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CLINTON ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICA'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN

"Learning begins in the first days of life. Scientists are now discovering how young children develop emotionally and intellectually from their very first days, and how important it is for parents to begin immediately talking, singing, even reading to their infants.... We already know we should start teaching children before they start school."

-- President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997

Recent scientific research has demonstrated that experiences during the earliest years of life -- before children reach school age -- are critical to their cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Nurturing and stimulating children in the first years of life actually help their brains develop and prepare them for the challenges of school and later life. President Clinton is committed to giving America's children the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential by investing in research, supporting parents and caregivers, and strengthening programs that provide early intervention to disadvantaged families.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Supported Over 90% of all Children's Research. In fiscal year 1995, the federal government spent an estimated \$2 billion on research and development directly related to children and youth -- over 90% of all funding of children's research. Spending on children's health research at The National Institutes of Health (NIH) increased 25% between 1993 and 1997, and this year NIH will spend \$904 million on research on young children alone. This research has contributed to the recent advances in understanding early learning and language development.

Increased participation in WIC program. WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program provides nutrition packages, nutrition education, and health referrals to low-income pregnant women, infants, and children. Over the past four years participation has expanded by 1.7 million from 5.7 to 7.4 million women, infants, and children. The increase in the President's budget proposal fulfills his commitment to achieving full participation in WIC by the end of 1998. Research shows that WIC prenatal services save Medicaid much more than they cost by reducing health care expenses in the first 60 days after birth.

Raised Childhood Immunization Rates to an All-Time High. The President's Childhood Immunization Initiative focuses on five areas: 1) improving the quality and quantity of vaccination delivery services; 2) reducing vaccine costs for parents; 3) increasing community participation, education and partnerships; 4) improving systems to monitor diseases and vaccinations; and 5) improving vaccines and vaccine use. This initiative has achieved notable

success. In 1995, 75% of two-year olds were fully immunized -- an historic high. Funding for childhood immunization has doubled since fiscal year 1993.

Protected the Medicaid Guarantee for 9 Million Children Under 6 Years Old. This Administration has protected and, preserved -- and now will improve on -- the guarantee of Medicaid coverage for 36 million Americans, including 9 million children under the age of 6. In 1995, the President vetoed the Republican Medicaid block grant proposal that would have ended the guarantee of coverage for up to 4 million children by 2002. At the same time, the President worked with states by granting 15 comprehensive Medicaid waivers and approving many more state plan amendments that improve and expand coverage for children.

Seeks to Extend Health Coverage to Up to 5 Million Children. Although this Administration has made great strides in protecting the health of America's neediest children, there is still much to be done. In 1995, more than 10 million American children, 80% of whom have working parents, had no health insurance. The President's budget takes three important steps to address the problem of children who lack health insurance coverage:

- 1) Provides annual grants to states to cover health insurance premiums for families of workers who are in-between jobs;
- 2) Utilizes state partnership grants to help working families who are not eligible for Medicaid to purchase private insurance for their children; and
- 3) Expands Medicaid coverage by allowing states to continue Medicaid coverage for up to one year even if family income changes, intensifying outreach to children who are currently eligible but not enrolled, and continuing current law expansions of coverage to reach poor children between the ages of 13 and 18.

Fighting Pediatric AIDS. In 1994, the National Institutes of Health released new research showing that the use of the drug AZT by HIV-infected pregnant women can reduce the risk of transmission from mother to child by two-thirds. In response, the Food and Drug Administration quickly approved changes in labeling indications for AZT to include HIV-infected pregnant women and, in 1995, the Centers for Disease Control began recommending routine HIV counseling and voluntary HIV testing for all pregnant women. In addition, the President has consistently supported investment through Title IV of the Ryan White CARE Act, which provides grants for coordinated HIV services and access to research for children, women and families. Since 1994, \$113 million has been appropriated under Title IV, with 59 organizations in 26 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia receiving support.

Protecting Mothers and Children. Due to the Clinton Administration's comprehensive strategy to increase access to prenatal care, the preliminary estimate for the U.S. infant mortality rate (the rate at which babies die before their first birthday) is at an historic low of less than 8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1995, and the proportion of mothers getting early prenatal care is at a record high of 81%. In addition, the President spearheaded legislation requiring insurance companies to cover at least 48 hour hospital stays following childbirth. In 1970, the average length of stay for an uncomplicated delivery was four days, but by 1992 it had declined to two days. This legislation ensures that mothers and babies do not leave the hospital before they and their doctors decide they are ready. The Administration is ensuring that the health needs of mothers and

children are met by providing over \$1 billion in FY 97 for Title V Maternal and Child Health Programs. The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, one of the Title V programs, serves approximately 17 million women, infants and children, in partnership with states. In addition, Title V programs provide comprehensive care for children with special health needs, meet nutritional and development needs of mothers and children and help reduce infant mortality.

Preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The Clinton Administration launched the Back to Sleep public education campaign to send the message to parents and health professionals that putting babies to sleep on their backs can reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Largely as a result of this campaign, SIDS deaths dropped by 30% between 1992 and 1995.

PROMOTING EARLY LEARNING

Increased participation in Head Start, created Early Head Start for 0-3 year olds, and improved program quality. For more than thirty years, Head Start has been one of our nation's best investments. President Clinton has made improving and expanding Head Start a priority because Head Start ensures that low-income children start school ready to learn. Over the past five years, funding for the program has increased by 80%, and in fiscal year 1997 Head Start will serve 800,000 low-income children five years old and younger. Initiated in 1994, there are now 143 *Early Head Start* programs across the country, expanding the proven benefits of Head Start to low-income families with children under three. Over the last three years, the Clinton Administration has also invested significantly in improving program quality and providing local programs with the resources they need to attract and retain high quality teachers. The President's 1998 budget proposal provides a \$324 million increase in Head Start's budget so that it will remain on course to serve 1 million children by 2002.

Improved Support for Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Infants and Families Program supports the continuing efforts of states to implement high quality statewide early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Over the past four years, funding for the program has increased by 48% or \$102.5 million. During the same period, the number of children served increased by 21.5%. An estimated 191,000 children will be served in fiscal year 1998.

Enhanced Family Literacy Program. Even Start Family Literacy is a family-focused grant program to improve the educational opportunities for children and their parents in low-income areas by integrating family literacy activities, including early childhood education, adult education, and parenting education. Since 1993, funding for Even Start has increased by over 40% to support programs in every state and the District of Columbia.

Providing Funding for Parent Resource Centers in 42 States. In addition to involving parents in the development of state and local education plans, the President's Goals 2000 program provides funding to establish parent resource centers that help parents learn how to help their children meet high standards. The centers provide training, distribute resource materials, and support a variety of programs that strengthen family involvement in education. In fiscal year 1997, funding is available for support centers in 42 states, 14 more than in 1996.

Promoting Parents as First Teachers. The President's America Reads Challenge, a campaign to ensure that every child can read well by the end of the third grade, includes Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants to fund proven local, regional and national programs that provide assistance to parents to help their children become successful readers. The grants can be used to expand successful programs such as the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) and the Parents as First Teachers (PAT) program. They will also fund national and regional networks to share information on how parents can help children to read.

IMPROVING CHILD CARE

Increased Child Care Funding. Since 1993 federal funding for child care has increased by \$1 billion, providing services for over 660,000 children -- 65% of whom are under 5 years of age. The newly established Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) has made available \$2.9 billion to states. The new fund, authorized and expanded by the new welfare law, will assist low-income families working their way off welfare to obtain child care so they can work or attend school.

Improved Child Care in Public Housing. The Early Childhood Development Program helps to provide quality child care for families living in public housing communities, as well as families who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. The program allows parents or guardians who live in public housing to get and keep jobs by ensuring that their children are cared for. In 1996, \$21 million was awarded to public housing sites across the country -- three times more than in 1994.

Providing High Quality Child Care for Military Families. Under the Clinton Administration, the Department of Defense has made important strides to improve the quality of child care for the children of the men and women who serve our country. Since 1992, the number of military child care facilities that are accredited by the independent National Association for the Education of Young Children has risen from 55 to 466. Currently, 72% of military child care programs are accredited, as compared to only 7% of other child care facilities nationwide.

SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT

Controlling Childhood Lead Poisoning. The Administration has launched a major new effort to control childhood lead poisoning. The program requires landlords and sellers of older homes to notify prospective tenants and buyers about lead-based paint hazards, provides grants to states to control lead-based paint hazards in low-income privately-owned homes, and offers technical assistance to ensure that lead hazard control work is done safely and efficiently. The 1997 interim report evaluating the HUD Lead-Based Point Hazard Control grant program shows that median dust levels on interior window sills were reduced by 85 %. In addition, the number of children suffering from lead poisoning dropped from 1.7 million in the late 1980s to about 930,000 in the mid-1990s.

Protecting Our Children's Environment. Because their bodies are still developing, children are among the most vulnerable to pollution in the air, water and soil. In 1995, the Clinton Administration began requiring that children receive first consideration when EPA assesses

environmental hazards and sets public health standards. In addition, the Clinton Administration has strengthened environmental protections for children by: proposing to strengthen air quality standards for soot and smog to protect children from air pollution, particularly those with asthma; speeding the clean-up of two-thirds of the nation's toxic waste sites to protect the 10 million children under age 12 who live within four miles of a toxic waste dump; strengthening drinking water protections to ensure that drinking water is free of microbial contaminants; expanding families' right to know about environmental health risks that infants and children face to help them make informed decisions about their children's exposure to these risks; issuing advisories about contaminated fish so parents can protect children from cancer-causing PCBs; and educating parents about the effects of second-hand smoke, which annually results in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations of infants and children under 18 months of age.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Passed Family and Medical Leave. The President fought for the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) that allows workers to take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave to care for a newborn or adopted child, to attend to their own serious health needs, or to care for a seriously ill parent, child or spouse. In June 1996, President Clinton proposed expanding FMLA to allow workers to take up to 24 unpaid hours off each year for school and early childhood education activities, routine family medical care, and additional activities related to caring for an elderly relative. Last week, the President asked Federal agencies to implement his expanded leave policy immediately for Federal workers.

Improved Children's Television. The President announced a breakthrough agreement with the media and entertainment industry to develop a television ratings system to enable parents to protect their children from violence and adult content. In addition, the Administration has given parents greater control over what their children watch on television by requiring the installation of anti-violence screening chips ("V-chips") in all new televisions.

Reducing Child Abuse and Domestic Violence. The Administration created the Safe Streets/Safe Kids initiative to make community responses to child abuse and neglect more comprehensive and coordinated in an effort to break the cycle of early childhood victimization and later delinquency. The Administration also put in place a nurse home visitation program for low-income first-time mothers. Studies have shown that home visitation programs are successful -- for example, reducing cigarette smoking during pregnancy by 25% and reducing mistreatment of children from birth to age 2 by 80 percent. The Clinton Administration has also taken significant steps to reduce domestic violence. For example, the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant Program helps law enforcement agencies, courts community organizations and businesses to work toward early identification, intervention and prevention of domestic violence and child victimization in rural areas. Finally, the President is committed to finding stable and permanent homes for children who cannot remain safely at home. As a result, the Administration announced Adoption 2002, a plan to double the number of children adopted or placed in permanent homes each year by the year 2002.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING: WHAT NEW RESEARCH ON THE BRAIN TELLS US ABOUT OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN

"Learning begins in the first days of life. Scientists are now discovering how young children develop emotionally and intellectually from their very first days, and how important it is for parents to begin immediately talking, singing, even reading to their infants....We already know we should start teaching children before they start school."

--President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997

Today, the President and First Lady are hosting *The White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*. The day-long conference highlights new scientific findings on brain development in very young children and point to the importance of children's earliest experiences in helping them get off to a strong and healthy start.

Applying New Findings on Brain Development in the Earliest Years. New scientific research shows that experiences after birth -- particularly in the first three years of life -- have a dramatic impact on brain development. That means that nurturing, talking to, singing to and reading to our youngest children will improve their ability to learn and develop throughout their lives. The White House Conference will focus on the practical applications of the latest scientific research on the brain, particularly for parents and caregivers. The conference will also be a call to action to all members of society -- including the health, business, media and faith communities, child care providers and government -- to use this information to strengthen America's families.

