in the future.

- **Wyoming: Using CCDF to Increase School-Age Capacity**

In **Wyoming**, licensing rule changes lowered the number of school-age children that family care providers could serve. This situation created an urgent need for new care options for



school-age children and youth. The state used its CCDF quality dollars to start a program to increase capacity for school-age care. In FY2003, nine grants were awarded, based on individual community needs. Grantees included community-based organizations, school districts, park and recreation services, and private child care facilities.

■ **Missouri: Supporting School-Based Child Care Through CCDF Grants**

Since 1996, **Missouri's** Department of Social Services and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have collaborated to provide \$1.4 million of CCDF quality funds for the School-Age Care Grant Program. This program provides grants for before- and after-school programs in public schools. Administered by DESE, 130 to 150 grants averaging \$10,000 to \$20,000 per site are awarded annually to aid public schools in building sustainable, high-quality programs for students during non-school hours.

**Issues to Consider**

- In administering capacity-building grants, states have partnered with resource and referral agencies, public school districts, workforce boards, community development corporations, and the Small Business Administration. Policymakers can explore opportunities for facilitating these partnerships and easing barriers to cooperation.
- CCDF quality funds can be used flexibly to reach more children than those served by the state's subsidy system. Start-up grants and loans provide an opportunity to extend the reach of CCDF and connect with additional programs, providers, and families.
- More and more, states and localities are recognizing that child care plays an important economic role in communities. Policymakers can incorporate start-up grants or loans into their economic development initiatives by highlighting their impact on working parents, the jobs they directly provide, and the role of school-age child care in developing the future workforce.

**Using Federal Child Care Subsidies Strategically to Promote Access to School-Age Care**

The CCDF, funded at \$4.8 billion in 2005, represents the largest single source of federal funding for afterschool programs and an important avenue through which low-income families can access care for school-age children.<sup>9</sup> States have great flexibility to shape the administration of the program, and each decision—from setting eligibility criteria to establishing provider reimbursement rates and calculating family co-payments—impacts families' ability to access care. The following section provides examples of how subsidy administration policies can broaden access to school-age child care.

**Family co-payments**

Families eligible for CCDF assistance are required to make a co-payment to receive subsidized child care. Each state establishes a sliding co-payment scale based on a number of factors, including family size and income. During the school year, school-age children are typically in part-time care; a co-payment based on full-time rates can result in families bearing a dispro-

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<sup>9</sup> CCDF funding support child care programs for children ages 0–12, including school-age programs.





portionate amount of the cost of care. States address this issue in a number of ways. For example, at least 13 states and the District of Columbia include the amount of time a child spends in care (i.e., part-day versus full-day) as a factor in determining co-payment levels.<sup>10</sup> Other states (Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Louisiana, and Nevada) consider the cost of care when determining family co-payments, since part-time school-age care is typically less expensive than full-time care for younger children.<sup>11</sup> Many states take additional steps to promote access, such as charging a reduced co-payment for multiple children in the same family or ensuring that the total co-payment does not exceed a set percentage of family income.

### **Provider reimbursement rates**

State child care agencies also have discretion in setting the rates paid to providers caring for subsidy-eligible school-age children. States must, however, certify that the payment rates ensure families receiving subsidies have access that is comparable to the range of care options available to private-paying families. States conduct market rate surveys to assess the cost of child care and set provider payment rates based on the survey results. Because there are special circumstances related to caring for school-age children, such as higher child-to-staff ratios and reduced hours of care, many states have established a separate rate category for school-age care. States also typically establish separate rate schedules for different types of settings (e.g., center-based care, family child care). Many state child care agencies also offer tiered reimbursement levels to reward providers who meet quality standards that exceed licensing requirements, a strategy explored in more detail on page 29.

Using the rate schedules published in the state's 2004–05 child care plans, the Afterschool Investments Project has compiled data on school-age rates in every state. Since states calculate rates on a per-hour, per-week, or per-month basis, Afterschool Investments calculated a standardized monthly school-age rate to better facilitate comparisons across states. To compare standardized rates in different states, visit <http://nccic.org/afterschool/reimbursementRep.htm>.

### **Contracts for school-age care**

In most instances, a family eligible for CCDF child care subsidies receives a certificate that can be used to purchase care from its choice of approved providers. Providers are later reimbursed for their services. Some states, though, have found it beneficial to award contracts or grants for providers to serve a certain number of eligible children (or fill a predetermined number of “slots”) over a specified time. A contract can provide a stable, predictable source of income for providers. Stability for providers can translate into stability for families and children, helping to ensure that access to care is not disrupted. Contracts can be especially beneficial for school-age care providers because attendance can fluctuate based on differing school calendars and children’s participation in other activities. At least seven states—**Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Vermont**—contract with before and afterschool child care programs. To ensure parental choice, federal CCDF rules require that families have the opportunity to select a voucher rather than a contracted slot.

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<sup>10</sup> These states are Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Washington.



