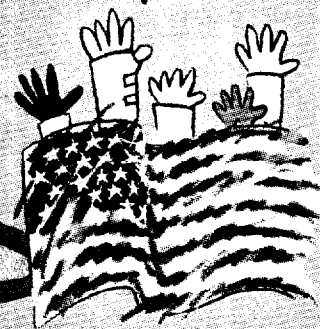


Parents Speak Out for America's Children

Report of the Surgeon General's Conference

HEALTHY CHILDREN



Ready to Learn

The Critical Role
of Parents

DG-D242B

JUN 6 1995

N.L.M.





If you would like more information on the "Healthy Children Ready to Learn" Initiative, the Conference on "Healthy Children Ready to Learn: The Critical Role of Parents," or the six National Education Goals, please contact one of the following agencies:



**Department of Health
and Human Services**
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 245-6445

Office of the Surgeon General
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 245-7163



Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-3000



Department of Agriculture
14th St. & Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 720-2791

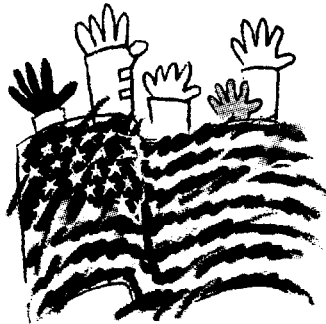
National Governors' Association
444 N. Capitol St., N.W.
Suite 250
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 624-5300



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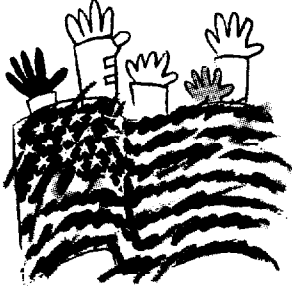
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**The Critical Role
of Parents**

February 9-12, 1992

FEDERAL COSPONSORS

HEALTHY CHILDREN



Ready to Learn

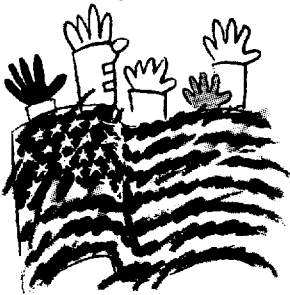
- ★ **Administration for Children and Families**, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- ★ **Food and Nutrition Service**, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- ★ **Office of Elementary and Secondary Education**, U.S. Department of Education
- ★ **Health Care Financing Administration**, Department of Health and Human Services
 - ★ Intergovernmental Affairs Office
- ★ **U.S. Public Health Service**, Department of Health and Human Services
 - ★ Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration
 - Office for Substance Abuse Prevention*
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- ★ Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning
- ★ American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- ★ American Academy of Pediatrics
- ★ American Association of Public Health Dentistry
- ★ American Association of School Health
- ★ American Dental Association
- ★ American Dietetic Association
- ★ American Medical Association
- ★ American Nurses' Association
- ★ American Public Health Association
- ★ American Public Welfare Association
- ★ American Red Cross
- ★ American School Food Service Association
- ★ Association for the Care of Children's Health
- ★ Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
- ★ Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
- ★ Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
- ★ Child Welfare League of America, Inc.
- ★ Children's Action Network
- ★ Federation for Children with Special Needs
- ★ General Federation of Women's Clubs
- ★ Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
- ★ Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies Coalition
- ★ Home and School Institute
- ★ Institute for Educational Leadership
- ★ La Leche League International
- ★ March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation
- ★ National Association of Community Health Centers, Inc.
- ★ National Association of Elementary School Principals
- ★ National Association of Pediatric Nurse Associates and Practitioners
- ★ National Association of Social Workers
- ★ National Association of WIC Directors
- ★ National Center for Clinical Infant Programs
- ★ National Center for Educational Statistics
- ★ National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality
- ★ National Congress of American Indians
- ★ National Dental Association
- ★ National Head Start Association
- ★ National Health/Education Consortium
- ★ National Mental Health Association
- ★ National Parent Network on Disabilities
- ★ National Parent-Teachers Association
- ★ National SAFE KIDS Campaign
- ★ National Urban League
- ★ Parent Action
- ★ Parents as Teachers National Center
- ★ Society for Nutrition Education
- ★ United Way of America

Dedication

HEALTHY CHILDREN



--- Ready to Learn ---

**The Critical Role
of Parents**

There are 64 million children in this country. When I was appointed to be Surgeon General, I vowed to speak for all of them—whether rich or poor, healthy or sick, whatever their race or ethnic background. To this end, nearly 2 years ago, I established the Healthy Children Ready to Learn Initiative. This Initiative, which focuses on the health aspects of school readiness, was born out of the President’s first National Education Goal, that “By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.”