Clinton Administration Commitment to Young Children. This conference builds on the Clinton Administration's investment in children and families. The Administration has invested heavily in research to help us better understand the importance of the first few years of life to child development and learning. Between 1993 and 1997, funding for NIH children's research increased 25%, from \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion.

President Clinton has also strengthened efforts to support families with young children. To take just a few examples, the Administration raised funding for Head Start -- providing low-income children and their families with comprehensive education, health services, and nutrition -- by 43% over the last four years and created the Early Head Start program to support families with children ages zero to three. The President's FY 1998 Budget further increases participation to reach 122,000 more children in FY 1998 than when he took office. The Administration also dramatically increased participation in the WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program, providing 7.4 million pregnant women, infants, and children with nutrition packages and information and health referrals -- 1.7 million more than when President Clinton took office. And his FY 1998 Budget would achieve his goal of full participation in the WIC program by the end of FY 1998.

Conference Program and Participants. During the morning session of the conference, leading researchers and child development experts will discuss the new research and what it means for parents and caregivers. The panelists for this session are: Dr. David Hamburg, Carnegie Corporation of New York (moderator); Dr. Carla Shatz, University of California, Berkeley; Dr. Donald Cohen, Yale Child Study Center; Dr. Patricia Kuhl, University of Washington; Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University; and Dr. Deborah Phillips, National Research Council. The afternoon session will highlight model community efforts to support parents and enhance early childhood development. The panelists include: Avance Family Support and Education Program, San Antonio, TX; the CEO and Chairman of the Board, The Kellogg Company, Battle Creek Michigan; and Ounce of Prevention, Chicago, IL.

Broad Participation Across the Country. The morning session of the conference will be broadcast by satellite to over 80 locations across the country. The satellite conferences will be co-hosted by regional federal agencies, local officials, and children's and other organizations.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING
April 17, 1997

THE PRESIDENT & MRS. CLINTON
THE VICE PRESIDENT & MRS. GORE

Dr. John Lawrence Aber
Director, National Center for Children in Poverty

Dr. Duane F. Alexander
Director, National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

Ms. Sheila Pegues Amaning
Co-Chair, Early Childhood PTA

Ms. Carolyn Becraft
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel Support, Families
and Education

Ms. Helen Benham
Scholastic, Inc.

Mrs. Carol Berman
Zero to Three National Center

Ms. Julie Bernas-Pierce
Blind Babies Foundation

Hon. Sheldon C. Bilchik
Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention
Department of Justice

Ms. Barbara "Bobbi" Blok
Executive Director, Washington Child Development Council

Dr. Thomas Berry Brazelton
Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School

Mr. David V.B. Britt
President & CEO, Children's Television Workshop

Mr. James Larry Brown
Director, Center on Hunger, Poverty & Nutrition Policy, Tufts University

Dr. John Bruer
President, James S. McConnell Foundation

Mr. Shannon Romandos Bryant
Student Team Leader, Jumpstart

Mr. Patrick Butler
Vice President, The Washington Post Company

Hon. Jane L. Campbell
Cuyahoga County Commissioner

Rev. (Dr.) Joan Brown Campbell
General Secretary, National Council of Churches

Ms. Joy Carlson
Director, Children's Environmental Health Network

Hon. (Gov.) Lawton M. Chiles
Governor of Florida

Dr. Harry T. Chugani
Director, PET Center, Children's Hospital of Michigan

Dr. Donald Cohen
Director, Yale University Child Study Center

Dr. Jordan J. Cohen
President, Academy of American Medical Colleges

- Ms. Janice Cox**
President, Georgia State Parent Teacher Association
- Mr. Dwayne Crompton**
Executive Director, KCMC-Early Child Development Corporation
- Ms. Judsen Culbreth**
Editor-in-Chief, Working Mother
- Ms. Sharon Darling**
President, National Center for Family Literacy
- Dr. Ezra C. Davidson**
Professor & Chairman, Dept. of OBGYN, Charles R. Drew University
of Medicine & Science
- Dr. Karen Davis**
President, The Commonwealth Fund
- Hon. (Rep.) Rosa DeLauro**
D/Connecticut
- Ms. Barbara Dellinger**
Director for Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Head Start
- Ms. Deborah Eaton**
President, National Association for Family Child Care
- Ms. Marian Wright Edelman**
President, Children's Defense Fund
- Ms. Isela Flores**
- Ms. Yolie Flores Aguilar**
Los Angeles, CA
- Dr. Henry W. Foster**
Acting President, Meharry Medical College
- Ms. Ellen Galinsky**
Co-President, Family & Work Institute
- Hon. (Dr.) John H. Gibbons**
Director, Office of Science & Technology Policy
- Ms. Ellen Gilbert**
International Creative Management
- Hon. Daniel Glickman**
Secretary of Agriculture
- Mrs. Katharine Graham**
Chairman of the Board, The Washington Post Company
- Ms. Sarah Greene**
Chief Executive Officer, National Head Start Association, Partnership Project
- Dr. Stanley Greenspan**
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry & Pediatrics, George Washington Medical School
- Ms. Elinor Guggenheimer**
Child Care Action Campaign
- Dr. Megan Gunnar**
University of Minnesota
- Ms. Margaret Hale**
Executive Director, West Virginia Kids Count
- Ms. Martha D. Haley**
Director, Public Affairs, Lifetime Television
- Dr. David Alan Hamburg**
President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

3.

Dr. Robert E. Hannemann
President, American Academy of Pediatrics

Hon. (Sen.) Thomas R. Harkin
D/Iowa

Mr. Irving Harris
Chairman, The Harris Foundation

Mr. William Harris
KidsPAC, Head Start

Dr. Jane M. Healy
Author

Ms. Judith Nolte Heimer
Editor-in-Chief, American Baby Magazine

Mrs. Teresa Heinz
Chairman, Heinz Family Foundation

Ms. Harriet Meyer Horwitz
Executive Director, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Mr. Jeffrey Jacobs
President, Harpo Entertainment, Inc.

Ms. Eloise Jenks
President, National Association of WIC Directors

Ms. Judith Marie Jerald
Brattleboro, VT

Dr. Gloria Johnson-Powell
Judge Baker Children's Center

Ms. Judith E. Jones
Director, Free to Grow

Hon. Elena Kagan
Office of Domestic Policy, The White House

Dr. Elaine C. Kamarck
Office of the Vice President

Hon. (Sen.) Edward M. Kennedy
D/Massachusetts

Dr. Patricia Kuhl
Professor & Chair, Department of Speech & Hearing Sciences
University of Washington

Dr. J. Ronald Lally
Director, Center for Child & Family Studies, WestED

Dr. Philip J. Landrigan
Director, Office of Children's Environment Health, EPA

Mr. Arnold Langbo
Chairman of the Board & CEO, Kellogg Corporation

Mr. Ralph S. Larsen
Chairman and CEO, Johnson & Johnson

Dr. David M. Lawrence
CEO, Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program

Ms. Geraldine B. Laybourne
President, Disney/ABC Cable Networks

Ms. Dolores Leckey
Executive Director for the Secretariat, Catholic Conference

Dr. Arthur Leibowitz
Chief Medical Officer, AETNA US Healthcare

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

4.

Dr. Michael Levine
Program Officer, Carnegie Corporation of New York

Mr. David Liederman
Executive Director, Child Welfare League of America

Dr.Carolynn Lindeman
National President, Music Educators National Conference

Dr. Evelyn Gruss Lipper
Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, Cornell Medical Center

Ms. Melissa Ludtke
Author

Dr. Shirley M. Malcom
Director of Education, American Association for the Advancement of Science

Rear Admiral Larry R. Marsh
Bureau of Naval Personnel

Mr. Lawrence A. McAndrews
President & CEO, National Association of Children's Hospitals

Dr. Bruce McEwen
President, Society for Neuroscience, Rockefeller University

Ms. Gail McGovern
AT&T

Mr. Matthew Melmed
Executive Director, Zero to Three National Center for Infants

Hon. (Gov.) Robert J. Miller
Governor of Nevada

Dr. Evelyn K. Moore
Executive Director, National Black Child Development Institute

Dr. Herbert L. Needleman
University of Pittsburgh Medical School

Dr. David Olds
University of Colorado

Dr. Bruce Perry
Senior Fellow, CIVITAS Initiatives

Dr. Carol Brunson Phillips
Executive Director, Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition

Dr. Deborah Phillips
Director, Board on Children, Youth & Families, National Academy of Sciences

Dr. Bruce Ramirez
The Council for Exceptional Children

Mrs. Michele Singer Reiner
Castlerock Entertainment

Mr. Robert Reiner
Castlerock Entertainment

Ms. Barbara Reisman
Executive Director, Child Care Action Campaign

Mr. James J. Renier
Renier & Associates

Ms. Nan H. Rich
National President, National Council of Jewish Women

Dr. Julius Richmond
Professor of Health Policy, Emeritus, Harvard University Medical School

Mr. John E. Riggan
Chairman of the Board, National Association of Child Advocates

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

5.

Hon. Richard W. Riley
Secretary of Education

Ms. Geraldine Robinson
The Children's Museum

Dr. Gloria Rodriguez
President and CEO, Avance Family Support & Education Program

Ms. Susan Roman
Executive Director, American Libraries Association Services to Children

Hon. (Gov.) Roy R. Romer
Governor of Colorado

Mr. Edward F. Rover
Charles A. Dana Foundation

Ms. Esperanza Segura

Mr. Rudy Segura

Honorable Donna E. Shalala
Secretary of Health & Human Services

Dr. Carla J. Shatz
Professor of Neurobiology, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

Mr. Jack Shifrel
Community Advocate

Ms. Marilyn Smith
Executive Director, National Association for the Education of Young Children

Mr. Marshall Smith
Acting Deputy Secretary of Education

Mr. Richard M. Smith
Editor-in-Chief & President, Newsweek, Inc.

Dr. Mary Susan Stine
Section Chief of Developmental Medicine, DuPont Hospital for Children

Ms. Maria Gregory Taylor
Parent Education Specialist, Parents as Teachers Program

Ms. Inez Moore Tenenbaum
President, South Carolina Center for Family Policy

Ms. Ruth Tracy
Navajo Chapter Coordinator, Pilot Parents

Mr. Thomas Van Coverden
President and CEO, National Association of Community Health Centers

Dr. Harold Varmus
Director, National Institutes of Health

Hon. Melanne Verveer
Assistant to the President & Chief of Staff to the First Lady

Ms. Yasmina Vinci
Executive Director, National Association of Child Care Resource
and Referral Agencies

Mr. David Walker
Executive Director, North Carolina Partnership for Children

Ms. Claudia Wayne
Executive Director, National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce

Mr. Melvin Wearing
Chief of Police, City of New Haven

Dr. Betsy Weaver

President & CEO, Parent's Plus, Inc.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

6.

- Ms. Bernice S. Weissbourd**
President, Family Focus
- Dr. Miriam Westheimer**
Executive Director, HIPPY USA
- Dr. Clarissa Leister Willis**
Executive Director, Southern Early Childhood Association
- Ms. Mildred Winter**
Executive Director, Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc.
- Ms. Marti Worshtil**
College Park, MD
- Dr. Ernst L. Wynder**
President, American Health Foundation
- Dr. Edward Zigler**
Professor of Psychology, Yale University
- Dr. Barry Zuckerman**
Professor & Chairman of Pediatrics, Boston Medical Center

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 16, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: KRIS BALDERSTON

**SUBJECT: FINAL UPDATE ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD REGIONAL
SATELLITE SITES**

Attached is a near final list and map of the eighty-two (82) regional satellite sites for the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning which will be held on Thursday, April 17, 1997. (I say "near final" because we continue to get calls from state and local officials including Members of Congress who are planning to hold similar sessions. By Thursday morning, I am sure we will reach nearly 100 sites.) In just three weeks, the Regional Administrators from HHS, Education, USDA, EPA, and GSA set up sites in 36 states (OH, FL, and WI do not appear on the map) in every federal region of the country. As you review the materials, please note the following points:

- These are not just "conference-watching" sessions. In nearly every case, the local organizers have replicated the East Room program. They will watch the morning session via satellite and create their own panel sessions of local experts to discuss early childhood issues in the afternoon. Many plan to develop their own local action plans.
- Each of the satellite sites will distribute White House materials and collect the names of their participants so that we can send each of the attendees a final report. Most of the sites are planning to send the White House a 1-2 page summary of their own proceedings for inclusion in the White House document.
- There is genuine excitement in the regions about participating in this conference. The Regional Administrators note that the local respondents immediately jumped on the opportunity to participate and help organize it. Anecdotally, we have learned that 600 people are planning to attend the Phoenix conference, 300 in Kansas City, 350 in New York City, 200 in San Francisco, 150 in South Texas, and 250 in Philadelphia. In most cases organizers expect an average of approximately 100-150 participants. As you look through the sites, you will note that many of the satellite sessions are being held in hospitals, universities, high schools, and federal buildings.