<sup>11</sup> National Child Care Information Center, *Child Care and Development Fund: Report of State Plans FY2004–05*, Vienna, VA, 2004).



- **Vermont: Using Contract Agreements to Increase Access and Stability** The **Vermont** Child Care Services Division is piloting formal grant agreements for subsidized placements with child care providers who meet more rigorous requirements than under the regular voucher system. The program pays these providers for a guaranteed number of child care slots. Five programs serving school-age children are included in the pilot, in addition to 26 other sites serving children ages 0 to 6. The goals for this effort are twofold: to increase access to quality child care programs for families eligible for child care subsidies and to increase the financial stability of the respective child care programs.
- **Massachusetts: Ensuring Access to School-Age Care Using Direct Contracts** In **Massachusetts**, the Office of Child Care Services uses direct contracts to build the supply of school-age care. According to state officials, contracts serve to help programs increase stability and improve capacity. Providers bid competitively for these dollars in response to state solicitation. Contractors include both individual providers and larger organizations providing school-age care. Contracts are also used to ensure care for vulnerable populations, such as homeless children and children who require care during nontraditional hours. In 2004–05, this process guaranteed more than 1,000 slots for several categories of children.<sup>12</sup>

### **Adapting eligibility to changing circumstances**

Families of school-age children often face additional hurdles to consistent and stable access to care because their needs can fluctuate along with the school calendar. States can ease this burden by implementing client-friendly processes for changing a family's subsidy authorization from part-time care to full-time care during the summer or school holidays. Traveling to agency offices and scheduling appointments during business hours can be difficult for low-income working parents, but agencies can relieve this burden by offering mail, phone, fax, and Internet interactions and by extending office hours when in-person visits are required.

Many states, including **Louisiana** and **Minnesota**, base authorization for care on the number of hours a client needs in order to remain employed or complete coursework. When the need for school-age care shifts from part-time to full-time, there is no need to complete an additional authorization as long as the hours the child receives care remain within the established parameters of parental need.

Other states, including **Iowa** and **Nevada**, allow clients to specify back-up providers specifically to cover teacher workdays, school breaks, and holidays. Allowing more than one provider on the child's plan of care encourages parents to plan for contingencies and ensures that the chosen providers are aware of their status and have completed necessary requirements to receive payment. In Nevada, where many schools operate on a year-round schedule with multiple "tracks" of children taking breaks at different times throughout the year, providers who serve school-age children during track breaks can receive a rate higher than the standard full-day school-age rate. This incentive is designed to ensure that parents have an adequate supply of flexible options to accommodate school calendars and that providers are compensated for accommodating a clientele that needs irregular care.

<sup>12</sup> Sharon Deich, Erika Bryant, and Elisabeth Wright, *Using CCDF to Finance Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, 2001).



### Issues to Consider

- Child care administration includes a number of policy levers (e.g., licensing, subsidy administration, welfare policies), each with substantial ability to impact both families and providers. Often, these policies impact families of school-age children and the providers who serve them differently than those who deal exclusively with younger children. To ensure that these differences are taken into account, policymakers can include afterschool programs and school-age providers, as well as parents of school-age children, when requesting input on the state's CCDF plan or on the administration of the state's market rate survey.

### Connecting Parents to Programs in Their Area

In addition to ensuring an adequate supply of afterschool programs, policies can help match demand to supply by providing information about the importance, availability, and affordability of programs to families interested in accessing afterschool programs and school-age child care. Many families do not know how quality afterschool programs can benefit their children, how to find programs in their area, or even that child care subsidies or other low-cost options may be available. Child Care Aware, a HHS-funded initiative focused on consumer education, has developed a brochure on finding quality afterschool programs and has identified principles for effective and useful public awareness strategies and marketing campaigns.<sup>13</sup> Many states and localities have used these principles to increase the flow of information to parents. Quality rating systems, described in detail in the next section, also serve as an educational tool signaling quality programs to parents.

**North Carolina** uses CCDF quality-enhancement funds to produce and distribute outreach materials that inform parents of the importance of high-quality school-age care and how to locate quality programs. To better reach all families, key materials are translated into Spanish.<sup>14</sup>

### Issues to Consider

- Consumer education is often the role of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs). Many CCR&Rs have dedicated resources to develop staff expertise in school-age child care. Policymakers with limited resources can focus their education efforts on developing this type of CCR&R expertise and have the potential to reach many families.
- Collaboration with multiple state agencies can ensure that parents receive information on quality care through any public agency they encounter. While not all parents of school-age children will interact with the state child care subsidy agency, most will interact with the public or parochial school system, employers, health care providers, and libraries. Policymakers may combine direct marketing to parents with outreach to other agencies.
- Information campaigns specifically focused on helping parents to recognize quality programs can increase demand for such programs, thereby exerting pressure on providers to improve quality.



<sup>13</sup> Selecting a Quality After-School Program for Your Child is available at <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/tools/pubs>.

<sup>14</sup> Deich, Bryant, and Wright, *Using CCDF to Finance Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives*.