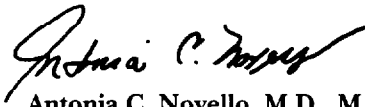
As part of this Initiative, the Conference on Healthy Children Ready to Learn: The Critical Role of Parents was held here in Washington, DC, in February 1992. More than 700 people attended—health professionals and administrators, teachers, Government officials, and others involved in the health and well-being of our Nation’s young people—but our guests of honor for this Conference were the approximately 225 parents who attended from each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories.

Over the course of those 3 days, our time was spent listening to and learning from one another. We learned what worked; we were told what didn’t. The Conference was unique in that the parents spoke from their hearts. They raised a collective voice that said, in effect, “As parents, we must stand up for our children and our families and see that our needs are met. We must do so with dignity, and we must demand respect when others try to rob us of our dignity.” Parents who never knew that they could speak for others eloquently articulated the needs of children and families. Although these parents came to our Conference from all parts of the country and from all walks of life, they came with the same mission: to improve the lives of the children and the families of this country.

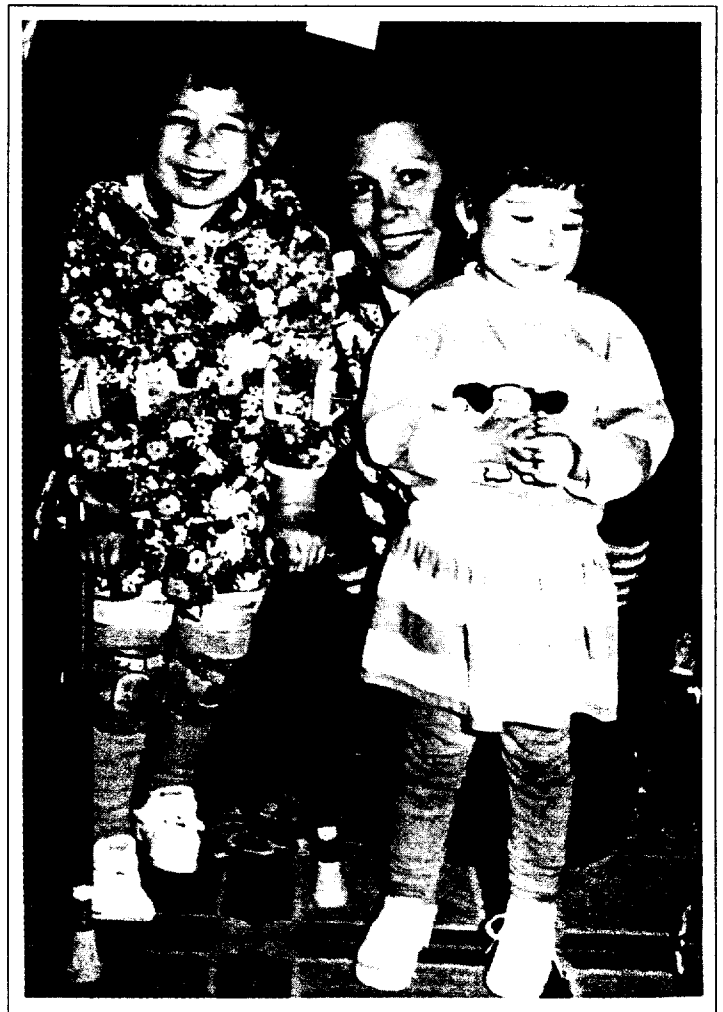
This proceedings document is dedicated to those parents who attended our Conference. We are proud of them and inspired by them. It is our sincere hope that what we learned in those 3 days is reflected honestly in these pages. This document will serve as a “guide” for the rest of us and as an inspiration to do what was asked. As I stated at the close of our Conference, “This Conference may be ending, but what we have accomplished is the beginning of a way of acting and thinking with families in mind.”