Finally a special thanks should go to Laura Schwartz for answering a million technical questions from administrators throughout the country, Pat Lewis for answering their press inquiries, (Jay Wolf our Cabinet Affairs intern who spent countless hours inputting the information), and Eric Dodds, the White House Liaison at GSA, who is the main point of contact with the Regional Administrators. Also a thanks to HHS, DoEd, GSA, USDA, and EPA for contributing funds to put the program up on the satellite.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD	DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING APRIL 17, 1997
Boston University -Boston, MA (2 sites)	Illinois Institute of Technology - Chicago, IL
Boston Federal Executive Board - Boston, MA	University of Minnesota - St. Paul, MN
Lesley College - Cambridge, MA	Minnesota Extension Service - St. Paul MN
University of MA - Worcester, MA	Cincinnati Public Schools - Cincinnati, OH
Springfield Technical Community College - Springfield, MA	Indiana State Department of Health - Indianapolis, IA
Brown University - Providence, RI	University of Missouri - Kansas City, MO
University of Rhode Island - Kingston, RI	Epworth Family Learning Center - East Prairie, MO
University of Rhode Island - Providence, RI	Cooperating School Districts of St. Louis County - St. Louis, MO
Stamford Public Schools - Stamford, CT	St. Louis Community College - St. Louis, MO
Groton Public Schools - Groton, CT	Southwest Livingston County R-I School District - Ludlow, MO
New Haven Public Schools - New Haven, CT	Federal Aviation Administration - Kansas City, MO
University of Connecticut - Storrs, CT	Neosho R-V School District - Neosho, MO
University of Vermont - Burlington, VT	Missouri Department of Health - Independence, MO
NH Division of Children, Youth & Families - Concord, NH	Heartland Education Agency - Johnston, IA
University of Maine at Fort Kent - Fort Kent, ME	Child Care Resource and Referral - Des Moines, IA
University of Maine at Orono - Orono, ME	Iowa Pilot Parents Program - Ft. Dodge, IA
Manhattan Borough Community College - New York, NY	Cowles Elementary School - Des Moines, IA
Cornell University - Voorheesville, NY	Kirkwood Community College - Cedar Rapids, IA
Cornell University - Ithaca, NY	Kansas Department of Education - Topeka, KS
Cornell University - Albion, NY	Kansas Dept. Of Social & Rehab. Services - Topeka, KS
Cornell University - Middletown, NY	NW Kansas Education Service Unit - Oakley, KS
PBS TV Affiliate - Rochester, NY	Kansas State University - Manhattan, KS
American Booksellers Association - Tarrytown, NY	Creighton University - Omaha, NE
Rutgers University - Livingston, NJ	Nebraska Department of Education - Lincoln, NE
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children - Philadelphia, PA	Alliance Public Schools - Alliance, NE
Egleston Children's Hospital - Atlanta, GA	Arkansas Children's Hospital - Little Rock, AR
Tennessee University - Nashville, TN	Arkansas River Education Co-Op - Pine Bluff, AR
East Tennessee State University - Johnson City, TN	Texas A&M - Weslaco, TX
University of Tennessee - Knoxville, TN	University of Texas Arlington - Arlington, TX
University of Tennessee - Martin, TN	University of Texas Arlington - El Paso, TX
Chattanooga State Technical Community College - Chattanooga, TN	Our Lady of the Lake University - San Antonio TX
Roper Mountain Science Center - Greenville, SC	Southwest Texas University - San Marcus, TX
Instructional Television Studio - Birmingham, AL	Children's Hospital of Oklahoma - Oklahoma City, OK
North Carolina State University - Raleigh, NC	Tulsa Community College - Tulsa, OK

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD	DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING APRIL 17, 1997
Department of Human Services - Hugo, OK	
Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute - Albuquerque, NM	
Onate High School - Las Cruces, NM	
Southeastern Louisiana University - Hammond, LA	
Colorado Department of Health - Denver, CO (2 sites)	
Auraria Media Center Library - Denver, CO	
Phoenix College - Phoenix, AZ	
Central AZ College - Coolidge, AZ	
San Francisco State University - San Francisco, CA	
Sacramento State University - Sacramento, CA	
Fresno State University - Fresno, CA	
UCLA - Los Angeles, CA	
Mable Smyth Auditorium - Honolulu, HI	
High Desert Conference & Training Center - Las Vegas, NV	
GSA Regional Headquarters - Auburn, WA	

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON THE CONFERENCE

Q. What will be discussed at the conference?

The conference will highlight new research on brain development in very young children and discuss what it means for parents, caregivers and policy makers. We now know that children's earliest experiences actually affect the development of their brains and are essential to their ability to learn, develop, and reach their full potential. This conference will be a call to action to all members of society -- including the business, faith and health communities, the media, child care providers and government -- to use this information to strengthen America's families.

Q. What kind of impact do you expect this conference to have?

We hope that this conference will mark the beginning of a national dialogue on how best to support, stimulate, and nurture children in the first years of life. That means a national dialogue on how to provide high quality, affordable child; how to make sure children have health insurance; and how to give them early educational opportunities. We also hope to send a simple message to parents and caregivers: that they should read to, sing to, play with and talk to children in the earliest years.

Q. How can the President reconcile his interest in early childhood development with the fact that he signed a welfare bill that will throw over a million children into poverty?

The President signed welfare reform because he believes that we need to end the cycle of dependency and help all Americans take responsibility for their own lives. The President believes -- and all the evidence suggests -- that children who grow up in households and communities where there's work will be far better off in the long run than those who don't. The welfare bill dramatically expanded the availability of child care for people moving from welfare to work, while preserving health, safety and other quality standards for child care.

Q. Doesn't this new research mean that women should stay home?

No. What the research suggests is that we should support all parents, those who work outside the home and those who don't. There are terrifically engaged parents who go to work, and there are parents who stay home but don't know or chose to spend time talking, reading and singing to their children. A recent report indicates that children in quality child care settings do just as well as children whose mothers stay home. What's most important is that children are surrounded by loving, nurturing caregivers who understand the importance of the first few years of life.

Q. Doesn't this new research mean that we can stop investing in children once they reach the age of three?

No. It would be nonsensical to stop spending money on things like crime prevention, schools, and job training. But we now know that early childhood is a critical time in children's development. Investments early can reduce the need for investments later, and we ought to set our priorities with that in mind.

Q. Given the new research, do you see an enhanced role for government in the lives of young children?

There are certainly things that government can do. The President fought for Family and Medical Leave so that workers can take leave to care for a newborn or adopted child, and he has proposed to expand FMLA to allow people to take up to 24 hours off each year for things like finding child care or school activities. The President has also expanded Head Start and created Early Head Start, increased participation in WIC, and raised immunization rates. But parents are responsible for raising their children. The purpose of this conference is to share information about what we can all do to enhance our children's development and learning, and to highlight model community efforts that are working across the country to support children and families.

Q. Isn't this conference just about government intruding into the family?

No. Parents raise children but, like it or not, children are influenced by businesses, schools, the media, and the government, to take just a few examples. This purpose of this conference is to share information about what we can all do to enhance our children's development and learning. The conference will also highlight model community efforts that provide voluntary assistance to parents and children, although most of these local initiatives do so with financial support from the federal government.

[NOTE: DOJ supports the New Haven Police initiative; AVANCE receives funding from Early Head Start, Even Start, and Family Preservation; and The Ounce of Prevention receives Early Head Start and Head Start funding.]

Q. Will there be a report on the conference?

Yes. There will be a report coming out of the conference that digests the research and its practical applications, summarizes the recommendations of the panelists, and provides a resource guide for parents, caregivers, and policymakers. We are also putting together a web page devoted to the conference that will be accessible through the White House home page.

Q. Is this conference part of Rob Reiner's 0-3 campaign?

No. Rob Reiner is working on an important effort -- a national engagement campaign involving foundations, corporations and media to spread the word about the significance of the first few

years of life. The President and the First Lady support his efforts and believe they complement the White House Conference, but the two are separate.

Q. Why aren't any Republicans participating in the Conference?

We invited the three Republican and three Democratic members of the NGA's Children's Task Force and asked both its co-chairs to participate in the afternoon roundtable discussion. None of the Republicans were able to attend. We also invited key Republican and Democratic Members of Congress, and one Republican will attend.

Q. A number of Members of Congress have sent a letter to the President urging him to devote at least one-third of the discussion to the development of the brains of fetuses. Will you do this?

Brain development before birth is a relevant topic. In fact, one of the panelists has done extensive work in this area. It will surely be discussed at the conference.

QUESTIONS ON POLICY INITIATIVES

Department of Defense

Q. You are holding the military child care system up as a model. Why is it so good?

The military child care system is noted for its high quality standards, including a high percentage of accredited centers; a strong oversight and enforcement system, that includes a 1-800 hot line for parents to report concerns; mandatory training for child care providers; relatively generous wages and benefits tied to continued training and education; a system of linking up and providing needed support to individual home care providers; and sufficient funding to make quality child care affordable.

Q. Isn't the military child care system so good because the military spends so much to fund it?

Experts agree that the military child care system is the best in the country for a number of reasons. It is true that the military recognizes that quality child care costs more than most parents can afford to pay and, therefore, the Department of Defense provides sufficient funding so that parents can afford the fees.

[NOTE: The military pays 50% of child care costs with appropriated funds. Parents pay according to a sliding scale based on income. Last year the average weekly fee was \$65 per week.]

In addition, the military child care system is noted for its high quality standards, including a high percentage of accredited centers; a strong oversight and enforcement system, that includes a 1-800 hot line for parents to report concerns; mandatory training for child care providers; relatively generous wages and benefits tied to continued training and education; and a system of linking up and providing needed support to individual home care providers.

Q. What are you doing to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable child care?

The President has proposed a \$500 per child tax credit, expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit to help working families with children and, in the welfare reform law, increased federal funding for child care by \$1 billion, providing services for over 660,000 children -- 65% of whom are under 5 years old.

Q. Why should the military use their resources to help civilian child care providers?

There's no doubt that the military's first priority is protecting the national security and supporting its own service members. This initiative will not undermine that mission. Much of this can be done without a significant expenditure of dollars. One piece of evidence that that is true is that the military is already reaching out to civilian child care providers in their communities, though in a less comprehensive, coordinated way. This initiative will also benefit the military by providing workers for its child care centers and by increasing the number of available spaces.

Health Care

Q. Many Congressional Republicans say they are opposed to new entitlements. How are you going to convince them to expand health care coverage?

The President's children's health proposal is not a new entitlement, but a capped program which gives states the flexibility to design innovative ways to extend health coverage to uninsured children. This carefully targeted investment has been fully paid for in the President's balanced budget. Moreover, we have seen enormous interest from both Republicans and Democrats in expanding health care for children, and we are optimistic that we will be able to pass a children's health bill this year.

Q. Couldn't you reach these children more effectively through an existing mechanism such as the Medicaid program, the tax code, or an existing discretionary program?

The President wants to pass bipartisan legislation that will extend health care coverage to up to five million uninsured children. He is willing to consider any ideas that will enable us to reach this goal.

Q. Is it really worth cutting \$22 billion from Medicaid and implementing a per capita

cap just to expand coverage to a few more children?