## Improving Afterschool Program Quality

High-quality afterschool programs recognize the importance of helping young people explore new interests and engage in interesting, enriching, and challenging activities with caring adult supervision. While definitions of quality vary depending on the focus of a given program (education, youth development, etc.), recent reports by the RAND Corporation and the C. S. Mott Foundation have defined key elements of successful afterschool programs across program types.<sup>15</sup> For example, according to RAND's 2005 literature review, a "convergence" of multiple cross-disciplinary studies shows agreement that the following factors are associated with high quality:

- A clear mission
- High expectations and positive social norms
- A safe and healthy environment
- A supportive emotional climate
- A small total enrollment
- Stable, trained personnel
- Appropriate content and pedagogy relative to the children's needs and the program's mission, with opportunities to engage
- Integrated family and community partners
- Frequent assessment<sup>16</sup>

Given the limited budgets of afterschool programs and the part-time work schedules of many afterschool staff, programs often struggle to hire and retain staff who can lead young people in developmentally appropriate activities. State and community leaders can help programs to move toward higher quality with a range of supports, including developing an infrastructure that supports (1) professional development for afterschool program staff and (2) licensing and program standards, or benchmarks of quality, through which programs may be assessed and recognized.

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, *A Framework for Effective After-school Programs* (Flint, Mich., 2005). Available online at: [http://www.publicengagement.com/Framework/images/framework\\_61505.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.com/Framework/images/framework_61505.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Bodilly and Beckett, Op cit.



## Promoting Quality School-age Care in Family Child Care Settings

While less frequently discussed as a setting for before- and after school care, family child care (FCC) providers serve over 30% of CCDF-subsidized school-age children across the nation.<sup>17</sup> Many parents choose licensed family child care providers because they prefer the home-like setting, and the typically mixed-age and in some cases, culturally-familiar environment.

Because family child care providers have very different characteristics and circumstances than school- or center-based settings, special attention may need to be paid to supporting these unique providers. For example, for providers where only one caregiver is present, it is important to ensure that professional development opportunities are available outside of work hours. Additionally, since many family child care providers serve mixed age groups, effective professional development will recognize the wide variety of developmental needs for younger and older children.

For more information on how communities can promote quality in family child care for school-age children, see the forthcoming Afterschool Investments publication on this topic, available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>.)

### Improve Quality through Professional Development

Professional development refers to supports and services that ensure that workers in school-age programs are equipped to respond to the needs of children and youth. Because of part-time schedules and low compensation associated with many positions, afterschool staff may view their work as a job, rather than a profession. State and local leaders can provide professional development supports, including education and training and ongoing technical assistance, to support professionalism in the field and thereby increase the quality and stability of afterschool staff.

**Support Education and Training for Providers:** States can provide training to existing providers or those considering careers as providers, often in partnership with a state or community college program. States can also provide financial incentives, such as scholarships or salary stipends, to providers who pursue further education or credentials in key subject areas. Like child development credentials commonly found across states, school-age credentials, which are focused on the unique skill set associated with the quality provision of school-age care, are now being developed in many places. The following are examples of promising state professional development policies that incorporate one or more of these strategies:

- **Idaho: Offering a Separate School-Age Track Within Child Care Professional Development System** Idaho STARS (State Training and Registry System) was launched by the state Department of Health and Welfare in July 2003 using CCDF school-age and quality earmark dollars. Administered by the Center on Disabilities and Human Development at the University of Idaho and the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children, STARS encompasses both professional development for providers and resource and referral services for parents. Professional development



<sup>17</sup> This estimate is based on ACF-801 forms reported to the Child Care Bureau in fiscal 2001.

training is offered at nine career levels ranging from pre-professional through doctorate and focuses on four areas of competency, one of which is school-age care. A compensation component to the program is still being developed. Incentives are expected to include stipends and scholarships for providers to attend training; bonuses for advancing to higher career levels; and grants for providers to design course offerings, purchase educational materials, or develop lending libraries or mobile vans to disseminate resources. For more information, see <http://www.idahostars.org>.

- **Alaska: Providing Financial Incentives for Professional Development**

The **Alaska** System for Early Education Development project and the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, through federal earmarks and the CCDF, provide financial stipends to individuals who work in school-age child care programs. Stipends can be used for college credits, work toward a Child Development Associate credential, school-age certification, and attendance at the Alaska School Age Care Alliance Conference. For more information, see <http://seed.alaska.edu/index.html>.

- **Wisconsin: Supporting a School-Age Professional Credential**

In 1995, school-age professionals in **Wisconsin** began developing a statewide school-age organization with assistance from the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) and the Wisconsin Child Care Improvement Project. At the same time, WECA was given funding to develop the Wisconsin School-Age Credential following the U.S. Army model. The Wisconsin School-Age Care Alliance (WISACA), as an informal organization, helped in the development of the Wisconsin School-Age Credential. In 1997, WISACA became a state affiliate for the National School-Age Care Alliance (now the National AfterSchool Association). The Wisconsin AfterSchool Association hosts a statewide conference, administers the Wisconsin School-Age Credential, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and supports public policy development at state and national levels. For more information, see <http://www.wi-communityed.org/wisaca/wisaca.htm>.