We must care for our children. That responsibility does not belong to only one individual or entity or Government agency. What we learned at this Conference is that we are all responsible for all of the children. We must become advocates for one another and share our strengths. When President Bush outlined his six National Education Goals, he envisioned an America where our children can compete on an international level. He knew that the children of today are the explorers, the writers, the teachers, and the inventors of tomorrow. If we invest in their future today, we can ensure their growth and advancement for tomorrow.

As Surgeon General, I will speak for you, the families of America. My voice and my office are at your service. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your thoughts, your energies, and your heartfelt spirit.



Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H.
Surgeon General



Contents

Dedication	iv
Executive Summary	1
Chapter 1 ★ Introduction	13
Chapter 2 ★ Charge to the Conference, Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., <i>Surgeon General</i>	19
Chapter 3 ★ Parents Speak Out: Summary of Parent Work Groups	27
National Consensus	30
Findings at a Glance	30
Awareness of and Entry into Health, Education, and Social Service Systems	32
Participation in Health, Education, and Social Service Systems	36
Transitions Through Health, Education, and Social Service Systems	39
Programs That Parents Grade A+	43
Regional Issues	44
Region 1	44
Region 2	46
Region 3	48
Region 4	50
Region 5	52
Region 6	54
Region 7	56
Region 8	58
Regions 9 and 10	60
Native American Families	62
Migrant Families	64
Chapter 4 ★ Presentation of Findings	67
Parent Representatives	68
Awareness of and Entry into Health, Education, and Social Service Systems Sherlita Reeves, <i>Parent Delegate from Arkansas</i>	68
Participation in Health, Education, and Social Service Systems Ellie Valdez-Honeyman, <i>Parent Delegate from Colorado</i>	70
Transitions Through Health, Education, and Social Service Systems Larry Bell, <i>Parent Delegate from Delaware</i>	73
Responder Panel	78
James O. Mason, M.D., <i>Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</i>	78

John T. MacDonald, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education	80
Catherine Bertini, Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture	82
Wade Horn, Ph.D., Commissioner, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	86
Christine Nye, Director, Medicaid Bureau, Health Care Financing Administration	88
Lou Enoff, Principal Deputy Administrator, Social Security Administration	90
<hr/>	
Chapter 5 ★ Commitment of Our Leaders	93
George H. Bush, President of the United States	94
Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., Secretary of Health and Human Services	97
Edward Madigan, Secretary of Agriculture	100
Lamar Alexander, Secretary of Education	103
Roger B. Porter, Ph.D., Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy	108
<hr/>	
Chapter 6 ★ Panel Presentations	111
Panel 1A: Early Childhood Issues That Affect School Readiness and Health	112
Panel 1B: Helping Families Get Services: Some New Approaches	115
Panel 2A: Healthy Children Ready to Learn: What Are the Roles of Parents, Educators, Health Professionals, and the Community?	116
Panel 2B: Special Issues That Impact Children and Families: Substance Abuse, HIV, and Violence	120
Panel 3A: Disabilities	122
Panel 3B: Exploring Comprehensive Health and Education Models for Young Children	125
Panel 4A: Children with Special Health Care Needs: Lessons Learned	127
Panel 4B: Parenting: The Critical Role	130
Panel 5A: Childcare: Two Perspectives	134
Panel 5B: Healthy Start, Head Start, Even Start, and WIC: Integrating Health, Education, and Social Service Programs	136
<hr/>	
Chapter 7 ★ Closing Remarks, Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Surgeon General	139
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Appendix A: Conference Participants	A-1
Appendix B: Advisory Group	B-1
Appendix C: Planning Committee	C-1
Appendix D: Agenda at a Glance	D-1
Appendix E: Facilitators and Recorders	E-1
Appendix F: Workshops	F-1
Appendix G: Exhibits	G-1
Appendix H: Entertainment	H-1