First of all, the President has proposed \$7 billion in net savings in Medicaid, which represents a reduction of about 1% off of the current Medicaid baseline over the next five years. Also, the President's plan to expand coverage to more children is not paid for solely from our savings in Medicaid. Moreover, because under a per capita cap States would get more dollars when they cover additional children and because children are relatively inexpensive to cover, we believe that this policy may well provide States with positive incentives to extend health care coverage to more children.

Q. Does the President support the Kennedy-Hatch children's health care bill which finances children's health care expansions by increasing the tobacco tax?

First of all, the President is delighted that there is so much bipartisan interest in expanding health coverage to children, and he will continue to work with Senators Kennedy and Hatch and others in Congress to pass a balanced budget this year that extends health care coverage to more uninsured children.

While the Hatch-Kennedy bill pays for new expansions by increasing the tobacco tax, the President has a proposal which would expand coverage to millions of additional children and is paid for in the context of his balanced budget plan. Regardless of the source of financing, assuring a significant commitment for children's health care will continue to be a top priority for the President.

That being said, studies of State excise tax increases indicate that they can have significant public health benefits, particularly for children and adolescents, because the increased cost can discourage them from starting and continuing to smoke.

Q. The Hatch-Kennedy children's health coverage bill seems to be losing support even by some of its cosponsors because of the tobacco tax financing. Are you concerned about these recent developments?

No piece of legislation in this town experiences smooth sailing throughout the legislative process. The President continues to be very encouraged by the strong bipartisan support for an investment in children's health coverage. In addition to the Hatch-Kennedy bill, a number of others in Congress are coming forward with proposals to expand children's health insurance. Just this week, Nancy Johnson joined the list of Republicans who have put forth proposals on to expand children's health care coverage. And we expect there will be many more. This should be a major priority for this Congress, and it is a top priority for the President.

Safe Start

Q. What is Safe Start?

Safe Start is a program designed to change the way law enforcement officers respond to children who are the victims of or witnesses to violence. The program will provide training on early childhood development to community police officers, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, school personnel and mental health providers. It prepares the people on the frontline to respond better to the needs of children who have been exposed to violence, and to intervene in time to prevent any further evidence.

Q. How much will this program cost?

In fiscal year 1997, the Department of Justice will spend \$700,000 of already appropriated funds on the program.

Q. How many individuals and communities will be reached by Safe Start?

Safe Start builds on a program that is already in place. In addition to providing additional intensive training and technical assistance to the four communities already taking part in the program, the Department of Justice will involve four additional communities and will provide training on early childhood development to 20,000 law enforcement and other professionals in more than 50 communities.

Q. Is President Clinton trying to turn police officers into social workers?

No. New Haven Policy Chief Wearing -- part of the panel at today's conference -- is a cop's cop, who rose up the ranks from detective to police chief. He will tell you that his department's partnership with the Yale Child Study Center helps stop the cycle of violence by providing early intervention to children who are exposed to violence and who, if left untreated, would be more likely to become violent offenders themselves.

Early Head Start

Q. Aren't many more children eligible for Early Head Start than are being served?

We estimate that nearly 3 million children ages 0 to 3 are eligible for Early Head Start while only 23,000 are currently served. However, Early Head Start is a very new program. The first Early Head Start grants were awarded in October 1995. The President's 1998 budget would nearly double the number of children and families served, from 18,000 in fiscal year 1995 to 35,000 in fiscal year 1998. The President is committed to continuing to support this program.

Q. Have the organizations who will receive this new funding been selected?

No. Today, we are announcing a competition for this funding. The Department of Health and Human Services expect to announce the new grantees in September.

Ready*Set*Read Kits

Q. How were the kits developed?

Fifty reading, literacy and early childhood groups worked with the Department of Education on the basic design for the kits. The materials were then developed by researchers from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, and finally a working group of families, caregivers and early childhood administrators reviewed and commented on them.

Q. How and when will these kits be distributed?

In May, kits will be mailed to families served by early childhood programs across the country like Even Start, Foster Grandparents, and Learn and Serve Early Childhood Programs. It will also be available to the public through the Department of Education's toll-free number at 1-800-USA-LEARN and will be available on the Internet through the Department of Education's home page. The kits are available in Spanish and English.

*For
McCole
Rabner*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 17, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Using Lessons Learned from the Military Child Development Programs to Improve the Quality of Child Care in the United States

We now know that children's earliest experiences, including those in child care, have significant effects on learning and development. I believe we all have a role to play in making sure that all of our children have a strong and healthy start in life.

The Military Child Development Programs have attained a reputation for an abiding commitment to quality in the delivery of child care. The Department of Defense's dedication to adequate funding, strict oversight, improved training and wage packages, strong family child care networks, and commitment to meeting national accreditation standards is laudatory. I believe that the military has important lessons to share with the rest of the Nation on how to improve the quality of child care for all of our Nation's children.

I therefore direct you, consistent with existing statutory authority, to share the expertise and lessons learned from the Military Child Development Programs with Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies, as well as with private and nonprofit entities, that are responsible for providing child care for our Nation's children. I further direct you, in doing so, to consult with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Administrator of General Services, and the heads of other Federal departments or agencies with statutory authority over child care programs. I ask that you provide me with a preliminary report within 6 months, and with a final report within 1 year on actions taken and further recommendations, including recommendations on any needed or appropriate legislation. I urge you to consider the following:

- I. In consultation with States, encourage military installation child development facilities in the United States to partner with civilian child care programs in their local communities to improve the quality of service offered. The Department of

Defense staff could provide assistance with local accreditation efforts, offer training as available, assist with State and local child development credentialing processes, and provide models of effective child development practices.

- II. Establish military Child Care Programs of Excellence, to the greatest extent feasible, to offer training courses to civilian child care providers. These training courses could demonstrate model practices for child care centers, family child care homes, and school-age facilities.
- III. Make widely available to the civilian child care community information on the model approaches and designs that the military uses for training and compensation, accreditation and evaluation, playground and facility design, support systems linking individual family child care providers, as well as overall financing strategies.
- IV. Establish partnerships with State or county employment and job training programs to enable Military Child Development Centers and Family Child Care Homes to serve as training locations for welfare recipients moving from welfare to work. The Department of Defense programs could provide on-the-job training, work experience, and an understanding of best practices for the delivery of child development services.

William J. Clinton

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Table of Contents

TAB

- A 4/11/97 Memorandum to the President with an Overview of the Conference and Description of Proposed Policy Announcements
- B Memorandum from Mark Penn with Suggested Conference Themes
- C Conference Background
 - One page overview of Conference
 - Conference Agenda
- D List of Conference Satellite Sites
- E Accomplishments Document: "Clinton Administration Efforts to Support the Development of America's Youngest Children"
- F Remarks by the President re: Conference:
 - 4/12/97 Radio Address
 - 3/13/97 Statement Announcing the Conference
- G Remarks/Statements by the First Lady re: Conference
 - 4/3/97 Speech to the Society for Research in Child Development
 - Newsweek* Column

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 11, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Melanne Verveer
Elena Kagan

SUBJECT: White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning

As you know, on Thursday, April 17, you and the First Lady will host the *White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*. This memorandum provides an overview of the Conference, as well as summarizing recommended policy announcements.

Conference Overview

The Conference will spotlight new scientific findings about how children develop, and explore how we can make the most of this information to give children what they need to thrive. The Conference will provide an opportunity to showcase what your Administration already has accomplished in this area, such as increasing investments in scientific research and creating or improving programs like Early Head Start and WIC.

The Conference will consist of two roundtable discussions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with a luncheon in the State Dining Room (optional for you) in between the two.

Morning session: You and the First Lady will make remarks to open the Conference. Yours will discuss the importance of the issue to be addressed, note past Administration accomplishments in the area, and discuss new initiatives, principally for improving child care and children's health (detailed below).

A panel of experts will then present an overview of the emerging knowledge, gained from neuroscience and behavioral science, on early childhood development. Dr. David Hamburg, President of the Carnegie Corporation, will moderate brief presentations by:

- Dr. Donald Cohen, Director of the Yale Child Study Center, who will discuss what the behavior of children shows about their cognitive, emotional, and social development;
- Dr. Carla Shatz, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Berkeley, who will explain how children's brains develop in the earliest years of life; and

- **Dr. Patricia Kuhl, Chair of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of Washington, who will discuss how children learn language.**

Following these presentations, three more experts will join the panel to discuss what the scientific research suggests about protecting children's health and providing good child care:

- **Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, who can address the importance of prenatal and perinatal services;**
- **Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University, who can discuss the pediatrician's role in early childhood development; and**
- **Dr. Deborah Phillips, Institute of Medicine, who can address how child care can affect early development.**

These experts also will respond to a series of questions posed by the First Lady and Mrs. Gore. Some of these questions will come from a poll conducted by Hart Research for Zero to Three (an early development advocacy group) that tried to discover what parents most want to know about early childhood development. Other questions will tackle the tough issues raised by the new research -- for example, "does this research mean that women should not work outside the home?" or "does this research suggest that adopting an older child is a bad idea?"

Afternoon Session: The purpose of the afternoon session is to highlight model efforts that communities are undertaking to support parents and enhance early childhood development. This panel will be action-oriented and will give you an opportunity to highlight Administration accomplishments and initiatives. Participants in the discussion will include:

- **Dr. Gloria Rodriguez, Avance Family Support Program, San Antonio, TX. Avance is a widely acclaimed family support and education program serving predominantly Hispanic communities.**
- **Harriet Meyer, Ounce of Prevention, Chicago, IL. Ounce of Prevention is a statewide program in Illinois that develops innovative early childhood programs and runs model Early Head Start and child care programs.**
- **Melvin Wearing, Chief of Police, New Haven, CT. Wearing will discuss a pioneering initiative that trains community police officers to use child development principles in their work.**
- **Arnold Langbo, The Kellogg Company CEO, Battle Creek, MI. Kellogg launched a community-wide effort last fall to provide practical early brain development information to every Battle Creek parent and caregiver.**

- **Rob Reiner, CastleRock Entertainment, Los Angeles, CA.**
Reiner will discuss the "I Am Your Child" campaign launched this month and the media's role in making early childhood development information available.
- **Governor Bob Miller, Nevada, Co-chair of the NGA Children's Task Force.**
Miller will discuss what States are doing to enhance early childhood development.

Satellite Sites: The morning session of the Conference will be transmitted to at least 53 satellite sites -- mostly universities and hospitals -- in about 30 states and all 10 federal regions. (Fifty-three is the current number; there will probably be more.) In almost all of these sites, local organizers will put on programs of their own to follow the morning session and will report back to you on their proceedings and recommendations. Cabinet Affairs is encouraging subcabinet officials to attend and speak at these satellite conferences. In addition, regional administrators from HHS, USDA, EPA, Education, and GSA are taking an active role in the satellite sessions.

Report of Proceedings: We are currently making arrangements for an official conference report, to be issued in early June. The report, in addition to providing a summary of the conference proceedings, will serve as a resource guide and learning tool for parents and child care providers. We expect to print 250,000 copies and distribute them through departmental programs, such as Head Start and Even Start, and to individuals who request information about the Conference.

Pre-Conference Policy Initiatives

We would like to make three announcements prior to the Conference, in order to lay the groundwork for the Conference's discussion of ways to enhance early childhood development.

FMLA Expansion for Federal Employees: In your April 12 radio address, you will introduce the themes of the Conference and then direct heads of executive departments and agencies to expand family and medical leave for federal employees in the ways proposed in your legislation. This action would allow federal employees 24 hours of unpaid leave each year to participate in activities relating to school and child care, children's health care, and (unrelated to the Conference) elderly relatives' health needs. You will stress in your radio address how such family-friendly policies can support parents with young children.

Prescription for Reading: On April 16, the First Lady (and perhaps you, depending on the status of budget negotiations) will announce an initiative to encourage pediatricians to "prescribe" that parents read to their children. As part of this initiative, the American Academy of Pediatrics will announce that prescribing reading to infants and toddlers should be part of standard pediatric care. In addition, several book companies have committed to donating hundreds of thousands of books for distribution to children through community health centers and other medical offices across the nation. This initiative reinforces the Parents as First Teachers portion of the America Reads program.