**Offer Ongoing Technical Assistance to Providers:** States can offer ongoing support to providers on topics ranging from meeting state health and safety guidelines to promoting healthy youth development. In addition to professional technical assistance providers, experienced afterschool program staff are a key source of insight on how to work effectively with children and youth during out-of-school time. Peer-to-peer networking or provider mentoring programs can harness the skills and lessons learned by existing providers. State chapters of the National Afterschool Association (NAA) (formerly the National School-Age Care Alliance) may be able to help facilitate these programs and services. The following are promising examples of how states can develop a technical assistance infrastructure for school-age care:

- **Ohio: Interagency Support for School-Age Programs**

The Out-of-School Time Project is a statewide network to support afterschool initiatives funded by CCDF quality dollars through a collaboration between the **Ohio** Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Education. The project, implemented



by the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, provides professional development training and technical assistance to all out-of-school time programs in Ohio. In 2003, more than 800 trainings were offered to 7,000 providers. For more information, see <http://www.ohioafterschoolnetwork.org/>.

■ **North Carolina: 4-H System Promoting Statewide Communication and Training**

The **North Carolina** 4-H School-Age Care Program created School-Age Care Partners Across Carolina, a statewide listserv, to ensure ongoing, active communication between afterschool providers and other important stakeholders. North Carolina State University's Cooperative Extension System representatives in every county ensure that no program or region is overlooked, keeping state 4-H officials aware of developments and program needs. The North Carolina 4-H also provides training and technical assistance for the Support Our Students program, funded by the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP). The Division of Child Development and DJJDP also coordinate efforts with the Department of Public Instruction around 21CCLC dollars and regulations for school-based programs. For more information, see [http://nccic.org/after\\_school/nc.html](http://nccic.org/after_school/nc.html).

■ **California : Regional Capacity-Building for Afterschool Programs**

As one piece of its efforts to provide technical assistance to afterschool programs, the **California** AfterSchool Partnership established leadership support in 11 regions across the state. Experienced providers in each region serve as liaisons and resources to help build the capacity of local programs. California also has 13 Regional Learning Centers that allow new and existing program leaders to learn from successful peers in their region. Program administrators meet regularly to learn from one another, share best practices, and identify areas for continual program improvement. For more information, see <http://nccic.org/afterschool/ca.html>.

**Issues to Consider**

- Most states have existing professional development systems that may include coursework and education incentives for providers of early care and education. These professional development activities are generally funded, at least in part, by CCDF quality set-aside funds. It may be cost-effective to build on this infrastructure and develop additional modules or specialties focused on the skills associated with school-age care provision.
- Professional development initiatives for school-age providers may be conceived and implemented by multiple public and/or private entities. Trainings may be more cost-efficient and reach a wider audience when the professional development system involves various key groups, such as 21CCLC programs, 4-H organizations, and providers in the child care system. State afterschool networks may serve as a forum for developing linkages among groups.
- A state's size and/or population density may influence the choice of a professional development strategy. For example, while providers in some states may benefit from a statewide provider conference, others may find regional meetings or Web-based training and networking more accessible.





## Improve Quality through Licensing and Standards

By developing standards for quality school-age care, states and communities can assess, recognize, and promote quality programs. Child care licensing regulations, which apply to a range of settings, generally represent the minimum standards necessary to keep children healthy and safe. In addition, various national, state, and local entities have developed strategies to promote higher quality, including tiered child care quality strategies, afterschool-specific program standards, and accreditation strategies. Some strategies used by states and communities to improve the quality of school-age care through licensing regulations, tiered quality strategies, and program standards are described below.

**Use Licensing Regulations to Promote Quality in Afterschool Programs:** Every state has child care licensing regulations (also referred to as health and safety requirements) to promote the safety of all children in regulated care settings. Regulations specify a quality baseline required of all providers, and address issues such as physical environment, staff qualifications and background, and staff-child ratios. Child care licensing standards, which were generally developed to meet the needs of young children in traditional care settings, may present challenges for afterschool providers, who may be required to be licensed simply to operate or to receive federal funds.

States can adapt child care licensing regulations, in some cases by creating separate school-age care regulations that address the specific needs of school-age children. Currently, 13 states have separate school-age care (SAC) licensing requirements, two states have specific supplemental sections of SAC requirements, while the others embed school-age regulations in their standard requirements.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, many state child care regulations still present significant challenges for afterschool programs. For a detailed analysis of how states can adapt specific licensing regulations, such as physical plant or staff qualifications requirements, to promote quality in afterschool, see *Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations*, available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>. Brief examples of challenges and state strategies are excerpted from this publication below.

