

## ***Developing America's Potential: An Agenda for Affordable, High-Quality Child Care*** **Facts on Enhancing the Supply and Quality of Care for Infants and Toddlers**

The first three years of life are a vitally important stage in children's development.<sup>1</sup> Yet high-quality care that supports the growth and learning of infants and toddlers is in particularly short supply. While nurturing, supportive child care is difficult to find and difficult to afford in general, these challenges are especially acute for families with very young children. The Agenda places a special focus on increasing the supply and quality of infant and toddler care through direct grants for high-quality programs as well as support for specialists and organizations to help providers enhance the quality of care. By supporting high-quality care for infants and toddlers, we enable parents of young children to have the peace of mind they need to be productive at work and enable young children to get the strong start they need to reach their full potential.

### **Infant and Toddler Care Is a Necessity for Many Families**

- Nearly three out of five (59 percent) of women with children under age three are in the labor force.<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately 5.7 million children under age three are in child care on a regular basis.<sup>3</sup>
- Mothers with reliable child care for their young children are significantly more likely to stay on the job than those without regular child care.<sup>4</sup>

### **Infant and Toddler Care Must Become More Affordable and Accessible**

- The supply of infant care is limited. For example, 41 percent of requests for child care referrals made to California's resource and referral agencies are from families looking for care for infants and toddlers, but only 5 percent of child care slots in licensed child care centers are for infants and toddlers.<sup>5</sup> Infant care is particularly scarce in economically disadvantaged communities.<sup>6</sup>
- The average cost of infant care ranges from approximately \$3,600 to \$15,900 a year, depending on where a family lives and the type of care.<sup>7</sup> These costs can be a burden to young families who have not had time or resources to accumulate savings.

### **Infant and Toddler Care Should Be Improved**

- Many child care programs fail to provide the high-quality care infants and toddlers need. In one four-state study, only 8 percent of centers providing care for infants and toddlers were rated as good using the Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS).<sup>8</sup>
- One study found that 65 percent of providers and caregivers of infants lacked specialized training in child development or infant care, and nearly half had only a high school diploma or less education.<sup>9</sup>
- Strategies to improve the quality of infant and toddler care through training, support from infant-toddler specialists, and other targeted efforts have improved the overall quality of care for infants and toddlers, and improved specific areas such as interactions between child care providers and children in their care.<sup>10</sup>

- A recent study of the Early Head Start program, which provides comprehensive early care and education for infants and toddlers, found that three-year-old Early Head Start children performed significantly better on cognitive, language, and social/emotional measures than children randomly assigned to a control group.<sup>11</sup>

***Developing America's Potential: An Agenda for Affordable, High-Quality Child Care* Includes Provisions to:**

- Provide grants for high-quality, comprehensive programs serving infants and toddlers.
- Provide grants for organizations that operate networks for family child care providers and that assist other infant and toddler providers in their communities.
- Support a statewide network of specialists who offer training and consultation on high-quality infant and toddler care.

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<sup>1</sup> Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips (Eds.), *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, 2000); National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, *Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships* (2004), *available at* [http://www.developingchild.net/pubs/wp/Young\\_Children\\_Environment\\_Relationships.pdf](http://www.developingchild.net/pubs/wp/Young_Children_Environment_Relationships.pdf) (last visited May 6, 2008); Anne Goldstein, Katie Hamm, and Rachel Schumacher, *Supporting Growth and Development of Babies in Child Care: What Does the Research Say?* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy and Zero to Three, 2007), *available at* [http://www.clasp.org/publications/supporting\\_babies.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/supporting_babies.pdf) (last visited May 6, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey, Employment Characteristics of Families in 2007*, Tables 5 and 6, *available at* <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/famee.pdf> (last visited June 10, 2008). This percentage understates how many women raising children are in the paid labor force because they reflect only women raising their *own* children, and do not include the many women who are raising grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, or other related children. Note that the labor force includes those who are working and those who are looking for work.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Initial Results from the 2005 NHES Early Childhood Program Participation Survey* (Washington, DC: U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, 2006), *available at* <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/earlychild/index.asp> (last visited Sept. 18, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Sunhwa Lee, *Keeping Moms on the Job: The Impacts of Health Insurance and Child Care on Job Retention and Mobility among Low-Income Mothers* (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2007), 37-40.

<sup>5</sup> California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, *2007 California Child Care Portfolio* (San Francisco, CA: California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2007), 7, *available at* <http://www.rnnetwork.org/publications/2007/revised-portfolio-2007.pdf> (last visited May 6, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, *Child Care in Thirteen Economically Disadvantaged Communities* (Arlington, VA: NACCRRA, 2006), 15, *available at* <http://www.naccrra.org/randd/data/CaseyReport.pdf> (last visited Sept. 17, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, *2008 Price of Child Care*, *available at* [http://www.naccrra.org/randd/docs/2008\\_Price\\_of\\_Child\\_Care.pdf](http://www.naccrra.org/randd/docs/2008_Price_of_Child_Care.pdf) (last visited Apr. 6, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Suzanne Helburn, Mary L. Culkin, Carollee Howes, Donna Bryant, Richard Clifford, Debby Cryer, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, and Sharon Lynn Kagan, *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers* (Denver, CO: University of Colorado, 1995).

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<sup>9</sup> NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, “Characteristics of Infant Child Care: Factors Contributing to Positive Caregiving,” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 11(3), 1996, 269-306.

<sup>10</sup> Peter L. Mangione, Poonam L. Ahuja, and J. Ronald Lally, Evaluation of PITC Partners for Quality Training and Technical Assistance in California (WestEd, 2003) (unpublished report); Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, KACCRRRA Infant/Toddler Project – Child Care Quality Study Final Report (Salina, KS: KACCRRRA, 2003), 2-4.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Early Head Start Benefits Children and Families: Research to Practice Brief (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006), 1-2, *available at* [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs\\_resrch/reports/dissemination/research\\_briefs/research\\_brief\\_overall.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/reports/dissemination/research_briefs/research_brief_overall.pdf) (last visited Feb. 6, 2008).