Executive Order on Environmental Health and Safety Risks: You currently have under consideration a proposed Executive Order that would require agencies to consider and explain the effects of certain major rules on children. This order, if you decide to approve it, would serve as an excellent lead-in to the Conference, and we recommend issuing it on April 16. The order gives meaning and effect to your Administration's commitment to protect children in making regulatory decisions.

Conference Policy Announcements

The biggest news from the Conference should be the Conference itself -- that you and the First Lady hosted a day-long meeting on this subject and that scientists, community leaders, parents, and other experts communicated ideas and information on this issue to each other and the American public. The Conference also should provide a vehicle to remind everyone of your Administration's accomplishments in this area, such as increasing funding for research related to children, expanding and improving Head Start and creating the Early Head Start Program, raising childhood immunization rates to an all-time high, and launching a major new effort to eliminate childhood lead poisoning.

In addition, the Conference -- especially your opening remarks -- will give you an opportunity to discuss new and pending policy initiatives that show a continuing commitment to this set of issues. We recommend that your comments focus principally, but not exclusively, on child care and children's health and that you make the announcements discussed below.

Child Care: Child care experts believe the Defense Department's child care system is now the best in the country and possibly the world (in large part because of legislation enacted in the late 1980s). DoD child care is characterized by: high standards, including a high percentage of accredited centers; a strong enforcement system with four unannounced annual inspections and a 1-800 hot line for parents to report concerns; a wage structure that is tied to training and an "up or out" personnel policy requiring completion of training requirements; relatively generous wages and benefits, which reduce staff turnover; a system of linking up individual home care providers to give them needed support; and sufficient funding to make quality child care affordable (though there still are waiting lists).

We recommend you hold up the DoD child care system as a model for the nation and issue an executive memorandum directing the Secretary of Defense to use the Department's resources and expertise to improve child care across the nation. In particular, you would direct that (1) military bases partner with state and county governments to provide on-the-job training in child care to welfare recipients; (2) each military child development center partner with a civilian child care center and work with it to improve quality; (3) DoD establish regional "Child Care Masters Programs" that civilian child care managers could attend for two weeks to learn best practices; (4) DoD publicize its model designs for child care facilities and playgrounds; and (5) DoD issue benchmarks in the areas of standards, enforcement, compensation, and cost against which civilian child care programs could evaluate themselves. Most civilian child care systems

will come up short against DoD's benchmarks, particularly in terms of compensation and affordability, but such a comparison might help build public support for greater investment in child care. DoD fully supports the idea of issuing such a directive.

You also might want to float some trial balloons on more ambitious -- and costly -- proposals. For example, some have suggested making the Child and Dependent Tax Care Credit refundable (at a cost of \$2-4 billion), so that families with little or no income can benefit from it. The Blue Dog budget makes the credit refundable, but pays for it by eliminating the tax benefit for families with incomes over \$100,000. Another legislative proposal would provide a tax credit to private companies and institutions to encourage them to build quality child-care centers on-site. Given our budget, you cannot endorse any of these proposals, but you might want to use this opportunity to suggest your openness to further discussion of such legislation.

Children's Health Initiative: We also recommend that you discuss in your opening remarks the importance of insurance coverage for children's health and development, highlighting the Children's Health Initiative in your 1998 budget proposal. Your proposal will extend coverage to up to 5 million uninsured children by the year 2000. You can announce at the Conference that the deans of academic medical centers -- important legitimators within the medical community -- have endorsed your proposal.

We are also planning a follow-up children's health event, where you will release a study showing the links between insurance coverage, health status and development and learning for children from 0 to 18 years old and talk in more detail about your health proposal. Either at the follow-up event or at the Conference itself, you can announce a project by Kaiser Permanente to spend \$100 million over the next 5 years to provide health insurance to uninsured children.

Child Victims of Violence Initiative. You can announce that the Department of Justice will establish, with FY 97 discretionary funding, a Child Victims of Violence Initiative through the Yale, New Haven Child Development-Community Policing Program. This program, which Chief Wearing will speak about, trains police officers in child development, so that they can better respond to situations arising in the field. The new initiative will extend the program to other sites and also broaden it to include people other than police officers -- such as prosecutors, probation and parole officers, and mental health professionals -- whose work would benefit from knowing about early child development.

Head Start Funding: You can announce the launch of a new competition for Early Head Start grants, which will highlight this Administration's creation of the program.

America Reads Early Childhood Kits: You can announce the release of the America Reads Early Childhood Kits for Families and Caregivers. The kits include a developmental growth chart and suggestions about developmentally appropriate activities for children ages 0 to 5. Everyone who looks at these kits loves them. The kits will be distributed to early childhood programs across the nation and to individuals who call the Department of Education's 1-800 line.

To: Milan Verveer

From: Mark Penn

I looked over some of the materials and have attached a summary of some points related to describing the conference that I hope can be useful to those writing the talking points.

The most significant new element is simply the idea of talking in terms of tying the conference to achieving the full potential of all every child – of giving every child the opportunity to develop to their fullest emotional and intellectual potential – and of relating this to achieving our national potential. I think that the conference is less about the intersection of science and policy, and more about achieving the potential of all of our kids.

Early Brain Conference

Goals:

This conference is about doing the best for our children – giving every child the opportunity to develop to the fullest of their God-given potential. For a long time now we have known how children need proper nutrition and access to healthcare to develop. And now we are finding out that very early on -- in the first three years – every child needs the stimulation of learning, reading, playing, singing and love to really reach their highest emotional and intellectual potential. Children can lose out long before they reach even our pre-schools, and we cannot afford to lose even a drop of the potential of our nation's children. That's what this is all about.

The First Lady is leading this effort as an extension of her lifelong work in the area of child and family development, highlighted in "It Takes a Village." She has brought together the country's leading experts, pediatricians, social workers, day care workers, business media, and the government. This is not a problem any one of these can solve, but one that they must all cooperate together on – and that's why she has made this a truly national conference with sites throughout the country.

This conference highlights:

How we must turn this latest research into action by telling parents what they need to do to nurture their children – that the time a parent spends reading, singing and playing with their children means so much to those kids not just now, but in later life. (ie. The prescription).

We need to extend the frontiers of research in this area, 90% of which is federally funded, so that we have all of the expert knowledge we need to raise our children and how this affects not just parenting, but all of our health, nutrition, child care and educational programs.

How we need to continue to expend the programs that protect our young children – The President has secured the guarantee of healthcare for 10 million children, now we must cover 5 million more. The President has increased participation in Head Start, but now we must expand it, along with early head start, to serve 1 million children by 2002. The President has increased funding for childcare, and now we must organize nearly \$3 billion in new quality childcare so that welfare mothers can re-enter the workforce without compromising on the development of their children. And we must continue to vaccinate all young children and guard them from debilitating lead paint.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING: WHAT NEW RESEARCH ON THE BRAIN TELLS US ABOUT OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN

"Learning begins in the first days of life. Scientists are now discovering how young children develop emotionally and intellectually from their very first days, and how important it is for parents to begin immediately talking, singing, even reading to their infants.... We already know we should start teaching children before they start school."

--President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997

On April 17, the President and First Lady will host *The White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*. The day-long conference will highlight new scientific findings on brain development in very young children and point to the importance of children's earliest experiences in helping them get off to a strong and healthy start.

Applying New Findings on Brain Development in the Earliest Years. New scientific research shows that experiences after birth -- particularly in the first three years of life -- have a dramatic impact on brain development. That means that nurturing, talking to, singing to and reading to our youngest children will improve their ability to learn and develop throughout their lives. The White House Conference will focus on the practical applications of the latest scientific research on the brain, particularly for parents and caregivers. The conference will also be a call to action to all members of society -- including the health, business, media and faith communities, child care providers and government -- to use this information to strengthen America's families.

Clinton Administration Commitment to Young Children. This conference builds on the Clinton Administration's investment in children and families. The Administration has invested heavily in research to help us better understand the importance of the first few years of life to child development and learning. Between 1993 and 1997, funding for NIH children's research increased 25%, from \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion.

President Clinton has also strengthened efforts to support families with young children. To take just a few examples, the Administration raised funding for Head Start -- providing low-income children and their families with comprehensive education, health services, and nutrition -- by 43% over the last four years and created the Early Head Start program to support families with children ages zero to three. The President's FY 1998 Budget further increases participation to reach 122,000 more children in FY 1998 than when he took office. The Administration also dramatically increased participation in the WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program, providing 7.4 million pregnant women, infants, and children with nutrition packages and information and health referrals -- 1.7 million more than when President Clinton took office. And his FY 1998 Budget would achieve his goal of full participation in the WIC program by the end of FY 1998.

Conference Program and Participants. During the morning session of the conference, leading researchers and child development experts will discuss the new research and what it means for parents and caregivers. The panelists for this session are: Dr. David Hamburg, Carnegie Corporation of New York (moderator); Dr. Carla Shatz, University of California, Berkeley; Dr. Donald Cohen, Yale Child Study Center; Dr. Patricia Kuhl, University of Washington; Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University; and Dr. Deborah Phillips, National Research Council. The afternoon session will highlight model community efforts to support parents and enhance early childhood development. The panelists include: Avance Family Support and Education Program, San Antonio, TX; the CEO and Chairman of the Board, The Kellogg Company, Battle Creek Michigan; and Ounce of Prevention, Chicago, IL.

Widespread Participation Across the Country. The morning session of the conference will be broadcast by satellite to over 50 locations across the country. The satellite conferences will be co-hosted by regional federal agencies, local officials, and children's and other organizations.

4/12/97 DRAFT

**White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning:
What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children
April 17, 1997**

OPENING REMARKS

The East Room

10:50-11:15 am *President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton frame the day, highlight the investments and commitment of the Clinton Administration in early childhood development, underscore the unique contributions of the United States Government in supporting research on early childhood and brain development, and highlight the national opportunity and responsibility the new finding present.*

SESSION ONE:

**Exploration of Current Scientific Research on Brain
Development and Its Applications for Parents and Caregivers**

The East Room

Moderator: Dr. David Hamburg, MD,
President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

11:20-1:00 pm *Overview of emerging knowledge of early childhood development in neuroscience and behavioral science*

Dr. Donald Cohen, Yale University, will discuss how children's behavior helps us understand their cognitive, emotional and social development.

Dr. Carla Shatz, University of California, Berkeley, will explain how children's brains grow and develop in the earliest years of life.

Dr. Patricia Kuhl, University of Washington, will discuss how children learn language.

11:40-12:15 pm *Presenters from the opening session address, joined by the experts below, will address concerns of parents, particularly discussing what this emerging knowledge means for health care, child care and early education and parenting. Questions are generated from a poll conducted by Zero To Three with parents across the country, and are posed by the President and the First Lady*

Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, will discuss the importance of prenatal and perinatal services.

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University, will talk about the pediatrician's role in early childhood development.

Dr. Deborah Phillips, Institute of Medicine, will discuss how child care can affect early development.

CLOSING REMARKS

The President

WORKING LUNCHEON

State Dining Room

1:20-2:30pm *Conference guests here have a chance to visit informally with one another
(Tables are hosted by a White House or Administration official)*

Informal Format

SESSION TWO: Applying the Knowledge

Exploration of Model Efforts Communities Are Undertaking To Support Parents and Enhance Early Childhood Development

The East Room

3:00-4:30pm *Various Sectors of society discuss how they are using new scientific
findings to support families and enhance early childhood development and
learning*

Dr. Gloria Rodriguez, Avance Family Support Program
San Antonio, TX

Avance is a widely acclaimed family support and education program serving predominantly Hispanic communities.

Harriet Meyer, Ounce of Prevention
Chicago, IL

Ounce of Prevention is a statewide program that develops and tests innovative early childhood development programs for replication, and runs model Early Head Start and childcare programs.

Melvin Wearing, Chief of Police
New Haven, CT

Will talk about a pioneering initiative that trains community police officers to use child development principles in their work.

Arnold Langho, The Kellogg Company CEO

Battle Creek, MI

Kellogg launched a community-wide effort last fall to provide practical early brain development information to every Battle Creek parent and caregiver.