### Challenges and Strategies for Licensing Afterschool Programs

States have found ways to address licensing challenges across a broad range of afterschool program settings, approaches, and circumstances. The following are examples of specific areas of licensing regulations that may challenge states and promising practices to address these challenges:<sup>19</sup>

#### Physical Plant Requirements

Physical plant requirements devised for child care centers often present challenges for afterschool programs operating in parks and recreation facilities or other settings. For

<sup>18</sup> S. LeMoine, "States with Separate Center School-age Care Licensing Regulations." *Child Care Bulletin*, Issue 29, 2005, p. 15. Washington, D.C.: HHS Child Care Bureau. The 13 states with separate SAC licensing requirements are California, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Massachusetts and New Mexico have specific supplemental sections of SAC requirements.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpts adapted from state regulations (available at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>) as well as from LeMoine, "States with Separate Center School-age Care Licensing Regulations."





example, child care and education agencies may require school-based programs to meet duplicative or contradictory physical plant requirements in order to become licensed.

Some states have addressed this issue by exempting programs run by or located in public schools from child care licensing, believing that these programs are sufficiently monitored by another state agency. Child care agencies in **Michigan, New Hampshire,** and **South Dakota** accept building fire and safety code requirements determined by education departments or individual school districts in lieu of the physical plant requirements in their licensing regulations.

Other jurisdictions that do not exempt public schools from licensing have used a number of strategies to address duplicative or contradictory requirements. One approach, recently implemented by Washington, is to adopt a uniform building code for all publicly supported facilities as a basis for minimum requirements, and set additional, age-appropriate physical plant requirements for programs serving children.

### **Staff Qualifications Requirements**

Regulations often specify that child care staff must have an early childhood certificate or degree. These regulations may not fully capture the range of desired competencies sought in afterschool providers, such as elementary or secondary education, arts education, or a background in adolescent psychology and prevention issues.

Regulations in **Massachusetts, Oklahoma,** and **Pennsylvania** provide a number of ways for child care directors, lead teachers, and other afterschool staff to meet qualifications through different combinations of degrees, course credits, relevant experience, and other factors. For example, school-age supplemental regulations in Massachusetts require that a program administrator have a bachelor's degree in "child development, early childhood education, elementary education, child guidance, human services, nursing, psychology, physical education, recreation, child psychology, the arts, social work, sociology, or child care and have six months working with school-age children."

### **Program Activities**

Regulations may not capture the wide difference between age-appropriate activities for younger and older children. For example, while regulations for infants and toddlers stress basic verbal skills and easing separation anxiety from parents, school-age children benefit from activities that support intentional linkages with schools and communities.

The child care regulations of several states, including **Alaska, Delaware, Rhode Island,** and **South Dakota,** promote activities that serve the needs, interests, and developmental requirements of school-age youth. For example, Alaska's regulations require that a facility providing care for school-age children shall provide "(1) a program that supplements rather than duplicates the child's school activities, providing a change of pace and interest between school and the child care program; (2) freedom appropriate to the age of the child and opportunities for self-reliance and social responsibility; (3) opportunities for school-age children to participate in the selection and planning of their own activities; and (4) in centers, separate space, equipment, and supplies for the school-age children."

Adapted from Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations, available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>.



**Develop a Tiered Child Care Quality Strategy:** In recent years, more than 30 state child care agencies have implemented tiered quality strategies to recognize and, in some cases, financially reward providers who meet standards of quality exceeding those required for state licensing.<sup>20</sup> Quality strategies can apply to all licensed providers serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. Typically, states require licensing as the first tier and require that providers be accredited by one of several national organizations as the highest tier. States with middle-level tiers usually develop their own standards. To encourage programs to meet quality standards, states can provide supports and/or incentives. Supports may include professional development activities or small grants to help providers meet standards. Financial incentives may be offered through a tiered child care subsidy system, in which programs meeting quality standards receive higher levels of state compensation.<sup>21</sup>

States can ensure that quality improvement efforts address benchmarks consistent with high-quality school-age care. To do so, most states that link higher reimbursement to accreditation recognize accreditation by NAA as well as national accreditation from organizations focused on early education.<sup>22</sup> Additional examples of how quality rating systems can promote quality afterschool care are listed below:

- **North Carolina's** five-star rating system, fully implemented in 2000, is based on the provider program's standards, education levels of staff, and compliance history with child care regulations. State legislation mandates that all providers meet basic licensing requirements (a one-star rating), but allows providers the option to seek higher ratings on a voluntary basis. North Carolina has tied a tiered child care subsidy system to the star ratings, rewarding centers and providers for continued quality improvements. The state contracts with the 4-H School-age Care Project at North Carolina State University to help programs achieve Basic School-age Care credentials and higher star ratings. For more information, see [http://ncchild-care.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/pr\\_sn2\\_ov\\_sr.asp](http://ncchild-care.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/pr_sn2_ov_sr.asp).
- **Pennsylvania** implemented its four-star child care quality rating system, Keystone STARS (Standards, Training, Assistance, Resources, and Support) in 2003. Many school-based and school-administered afterschool programs have chosen to seek higher star levels (note that school-based programs serving children over age five are exempt from facilities licensing requirements but are subject to environment rating scales as part of Keystone STARS). In addition to technical assistance from STARS staff, programs receive support grants and staff merit awards to promote quality-improvement efforts. As the STARS program has been implemented, the afterschool community has been at the table to inform ways in which the incentive program can align with the needs of afterschool programs. Some initial steps have involved training and professional development requirements for school-age staff seeking higher star levels. For example, if staff work in a program for

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<sup>20</sup> National Child Care Information Center, Tiered Quality Strategies: Definitions and State Systems, available at <http://nccic.org/pubs/tiered-defsystems.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> State-by-state information is available at the National Association for the Education of Young Children, State Policies on Accreditation and Quality Rating Systems (Washington, D.C.: February 2005). Available at <http://www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart1.asp>.



less than 500 hours per year, they have to complete only two-thirds of the training hours required for full-time staff. Because the system is coordinated by staff who serve in the Department of Public Welfare as well as the Department of Education, more system alignment is anticipated as the program moves forward. For more information, see <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/child/childcare/keystonestarchildcare/default.htm>.

**Develop Program Standards:** Quality standards may be used to assess and promote higher levels of program quality and may address issues similar to child care licensing, such as child-to-staff ratios and building safety requirements. They may also promote outcomes specific to the mission of a given program, such as academic achievement or healthy youth development.

Several national organizations have developed program standards. For example, NAA has developed standards of quality school-age care that form the foundation of NAA's self-assessment and accreditation process. For more information on NAA standards, see text box on page 31. Other national groups that have defined standards for afterschool programs include the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Parent Teacher Association, and the Promising and Effective Practices Network. In addition, the National Mentoring Partnership and the Search Institute have defined key elements of quality programs that support healthy youth development. States or localities may adopt national standards in part or fully. For example, the Afterschool Coalition, a collaboration of 30 afterschool providers in Marion County, Indiana, has developed standards for program operation based on National AfterSchool Association standards and the youth development assets of the Search Institute. Members agree to accept these standards and to implement accountability measures that reflect them.

State-level afterschool program standards are also beginning to emerge. In the area of education, many afterschool programs receive funds from the 21CCLC program or other funds targeted at improved academic outcomes. For many of these programs to demonstrate effectiveness, quality standards focused on academic success are required. In Michigan, for example, the State Board of Education finalized model standards for out-of-school time programs for elementary and middle schools in 2003. In addition, the Department of Education is developing an instrument for program monitoring and self-assessment that will allow programs to implement the activities necessary to meet the standards.

In several states, multiple policy and practitioner stakeholders have begun to develop cross-system afterschool program standards across various settings. Cross-system standards allow states or localities to assess quality in school-age care programs that take place in schools, child care centers, and other settings and that are funded and administered by different state entities. For promising examples of state and local efforts to develop cross-system afterschool standards, see the text box on page 32.



## National AfterSchool Association Standards for Quality School-Age Care

As leaders in many states and communities define standards that meet their needs and circumstances, they seek to build on those developed by national groups. The National AfterSchool Association Standards for Quality School-Age Care, used for more than a decade, are one set of standards that often inform such quality. The NAA standards form the foundation for a self-assessment and accreditation system that attempts to recognize high-quality afterschool programs. According to NAA, components essential for quality afterschool programs can be grouped in five categories.

1. **Positive Human Relationships.** A program should foster consistent and caring relationships and positive interactions between young people and adults and between young people and their peers. Programs should have a ratio of adults to youth of no higher than 1:15.
2. **Effective Programming.** A program should offer constructive and well-planned schedules and activities that are tailored to the needs and interests of parents, youth, and their peers. A flexible daily schedule offers young people security, independence, and choices among various youth-centered and age-appropriate activities. The activities should promote numerous academic and youth development outcomes, including learning to work as part of a team and developing leadership skills.
3. **Appropriate Environment.** An appropriate environment for school-age care has sufficient and clean space for indoor and outdoor activities, attractive and welcoming décor, appropriate space, and supplies and furnishings to support the program's activities. Specifically, NAA encourages programs to have computer stations, an area with tables and chairs for homework, and an ample supply of books, games, art supplies, and outdoor play equipment. The standards should require regular safety checks of indoor and outdoor settings.
4. **Strong Partnerships with Young People, Families, Schools, and Communities.** Active relationships with all stakeholders in the program are an important component of an effective afterschool program. Such programs can pursue several strategies to develop strong partnerships, including establishing a youth advisory group, setting up regular parent meetings, connecting with participants' teachers, and reaching out to community institutions, such as colleges, hospitals, museums, and local businesses.
5. **Effective Staff and Administration.** A program should have sufficient funding, committed and well-trained staff and volunteers, frequent and efficient staff meetings, and ongoing training opportunities. According to NAA, programs should also have clear policies on health, security, and expectations for parents that are disseminated to staff, families, and young people in a handbook. Providers should also post rules and policies for young people at program locations.