Rob Reiner, CastleRock Entertainment

Los Angeles, CA

Will talk about the "I Am Your Child" campaign launched this month, and the media's role in making early childhood development information available.

Bob Miller, Governor of Nevada

Co-Chair of the National Governor's Association and co-chair of the National Governors' Association Children's Task Force

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The First Lady

The President

RECEPTION

South Lawn

Tented South Lawn reception draws together a broad range of local advocates and association leaders.

Remarks by the President and the First Lady

**THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF MEDIA AFFAIRS**

**FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY
NOT FOR RELEASE
Contact: 202/456-7150**

April 10, 1997

**WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
AVAILABLE ON SATELLITE AND IN SITES ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

Washington, D.C. -- On April 17, parents, caregivers and other interested parties across the nation will view the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning's morning session by satellite. The full day event, being held at the White House, will highlight recent research on the brain, and what it means to early childhood development. Scientists and physicians will discuss the current state of knowledge and answer some of the questions most frequently asked by parents.

The following are some of the sites that plan to broadcast the morning session. Many will use the broadcast as a way to organize local events.

Live and unrestricted satellite feed available beginning 10:30 am, April 17, EDT
Expected to end approximately 12:30 pm

Coordinates:

**KU Band
Galaxy K-4
Transponder 21 Horizontal
Downlink frequency 12110 MHZ H
Orbital slot is located at 99' west
Audio 6.2/6.8(Satellite coordinates follow.)**

Sites will include:

**Boston University Medical Center
West Newton St.
Boston, MA
Holly Newman (617) 534-3643**

**Boston Federal Executive Board
O'Neill Federal Building
10 Causeway St.
Boston, MA
Kim Ainsworth (617) 565-5823**

Brown University
Providence, RI
Brenda Mussei (401) 274-9548 ext. 240

University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI
Dr. David Byrd (401) 874-2581

Stamford Public Schools
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT
Sarah Arnold (203) 977-4105

New Haven Public Schools
East Rock Elementary School
133 Nash St
New Haven, CT
Dr. Verdell Roberts (203) 946-7871

University of Vermont
School of Education
Burlington, VT
Dean Jill Tarule (802) 656-3424

NH Division of Children, Youth & Families
6 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH
Joy Tinker, HHS

University of Maine at Fort Kent
25 Pleasant St.
Fort Kent, ME
John Martin (207) 834-7568

University of Maine at Orono
Orono, ME
Judy Gramm Cobarm, USDA (207) 581-3104

Manhattan Borough Community College
199 Chamber Street
NY, NY 10007
Bill Caldararo (212) 346-8185

Cornell University Cooperative Extension Center
Marten Road
Albany County
Voorheesville, NY
George Hecht (518) 765-3500

Cornell University Cooperative Extension
Faculty Commons
Ithaca, NY
Susan Miles (607) 255-2246

Cornell University Cooperative Extension
Education Center
12690 Million Dollar Highway
Albion, NY
Shirley Bright (716) 589-5561

Cornell University Cooperative Extension
Education Center Community Campus
Dillion Drive
Middletown, NY
Patricia Claiborne (914) 344-1234

PBS TV Affiliate WXXI
289 State Street
Rochester, NY
Sharon Conheady (716) 428-6400

St. Christopher's Hospital for Children
Bell Atlantic Training Center
Erie Avenue at Front Street
Philadelphia, PA
Site Contact: Carol Norris (215) 427-5525
HHS Contact: James Mengal (215) 596-0504

Egleston Children Hospital
1405 Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta, GA
HHS Contact: Pat Ford-Roegner (404) 331-4159 or 331-2442

Arkansas Childrens Hospital
Sturgis Building
800 South Marshall
Little Rock, AR
Jeanette Wagner (501) 320 6441

North Carolina Cooperative Extension
North Carolina State University
302 Ricks Hall
Raleigh, NC
Site Coordinator: Dr. Karen DeBord (919) 515-2770
Press Contact: Ellen Devlin (919) 515-3173

Roper Mountain Science Center
504 Roper Mountain Road
Greenville, SC
Press Contact: Dr. Scarlette Owens (864) 241-3159

Illinois Institute of Technology
10 West 31st Street-Stuart Building
Chicago, IL 60616
Site Contact: Charles Scott (312) 567-5167
Press Contact: Bret Hoffman (312) 886-8217

Texas A&M Agriculture Experiment Station
2415 E Highway 83
Weslaco, TX
Location Contact: Jose Amador (210) 968-5585

University of Texas Arlington
Netteman Hall
211 Cooper St.
Arlington, TX
Margie Barret (817) 272-3954
Patricia Montoya (214) 767-3301

University of Texas Arlington
Thomas Rivera Conference Center
Union East 3rd Floor
Union Ave.
El Paso, TX
Dr. Arturo Pacheco (915) 747-5572

Childrens Hospital of Oklahoma
Nicholson Tower
900 NE & 13th
Oklahoma City, OK
Kurt Snodgrass (401) 530-3484

Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute
Jeanette Stromberg Hall
2000 Coal Ave. SE
Albuquerque, NM
Patricia Buehler (505) 224-4414

University of Missouri-Kansas City
5100 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO
Sandra V. Walker (816) 880-4000
Dr. Eugene Eubanks (816) 235-5270

Epworth Family Learning Center
207 N Washington St.
East Prairie, MO
Dr. Martha Ellen Black (573) 649-3731

Saint Louis-TBA
Enterprise Community Service Projects
330 North 15th St.
Saint Louis, MO
Donna Dailey (314) 622-3400

Child Care Resource and Referral "Childnet"
1200 University Ave., Suite H
Des Moines, IA
Janet George (515) 286-3366

Kansas Department of Education
120 SE 10th St.
Topeka, KS
Phyllis Kelley (913)296-3069

NW Kansas Education Service Unit
703 West 2nd St.
Oakley, KS
July Rodger (913) 672-3125

Creighton University
1819 Farnam St. #1100
Omaha, NE
Scott Knudson (402) 444-5381

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE
Polly Feis (402) 471-5025

Alliance Public Schools
1604 Sweetwater
Alliance, NE
Lonie Sherlock (308) 762-1580

Colorado Department of Health
4300 South Cherry Creek Drive
Denver, CO
Dr. Hugh Sloan HHS (303) 844-6163 ext. 340

Colorado Department of Health Laboratory
Training Facility
8100 Lowry Boulevard
Denver, CO
Lary McNatt (303) 692-2116

Auraria Media Center/Library
Lower Level, Video Classroom AU 008
11th and Lawrence Streets
Denver, CO
Jim Straub (303) 556-4729

Mabel Smyth Auditorium
510 Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawaii
Emory Lee (415) 437-8500

Phoenix College
1202 West Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85013
Bret Garrett (602) 285-7483

San Francisco State University
425 Market Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA
Jennifer Peck (415) 437-7526

Sacramento State University
Room 11, Library
Sacramento, CA
Ginny Monroe (916) 668-2045

Fresno State University
Cedar & Shaw Streets, Room 200 (upstairs in cafeteria)
Fresno, CA
Ginny Monroe (916) 668-2045

UCLA, Northwest Corner
Sunset Village Commons, Salon 306 A
Los Angeles, CA
Dierdre Nurry (415) 744-1156

High Desert Conference & Training Center
3200 East Cheyenne Ave., J1E
North Las Vegas, NV
Vince Juarasti (702) 687-5670

Central AZ College
8470 N. Overfield Road
Coolidge, AZ
Diana Jennings (602) 280-8754

GSA Regional Headquarters
400 15th Street, SW
Auburn, WA
Rick Desimone (206) 931-7020

CLINTON ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICA'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN

"Learning begins in the first days of life. Scientists are now discovering how young children develop emotionally and intellectually from their very first days, and how important it is for parents to begin immediately talking, singing, even reading to their infants.... We already know we should start teaching children before they start school."

-- President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997

Preparing our children for the 21st century is among our most important national priorities. Over the past few years, scientific research has demonstrated that the earliest years of life -- before children reach school age -- are critical to their cognitive, emotional, and physical development. President Clinton is meeting the challenge to improve those years by investing in research, supporting parents and caregivers, and strengthening programs that provide early intervention to disadvantaged families.

Increased participation in Head Start, created Early Head Start for 0-3 year olds, and improved program quality. For more than thirty years, Head Start has been one of our nation's best investments. By ensuring that low-income children start school ready to learn, Head Start can pay for itself. For that reason, President Clinton has made expanding and improving Head Start a priority of his Administration. Over the past four years, funding for the program has increased by 43%, and in fiscal year 1997 Head Start will serve 800,000 low-income children four years old and younger. Initiated in 1994, there are now 142 *Early Head Start* programs across the country, expanding the proven benefits of Head Start to low-income families with children under three. Over the last three years, the Clinton Administration has also invested significantly in improving program quality, providing local programs with the resources they need to attract and retain high quality teachers and ensuring the safety of Head Start centers. The President's 1998 budget proposal provides a \$324 million increase in Head Start's budget so that it will remain on course to serve 1 million children by 2002.

Increased participation in WIC program. WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program provides nutrition packages, nutrition education, and health referrals to low-income pregnant women, infants, and children. Over the past four years participation has expanded by 1.7 million from 5.7 to 7.4 million women, infants, and children. The increase in the President's budget proposal fulfills his commitment to achieving full participation in WIC by the end of 1998. Research shows that WIC prenatal services save Medicaid much more than they cost by reducing health care expenses in the first 60 days after birth.

Raised Childhood Immunization Rates to an All-Time High. The President's Childhood Immunization Initiative focuses on five areas: 1)improving the quality and quantity of vaccination delivery services; 2) reducing vaccine costs for parents; 3)increasing community participation, education and partnerships; 4)improving systems to monitor diseases and vaccinations; and 5) improving vaccines and vaccine use. This initiative has achieved notable success: in 1995, seventy-five percent of two-year olds were fully immunized -- an historic high. Funding for childhood immunization has doubled since fiscal year 1993.

Improved Support for Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Infants and Families Program supports the continuing efforts of States to implement high quality statewide early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Over the past four years, funding for the program has increased by 48% or \$102.5 million. During the same period, the number of children served increased by 21.5 percent. An estimated 191,000 children will be served in fiscal year 1998.

Enhanced Family Literacy Program. Even Start Family Literacy is a family-focused grant program to improve the educational opportunities for children and their parents in low-income areas by integrating family literacy activities, including early childhood education, adult education, and parenting education. Since 1993, funding for Even Start has increased by over 40% to support programs in every state and the District of Columbia.

Improved Child Care in Public Housing. The Early Childhood Development Program helps to provide quality child care for families living in public housing communities, as well as families who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. The program allows parents or guardians who live in public housing to get and keep jobs by ensuring that their children are cared for. In 1996, \$21 million was awarded to public housing sites across the country -- three times more than in 1994.

Providing Funding for Parent Resource Centers in 42 States. In addition to involving parents in the development of state and local education plans, the President's Goals 2000 program provides funding to establish parent resource centers that help parents learn how to help their children meet high standards. The centers provide training, distribute resource materials, and support a variety of programs that strengthen family involvement in education. In fiscal year 1997, funding is available for support centers in 42 states, 14 more than in 1996.

Promoting Parents as First Teachers. The President's America Reads Challenge, a campaign to ensure that every child can read well by the end of the third grade, includes Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants to fund proven local, regional and national programs that provide assistance to parents to help their children become successful readers. The grants can be used to expand successful programs such as the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) and the Parents as First Teachers (PAT) program. They will also fund national and regional networks to share information on how parents can help children to read.

Supported Over 90% of all Children's Research. In fiscal year 1995, the federal government spent an estimated \$2 billion on research and development directly related to children and youth. Spending at The National Institutes of Health (NIH) alone increased 25% between 1993 and 1997. This research has contributed to the recent advances in understanding early learning and language development.

Maintained the Commitment to the Medicaid Guarantee for 10 Million Children Under 6 Years Old. This Administration has protected and, preserved -- and now will improve on -- the guarantee of Medicaid coverage for 36 million Americans, including 9 million children under the age of 6. In 1995, the President vetoed the Republican Medicaid block grant proposal that would have ended the guarantee of coverage for up to 4 million children by 2002. At the same time, the President worked with states by granting 15 comprehensive Medicaid waivers and approving many more state plan amendments that improve and expand coverage for children.