Source: Adapted from National Institute on Out-of-School Time, "Section Two: Understanding Standards of Quality," in *Making an Impact on Out-of-School Time* (Wellesley, Mass.: National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2000).



## Cross-System Afterschool Standards

The following are examples of state and local efforts to develop cross-system afterschool quality standards:<sup>23</sup>

In **Louisiana**, the Department of Education and Department of Social Services have signed an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop new regulations for programs funded by social services (TANF), child care, education, and other state resources. The MOU will help facilitate discussions around program licensing regulations and quality standards for all state-supported afterschool programs.

The **North Carolina** Center for Afterschool Programs drafted core principles for high-quality afterschool programs to take to communities for feedback and buy-in. Through four regional summits, a range of stakeholders across the state provided their input on the draft elements. The principles were then shared with state policymakers and other stakeholders at a statewide afterschool summit in April 2004. State leaders are seeking strategies to use the principles to inform cross-system standards that will guide quality for all afterschool programs. For more information, see <http://www.nccap.org>.

In fall 2004, the **Kansas** Enrichment Network, with the Kansas Children's Campaign, released A Call for Quality Afterschool Programs in Kansas, which made a number of recommendations for state afterschool policy. Several of the recommendations highlight the need for systems coordination, such as aligning state agency/department systems for coordination around afterschool and youth development resources and creating standards, training, and leadership credentialing for afterschool professionals. The Kansas Enrichment Network, which counts all relevant state agencies among its key partners, is working to implement these recommendations. For more information, see [http://raven.cc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/~ken/ken\\_index.htm?KEY=4&PRIMARYKEY=4&TOPIC=HOME](http://raven.cc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/~ken/ken_index.htm?KEY=4&PRIMARYKEY=4&TOPIC=HOME).

The **Illinois** After-school Partnership, co-chaired by the State Board of Education and the Department of Human Services, has been working to reach consensus among a broad range of stakeholders on a set of outcome measures that can guide program quality across program settings and types. The effort is in response to one of 23 recommendations of the Illinois Afterschool Task Force Report of 2002. For more information, see <http://www.icvp.org/afterschool.asp>.

Localities across the country are engaged in similar efforts. When it comes to aligning standards with child care regulations, many cities provide experiences that can help inform policies and practices at the state level. Groups and national networks that have helped cities develop standards or other quality strategies include the following:

- The National Institute of Out-of-School Time built a learning network of afterschool leaders in more than 20 cities. For their experiences developing and implementing standards, see [http://www.niost.org/publications/cross\\_cities\\_brief6.pdf](http://www.niost.org/publications/cross_cities_brief6.pdf).
- The Forum for Youth Investment documented experiences of Baltimore, Kansas City, and San Francisco as part of the Greater Resources for Afterschool Program-ming project. See <http://www.forumfyi.org/Files/GRASPCmmnGrnd.pdf>.
- The National League of Cities has supported more than 14 cities in their quest to enhance afterschool programs by utilizing municipal leadership to help bridge in- and out-of-school time learning. For more information, see [http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program\\_areas/education/3795.cfm](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program_areas/education/3795.cfm).



<sup>23</sup> Examples from Afterschool Investments Project. *Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations*. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Bureau, forthcoming.)

### Issues to Consider

- Most efforts to develop quality standards are most effective when coupled with supports to help programs meet quality benchmarks. For example, states or localities might provide financial incentives (capacity-building grants, higher subsidy reimbursement) or training and technical assistance to help programs that are not financially able to meet high-quality standards.
- Aligning program standards that have their roots in different fields, such as child care and education, may be challenging, but can help states and localities to coordinate multiple resources. In addition to promoting program accountability, cross-system quality strategies can strengthen the overall system of out-of-school time care. State afterschool networks can play a major role in facilitating and hosting policy discussions about how to improve quality across the range of the systems that sponsor afterschool programs.
- Alignment between child care licensing standards and other program standards may be a first step in promoting a cross-system approach to improving afterschool program quality. See Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations see <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool> for more information.







## Conclusion

Facing limited resources for afterschool programs, states and localities may consider the best uses of funds to support improved access to afterschool and to improve the quality of ongoing programs. The promising practices and considerations highlighted in this brief can inform policy and funding choices that support increased access to and improved quality of afterschool programs held in various settings.

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## Key Resources

General resources are listed below, followed by resources aimed at specific types of policymakers (city leaders, governors, etc.) and those addressing the various types of policy strategies outlined in this brief.

### General Resources

Afterschool Investments Project. National Afterschool Profile. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2005. Available at <http://nccic.org/afterschool/nationprofile.pdf>.

Afterschool Investments Project. State Afterschool Profile Series. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2004. Available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool/statep.html>.

Bodilly, Susan, and Megan K. Beckett. Making Out-of-School-Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2005. Available at [http://rand.org/publications/RB/RB9108/RAND\\_RB9108.pdf](http://rand.org/publications/RB/RB9108/RAND_RB9108.pdf).

The Community Guide to Helping America's Youth, available at <http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov>.

Duffett, Ann, and Jean Johnson. All Work and No Play: Listening to What KIDS and PARENTS Really Want from Out-of-School Time. New York, N.Y.: Public Agenda, 2004. Available at [http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research\\_reports\\_details.cfm?list=2](http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=2).

National Child Care Information Center Web site: <http://nccic.org>.

National Institute on Out-of-School Time. Making the Case: A Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time. Wellesley, Mass.: National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2005. Available at [http://www.niost.org/publications/Factsheet\\_2005.pdf](http://www.niost.org/publications/Factsheet_2005.pdf).

Padgette, Heather Clapp. Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Resources for Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, 2003. Available at <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/FundingGuide2003.pdf>.

The Finance Project. Out-of-School Time Strategy Brief Series. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project. Available at <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/OST/ostfinancing.asp>.

### By Type of Policymaker

#### Governors

The National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices. Governor's Guide to Extended Learning Opportunities. Available at <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0509GOVGUIDEELLO.PDF>.

#### City Leaders

Hall, Georgia, and Brooke Harvey. Building and Sustaining Citywide Afterschool Initiatives: Experiences of the Cross-Cities Network Citywide Afterschool Initiatives. Wellesley, Mass.: National Institute of Out-of-School Time, November 2002. Available at [http://www.niost.org/publications/cross\\_cities\\_brief8.pdf](http://www.niost.org/publications/cross_cities_brief8.pdf).

National League of Cities. The Afterschool Hours: A New Focus for America's Cities: A Report of the Municipal Leadership Project. Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education and Families, 2005. Available at <http://www.nlc.org/content/Files/IYEF-Lessons%20Learned%20Afterschool.pdf>.



Tolman, Jean, et al. Moving an Afterschool Agenda: Lessons and Challenges Across Cities. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment. Available at <http://www.forumfyi.org/Files/GRASPCmmnGrnd.pdf>.

### **School Boards**

National School Boards Association. Building and Sustaining After-School Programs: Successful Practices in School Board Leadership. Washington, D.C.: National School Board Association, 2005. Available at <http://www.nsba.org/site/docs/34300/34244.pdf>.

### **By Type of Strategy**

#### **Afterschool System-Building**

Afterschool Investments Project. Creating a Vision for Afterschool Partnerships. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2004. Available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool/visioning-tool.pdf>.

Afterschool Investments Project. CCDF and 21CCLC: State Efforts to Facilitate Coordination for Afterschool Programs. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2004. Available at <http://nccic.org/afterschool/CCDF21CCLC.pdf>.

Afterschool Investments Project. If You Build It, They Will Come: A Governance Guide for Afterschool Networks. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2005. Available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>.

Deich, Sharon. A Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships for Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, January 2001. Available at <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/ostpartnershipguide.pdf>.

Halpern, Robert. The Challenge of System-Building in the After-School Field: Lessons from Experience. Wellesley, Mass.: National Institute on Out-of-School Time, October 2003. Available at <http://www.niost.org/about/HalpernSystemsShort.pdf>.

#### **Promoting Access to Afterschool Programs**

Afterschool Investments Project. Estimating Supply and Demand for Afterschool Programs: A Tool for State and Local Policymakers, Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2004. Available at <http://nccic.org/afterschool/SupplyDemand.pdf>.

Child Care Aware Web site: <http://www.childcareaware.org>.

Oulette, Mark. Assessing Local Afterschool Resources and Needs. Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities. Available at <http://www.nlc.org/content/Files/IYEF-AS-City%20Strategies%20Paper.pdf>.

National Child Care Information Center. State Administrative Rules and Policies Manuals for Child Care. Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2005. Available at <http://nccic.org/poptopics/stateadminrules.html>.



### **Promoting Quality Programs**

Afterschool Investments Project. Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations. Washington, D.C.: Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, 2005. Available at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>.

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. A Framework for Effective After-school Programs. Flint, Mich., 2005: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. [http://www.publicengagement.com/Framework/images/framework\\_61505.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.com/Framework/images/framework_61505.pdf).

Morgan, Gwen, and Brooke Harvey. New Perspectives on Compensation Strategies for the Out-of-School Time Workforce. Wellesley, Mass.: National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2002. Available at <http://www.wcwoonline.org/title368.html>.

National Afterschool Association Program Standards. Available at <http://www.naaweb.org/>.



**Contact us:**

**email** [afterschool@financeproject.org](mailto:afterschool@financeproject.org)

**web** [www.nccic.org/afterschool](http://www.nccic.org/afterschool)

**The Finance Project**

1401 New York Ave., NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

**phone** 202 628 4200

**web** [www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org)

**National Governors Association**

Center for Best Practices

444 North Capitol, NW

Washington, DC 20001-1512

**phone** 202 624 5300

**web** [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
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Child Care Bureau