Seeks to Extend Health Coverage to Up to 5 Million Children. Although this Administration has made great strides in protecting the health of America's neediest children, there is still much to be done. In 1995, more than 10 million American children, 80% of whom have working parents, had no health insurance. The President's budget takes three important steps to address the problem of children who lack health insurance coverage:

- 1) Provides annual grants to states to cover health insurance premiums for families of workers who are in-between jobs;
- 2) Utilizes state partnership grants to help working families who are not eligible for Medicaid to purchase private insurance for their children; and
- 3) Expands Medicaid coverage by allowing states to continue Medicaid coverage for up to one year even if family income changes, intensifying outreach to children who are currently eligible but not enrolled, and continuing current law expansions of coverage to reach poor children between the ages of 13 and 18.

Increased Child Care Funding. Since 1993 federal funding for child care has increased by 22%, providing quality services for over 660,000 children of whom 65% are under 5 years of age. The newly established Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) has made available \$2.9 billion to states. This new program, authorized by the new welfare law, will assist low-income families and those coming off welfare to obtain child care so they can work or attend school.

Eliminating Childhood Lead Poisoning. The Administration has launched a major new effort to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. The campaign includes notification and disclosure to parents who buy or lease older homes so that they get the information they need to protect their children, grants to states to control lead-based paint hazards in low-income privately-owned dwellings, development of a consensus on lead safety standards, and technical assistance to ensure that lead hazard control work is done safely and efficiently.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Embargoed For Release
Until 10:06 A.M. EDT
Saturday, April 12, 1997

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATION

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Today, I want to talk about the toughest job any person can have. It's not a job you can quit, show up late for, or do just enough to get by. In every way, it's a lifetime commitment -- it's being a parent.

In our times, parenting has become an even greater challenge. The world moves faster, and parents rightly worry more about how to protect their children's health, their safety and their future. Jobs place more demands on mothers and fathers. Finding a balance between home and work takes more effort than ever.

Parents can use some help. And while government doesn't raise children, it can sometimes give parents the tools they need to make their jobs easier. That's why we fought for and won the V-chip and a ratings systems for TV, so parents can better protect their young children from unsuitable shows. That's we fought to keep the tobacco industry from advertising their products to children. And why we're fighting to keep streets safer and to reduce juvenile crime. All these help parents to do a better job with their children.

But there is still work to be done. Parents want to do right thing by their children from the very start. And giving our youngest children what they need to thrive from the very first days of life is something the First Lady has studied for a long time. In her book, "It Takes a Village," Hillary called on our nation to give its attention to new findings about the early years of children's lives that so often are overlooked in intellectual, social and emotional development.

Our administration has worked hard to better understand these early years. Since 1993, we increased funding for children's research at the National Institutes of Health by 25 percent -- or \$322 million -- and my balanced budget plan promotes further increases in funding. We expanded and improved Head Start, and we created an Early Head Start Program for children age three or younger so that they could get the stimulation they need at those critical times.

From our research, we know that from the very first days of life a child is developing emotionally and intellectually, and how he or she does in those first three years of life will help to determine how a child does later in school and in life. That's why we need to begin teaching and nurturing our children before they go to school.

We want to sort through our research and get it to parents and to care givers who work with children. So next week Hillary and I will bring together researchers, parents and other experts for the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children.

We will meet for a full day at the White House, with satellite hook-ups to more than 60 sites around our nation. This conference is an exciting and an enormous undertaking. It is a call to action to parents, to businesses, to care givers, the media, the faith community and the government, each to do their part to enhance the earliest years of life. It grows out of our commitment to find new ways to support parents and to help their children reach their God-given potential.

As part of that commitment, I also want to call today on the members of Congress to do their part to come to the aid of our families. They can do that very simply by passing my expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

This bill would allow workers up to 24 hours of unpaid leave each year to fulfill certain family obligations. It could allow a worker to attend a parent-teacher conference, or take a child to the pediatrician, or to find quality child care, or to care for an elderly relative.

Families occasionally need these small pieces of time to

take care of their own. More than 12 million American workers have taken leave for reasons covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act since it became the very first bill I signed into law in 1993. It was needed then, it's needed now and we need to improve on it. So I urge the Congress to act soon on this legislation. Don't ask people to choose ever between being good workers and good parents. We can help them to do both. Pass the expanded Family and Medical Leave Act.

I think this bill is so important that today I am asking all federal departments and agencies to make expanded Family and Medical Leave available to their workers immediately. Wherever possible, I want workers to have access right now to essential time off for family obligations.

I am committed to doing all we can to support families as they struggle to do right by their children. We know that the very earliest years will decide whether children grow up to become healthy and happy people. That's why we're giving parents time off to care for them, why we should extend the family leave law so millions more parents can have that opportunity and why we must focus all our science, education and public efforts to give our children the very best start in life.

Almost a century and a half ago, Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "A child's education should begin at least a hundred years before he was born."

What we do now can benefit generations of Americans to come. We can start with the smallest community -- the family. And from there we can rebuild and renew the best in America by beginning with the best of America, our children

Thanks for listening.

END

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 13, 1997

Today, Hillary and I are pleased to announce that on April 17, 1997, we will host the *White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*. The Conference, which will take place at the White House, will spotlight exciting new findings about how our children develop, and explore how we can make the most of this information to give our children what they need to thrive.

We hope that this one-day Conference will make the latest scientific research, nearly all supported by the federal government, more accessible and understandable to America's families. The research clearly indicates the importance of children's first few years to their later success in school and in life. This Conference is a continuation of my Administration's commitment to children and, in particular, it follows Hillary's work over the years on issues relating to early childhood development.

The Conference will examine how we can use this new research in practical ways -- to be better parents, more informed care-givers and more responsive members of our communities. It will also explore how this information can be used by all members of our society -- from corporate executives to pediatricians, from ministers to elected officials -- to help strengthen America's families.

Parents desperately want to do right by their children, and we all have a role to play in making sure they have the tools they need to do the best job they can. We believe this Conference can make a valuable contribution.

-30-30-30-

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 3, 1997

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
TO THE SOCIETY FOR RESEARCH IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT
The Sheraton Washington
Washington, D.C.

MRS. CLINTON: -- I want to thank Dr. Elder and thank all of you for the expertise and leadership you bring to the field of child development. The work you do is vitally important, not only in promoting a greater understanding of our children and how they develop but in strengthening our understanding and the connection between research, public policy, and people's everyday lives.

I've had a chance to look through the book that has been produced for this biannual conference -- and I know you haven't been in Washington, D.C., since, I believe, the 1930s -- but given the number of topics and presenters, it seems like you are more than making up for the fact that you have not been here for some time. The range of topics that you are addressing and the research that you are discussing touches on every aspect of children and families and the environments in which they grow and develop.

Many years ago, it seems to me now, when I was in law school, I had the chance to study children at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut. I was privileged to work with many experts in the field of psychiatry and psychology and development and social work and medicine. And I was particularly privileged to work with one of the pioneers in the field of infant behavior, Dr. Sally Provence. I still have vivid memories of the gentle and subtle ways that Dr. Provence would elicit information from parents and infants to help establish better patterns of relating to children. And I would stand sometimes behind the one-way mirror, watching her work, thinking to myself, how can we know so much about these babies? How can we draw from their gestures and their patterns of relationships such lessons? That was before I myself was a mother.

Later on in the work that I have done with children's organizations, such as the Carnegie Council on Children and others, I have been interested in watching how experts, such as yourselves, have applied the knowledge that you have learned from research to public policy, and that has become one of my abiding interests. How do we take what you have developed

through research and apply it in the public policy arena? I think that that is a question that certainly should be on the minds of anyone who takes seriously Dr. Elder's challenge about the state of children in our country. We have made a lot of progress in many areas.

Certainly, if you look at the progress that has been made in infant mortality -- eradicating childhood diseases like measles or polio, developing and releasing new drugs and therapies, making it better known to the general public what are the conditions of child rearing that are more likely than not to benefit a child's development -- one can see a very clear nexus between medical science and research and policy. I don't know that we could have made as much progress in our understanding of certain hazards that affect the lives of children -- whether those hazards be lead or tobacco or alcohol or illegal drugs -- without basic research. We are also beginning to understand how violence is a public health epidemic, and the steps that need to be taken to try to protect our children from it.

In so many areas the research that you and your colleagues do every day enhances our teaching methods for children with learning disabilities; outlines the benefits of everything from educational television programming to friendship to nutrition; gives us new tools for devising care and services for infants, toddlers, young children, adolescents; helps us strengthen programs, whether they be child care or Head Start or school programs, aimed at providing better conditions toward a child's development.

In short, science and research need social policy. And social policy needs science and research, and needs scientists and researchers. There has to be a relationship so that the work that you do and that you report at this conference doesn't just stay in a room like this but is able to inform public debate far beyond these walls.

I have seen for myself in the programs that I've worked with how using the benefits of science and research can make a difference. Dr. Elder mentioned one program that I've been involved with called the Home Instruction Program for Pre-School Youngsters -- the acronym HIPPPY -- which I always get a kick out of saying. (Laughter.) Some of you may know that it's a program which started with research at Hebrew University in Israel. And using data from research on immigrants to Israel who were exposed to many of the same social conditions as those who had lived there longer but were not progressing as well in school, researchers devised a program to begin to work with the parents of such youngsters to increase the confidence of parents, primarily mothers, in their capacity to be their child's first teacher, to begin to lay the foundation for the acquisition of academic skills. And in country after country we've seen that programs like this, if properly administered, can make a difference not only in the preparation of a child but in the increased competence of a parent.

There are many such efforts that we could mention that researchers have devised that have helped to improve the quality of life for our children, our families and our communities. So I thank you and commend you for building on the rich legacy of the SRCDC and providing this opportunity to showcase some of the latest advances in children's research. What I hope is that

this work will continue to inform scientists, decision-makers, child care providers, individual parents as we seek to create more promising conditions for the growth and development of our children.

We do face many challenges. On the one hand, there have been advances and greater understanding in how a child develops. On the other hand, we know that, given the necessary prerequisites for healthy development, we are falling short in many respects, in many communities. And we must have a united effort that involves every level of society in addressing the needs of children and putting to use the information that we have.

I think it's especially important that we continue with the federal government's historic support of basic research. (Applause.) All too often skeptics wonder why the government should invest in research instead of leaving research to the private sector. Yet we know that government support is essential to the kind of progress that we have already made and that we must continue to make on behalf of children, both in the scientific and public policy arenas.

This is especially important when we talk about the issues that you are concerned with. The federal government contributes more than 90 percent of the funding for children's research in this country. Since 1993, funding for children's health research has increased by 25 percent from the federal government. And we have seen some fruits already of that investment. Without federal support we simply would not be where we are today in terms of our understanding of child development.

As unfashionable as it is in some quarters today to suggest that government has any virtues at all -- (laughter) -- I believe that government, and in particular the federal government, can be instrumental in funding research that leads to better understanding of children's needs and in adopting policies shaped by that scientific knowledge. I also believe that the government can help people apply your research in practical ways that better their lives.

Research, for example, now confirms what many of our own parents and grandparents knew intuitively all along -- that hugging a baby and reading to a child or singing and talking to a child has an impact on that child's well-being. What our parents and grandparents and the vast majority of us did not know until recently is just how great an impact those activities have on actual brain development. Clearly, the latest research from neuroscience is a very exciting step in our understanding of how children grow in their earliest years.

But the information coming from our laboratories and our clinical studies is essentially useless if parents and caregivers and teachers and doctors and lawmakers and others who have an impact on children don't have any clue about that basic information nor what to do with it.

As some of you may know, the President and I will host a conference at the White House later this month on early childhood development and learning. Our goal is to help spread the word about new research on the development of the brain in the earliest years. And to take this

extraordinary information and explore how we translate it into our everyday actions affecting children.

The White House conference will bring together leading neuroscientists, pediatricians, and child development specialists -- including some of you in this room -- with child care providers, business and religious leaders and others who are putting this knowledge to practice. It is an important starting point, a first step. But much work will have to be done to ensure that parents and caregivers who need this information actually get it and know how to make use of it.

I am still constantly surprised, when I speak with people that I meet as I travel around the country about their young infants, how many of them still do not know that reading to an infant, singing to an infant, talking to an infant -- all of that is feeding that young child's development. I still have people say to me, well, why would I talk to him? He can't talk back. And it's not that the person who says that is in any way resistant to helping a child; it's that that is not something that they've ever been told. So we will do our best to tell as many people as possible about why what many of us did because we liked doing it and thought it was good for our children turned out after all to be essential.

But we have to be vigilant about how this information is used, because for all the good ideas that new research brings, it is always subject to manipulation, oversimplification, and misinterpretation. One of my great fears, for example, about this research concerning the brain is that parents who are doing their best to raise children, often under difficult circumstances, will feel even more guilt and anxiety because they aren't sure if they are doing everything that the research should ask them to do.

I am reminded of a man I know who became so obsessed after reading in a popular magazine about how synapses develop that he determined he would read two books to his young son every night -- and he raced through the material without ever giving the child a chance to look at the pictures or ask questions about the story and couldn't understand why his son was not enjoying this experience at all. (Laughter.) And speaking with some of us, as he described what had turned into a forced march toward reading, and we asked him questions about what it was he was hoping to get out of this experience with his son, it became clear that instead of a loving, nurturing, stimulating experience, it had become a tense obligation for them both.

So there is one anecdotal piece of evidence of someone who heard about brain development, applied what he thought would be the appropriate approach, and learned quickly that that is not what we're talking about.

It's very important that, as exciting as new discoveries about early brain development are, that the early years are not seen as the only important time in a child's life. We know, from your research and from reading various reports like the excellent Carnegie Foundation Reports "Starting Points" and "Years of Promise" and "Great Transitions," that children do not exist in a vacuum of time.

Many of you in your own research have shown that children need interaction, engagement, and stimulation every day and every year of their lives, and that they can profit from that. It will do our children little good if we only care about promoting cognitive development until the age of three and then pretend that all learning is over and done with. To fully understand a child's development, we must explore the dynamics of development during each stage of life -- from birth, through adolescence, and on to adulthood. And we should be willing to invest in young people at every step of their development.

I was reminded of that forcefully during my recent trip to Africa, when I was privileged to spend time with President Mandela on Robben Island, where he had been imprisoned for 27 years. He talked to me about how the political prisoners who were educated would take time to teach prisoners who were not. They would all work in a lime quarry from early in the morning until sundown and, because they were working they had more freedom than when they were in their cells or eating or taking exercise. So they would be using the opportunity of the sand and the quarry to be showing these other prisoners letters, and then to be talking with them about learning. And so many of the prisoners who came into the prison illiterate left literate, including one man who now holds a high position in the government.

Clearly, learning doesn't stop, and all of us have an opportunity to continue to promote learning. And even with our emphasis on early childhood, we need to make clear that all people deserve a chance to learn and develop, and that although we should put more resources and attention on the earliest years, that should not be the only place that we place emphasis. I imagine that there will be some people who upon hearing about the importance of reading and talking to infants and toddlers will wonder whether mothers and fathers should immediately quit their jobs to stay home with their children and read to them all day. Some parents may, I'm sure, begin to second-guess their own personal and professional choices.

Here again, a combination of research and common sense ought to be our guide. As we will learn tomorrow from the results of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study about child care, it does make a difference to the cognitive development of children if they are in a nurturing, stimulating child care environment.

But what does this mean in practice? It means that all children need love, attention, stimulation, and discipline no matter what settings they are in, whether it's with their own parents, babysitters, caregivers, preschool teachers, neighbors, or relatives. I have seen examples, as I'm sure many of you have over the years, of parents who work full-time and sometimes double-time and still manage to give their children the love and support they need for healthy development. And I've seen parents who stay home all day and are uninvolved, inattentive, and emotionally divorced from the children they are raising.

The same can be said for child care. There is a huge chasm of quality among child care providers, from the most nurturing and stimulating caregivers to those who fall far short of the mark.

So I hope that rather than further confusing parents on these sensitive issues, we will help them by using this new research in ways that are sensible and appropriate to their own family circumstances. There is so much we can do together by taking the results of your work, translating it into language that average parents can understand, making sure it is disseminated widely to people who have responsibility for children, and challenging decision-makers in business and government, academia, religion, every aspect of our life together, to apply what we know helps children's development in all that we do.

I know that among those participating in this conference are many established veterans of children's research, as well as some of you who are just embarking on careers. To those of you who have devoted your lifetimes to expanding our understanding of children, we are grateful for your ongoing commitment and for the wisdom and expertise you continue to lend us. And to those of you who are new to the profession, we are encouraged by your decision to commit yourselves to this important field, and we eagerly await your contributions in the years ahead.

The child development research community is making a profound contribution to the future well-being of our country. Just as your work has inspired me and many others who have watched it and followed it from outside the profession, you can't open new vistas for people everywhere. And as you gather to discuss your research in all its rich, technical complexity, please consider too its implications for public policy and the everyday lives of families. It is not always easy to take research and apply it to the public policy arena. And certainly the complexity of what you study and the results that you achieve may not always fit into a sound bite for the nightly TV news.

But I hope that you will continue to search for ways to translate your work into information that is readily available and usable in many different venues. We need that now as much as ever. I think there is a greater attention to the needs of children than there has been. We are embarking in our country on many changes -- welfare reform being but one that I could mention -- that will have profound implications on how children develop. We need your expertise; we need your early warning signals; we need your advice.

And so I would ask you not only to continue your research for the sake of developing the body of knowledge that is available to experts but to do whatever you can to make sure that information is available to all of us. This is, I believe, a moment in time to intensify our commitment to understanding child development as deeply as possible and to use that emerging knowledge to the benefit of all of our children.

It is an exciting time to be studying development with all of the breakthroughs in research that have already occurred and that are on the brink of occurring. And it will be a great test of our political will, of our humanity, of our understanding of how we are all inextricably connected to see whether or not we take what we know works for children and apply it, and that we make sure that it is not just the children of people like us who benefit from the information that is available, but that we work to make society more attentive to the needs of children and

parents who might otherwise be left behind.

The two weeks that I just spent in Africa was exhilarating, challenging, exciting, sometimes depressing, but I felt at the end of that trip that it wasn't only in our country or in advanced countries that people were beginning to focus on the next generation in a way that perhaps we hadn't for the last couple of decades. Whether I was in a classroom in Soweto with young boys and girls who were learning English; or in a school in Kampala, Uganda, with 74 eight-year-olds in a classroom because the country has committed itself to increasing school enrollment, and in the space of less than a year has increased enrollment by more than 2 million; or whether I was in the newest country in Africa, Eritrea, talking with men and women who had spent 30 years fighting for their independence, and hearing how what their doing is investing in education and health care for children -- I felt that there was a commitment to what is really important among many of the people I had a chance to meet.

I feel the same when I travel in our own country: that there are many people who look at what is happening in the economy, who look at the changes that have gone on in the family, who understand the challenges that we are facing socially, and who are committed to making it possible for more children to be productive and successful in their development.

And what we have to do -- those of you who care about the work you have committed yourselves to and those of us who want to translate your work into practical application -- is to be relentless in speaking about and standing up for the needs of children, and doing all we can to take what works and spread it as widely as possible.

As we move toward this new century -- my husband is very fond of saying we do not have a person to waste -- and we must believe that, we must act one it. And you can provide an enormous amount of inspiration and information to make sure that we do.

Thank you for what you're doing on behalf of children. And please make sure that what you know is broadly known so that all the rest of us can try to make sure we leave no child behind. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

DOING THE BEST FOR OUR KIDS

The First Lady calls for Americans to work together and give parents the tools they need to raise their children—and provide them with a lifetime of learning

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS THAT TIME HASN'T always been an ally to us parents. As Bill and I have discovered at every birthday and every milestone in our daughter Chelsea's life, months and years fly much faster than we ever want. Like other parents bracing themselves for a child's departure for college, we ask ourselves every day: "How did the baby we brought home from the hospital grow up so fast?" "Is there any way we can move the White House to her college campus?"

Of course, we know that Chelsea is ready to begin a new phase of her life and that college will be a great experience. But it still doesn't keep us from reviewing the past 17 years and wondering if we've made the most of every minute to prepare her for the challenges of adulthood.

As science is now telling us, some of the most important preparation we can give our children takes place during the earliest years of life. New research has confirmed what many parents have known instinctively: infants begin learning the minute they are born. They are acutely aware of their surroundings and their brains crave and absorb all sorts of stimulation. Recently we have learned that the combination of intellectual and emotional interactions with infants and toddlers—holding a child in your lap while reading a story, for example—is crucial to their learning and emotional development.

Although Bill and I didn't realize it at the time, the countless hours we spent cuddling with Chelsea and reading her favorite stories not only strengthened our relationship with her but literally helped her brain grow.

Unfortunately, too many children are still missing this early stimulation. Just half of all infants and toddlers in our country are routinely read to by their parents. Over the years I have met parents who tell me they never really talk to their babies because babies can't understand what they are saying. I've also met parents who thought that they

couldn't read well enough themselves to read to a child.

We must help parents understand that, no matter their educational level or reading ability, they can stimulate their children's cognitive and emotional development by talking to and reading to their children, even if they stumble over a few words here and there. Most likely, their children won't even notice. But they will notice the power of reading and the books to take them on fascinating adventures and introduce them to the world of words and ideas. And just as important, they will notice the time a parent has set aside to be with them, to hold them close and to share in a nurturing activity.

Earlier this year, I announced a nationwide effort to encourage early reading in homes across our country. I believe that few efforts can make a more dramatic difference over the next 10 years than to persuade parents of all educational and economic backgrounds to take this mission of reading, talking—and even singing—to babies more seriously.

At the same time, parents shouldn't go overboard. A friend of mine told me that he became so obsessed with making sure that he and his son finished reading two books a day that he rarely stopped for questions or allowed his son to look closely at the pictures. And mothers and fathers don't need to feel that they have to rush out and read the latest scientific paper on human brain development for exact instructions on how to interact with their children.

The point is that learning is a lifelong proposition—one that, in the best of worlds, begins at the earliest stages and continues for years. Yes, the first three years of life are crucial, but they are not the only time that parents need to be engaged with their children or help them develop the skills they need to progress in the world. We should not use this new research to ignore the learning needs of older children and adults. I thought about this recently when I visited Robben Island in South Africa, the prison where Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were jailed for many years.



Reading to patients at a Kansas City, Mo., hospital

As Chelsea gets ready to leave for college, Bill and I can't help reviewing the past 17 years; we wonder if we've made the most of every minute to prepare her for the challenges of adulthood

While doing hard labor in a nearby limestone quarry, literate prisoners taught their fellow inmates to read by writing letters and words in the dust with their shovels and picks. One prisoner who learned to read that way went on to educate himself and now is a top official in the South African government.

My greatest hope is that we can find effective ways to apply the knowledge we are gaining from science and make it more easily available to parents. It seems as if every day more new information is piled on top of what already exists about how our children develop and what they need most to grow. And yet many parents lack access to this research and others aren't sure how to interpret it. What little information they do get comes in bits and pieces, with little guidance about how to apply it to benefit their children. This month, the president and I are convening a first-ever White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning. Our aim is to bring together parents, scientists, policymakers, educators, business leaders and child-care providers to dis-

cuss the new research on the brain and early-childhood development and explore how we can deliver this information to more homes.

Many things can conspire against parents as they try to provide children with the attention and stimulation they need to develop. Parents are often stretched for time and resources, and can use all the help they can get.

As I've been saying for years, it does take a village to raise a child. That's why we can all work together to make sure parents have the tools they need to raise their children—whether it is providing information about the importance of reading and talking to children in the early years, strengthening prenatal care, expanding Head Start or ensuring access to affordable, high-quality child care.

Our children have so much potential to grow and thrive throughout their childhood. Wherever there is patience, love and commitment, the window of opportunity for raising a healthy, happy and well-adjusted child never closes. ■