

# Child Care Assistance and School Readiness

---

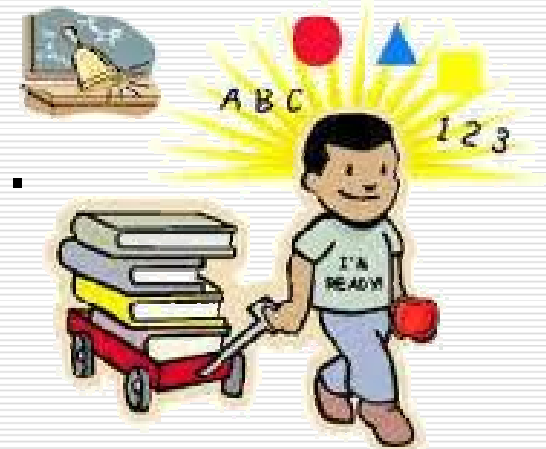


Helen Blank  
Karen Schulman  
National Women's Law Center  
May 2011

# Young Children Are in Child Care

---

- ❑ 12.7 million children under age 5 are in child care on a regular basis.
- ❑ Two-thirds of the nearly 2 million children who receive child care subsidies are age zero to five.
- ❑ Most of these children are not enrolled in Early Head Start, Head Start, or prekindergarten.
- ❑ Their child care experiences should encompass school readiness.



# Defining School Readiness

---

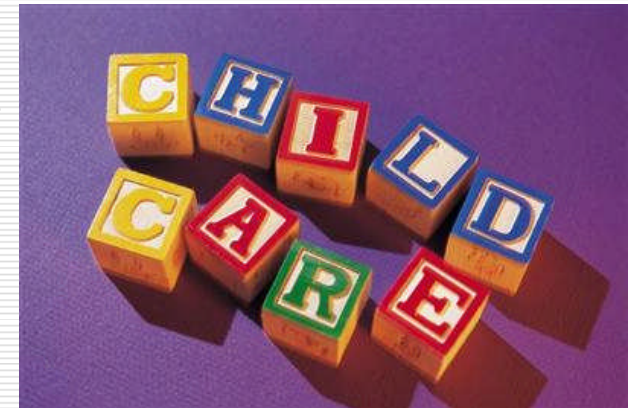


- ❑ School readiness is about more than narrow academic skills – it's about children's general learning skills, love of learning, persistence, self-control, and self-motivation that are critical to their success in school and in life.
  - ❑ School readiness also involves the family context – whether children have a stable, secure environment at home and whether their parents are supporting their learning.
  - ❑ Child care can play a role in both directly supporting children's school readiness and helping their families to support their children's school readiness.
-

# Child Care Helps Children by Helping Parents Work

---

- ❑ Living in a poor or low-income environment can be detrimental to young children, so it is important to improve their families' financial situation.
- ❑ Child care assistance helps families work, earn income, and remain independent.
- ❑ Child care assistance can relieve family stress, which can affect parenting.
- ❑ North Carolina's Smart Start Program reserves 30% for subsidies because it is family support.



# Strengthen Subsidy Policies to Encourage High-Quality Care

---

- ❑ Contracts to encourage stability for providers
    - Tie higher standards to contracts
  - ❑ Vouchers tied to higher standards (Ohio ELI Program)
  - ❑ Require programs receiving subsidies to participate in quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) or be at a certain level of the QRIS
  - ❑ Add requirements for family, friend, and neighbor care (Delaware)
- 



# Improve Provider Reimbursement Rates to Encourage High-Quality Care

---

- ❑ Increase basic reimbursement rates for child care providers
    - Only 6 states at federally recommended level (75<sup>th</sup> percentile of current market rates)
    - Low rates discourage regulated care (Michigan)
  - ❑ Allow higher rates in low-income communities, rural areas, etc.
  - ❑ Provide higher rates and/or bonuses for programs in QRIS
  - ❑ Provide higher rates and bonuses for programs serving a large percentage of subsidized children
- 





# Help Parents Locate Higher-Quality Care

---

- ❑ Support Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
- ❑ Ensure the QRIS focuses on providing information to parents



# Support Qualified Child Care Teachers

---



- ❑ Quality of child care teachers is key to child care quality and encouraging children's school readiness
  - ❑ Initiatives to improve education, compensation, and retention (T.E.A.C.H.®)
  - ❑ Funding for professional development
  - ❑ Strategies to make training and education accessible for child care providers/teachers
    - Online access
    - Classes available at convenient times and locations
    - Scholarships and tuition assistance
  - ❑ Mentoring support
  - ❑ Early learning guidelines and curriculum training and materials
-



# Establish Subsidy Policies that Create More Stability for Families

---

- ☐ Require eligibility redetermination only once per year
- ☐ Reduce in-person visits required to obtain and retain subsidies
- ☐ Minimize reporting requirements
- ☐ Set longer periods for job search



# Establish Subsidy Policies that Create More Stability for Providers

---

- ☐ Use payment practices that reflect generally accepted payment policies used for private-paying parents
- ☐ Pay for absent days
- ☐ Make timely payments to providers
- ☐ Notify providers about changes in parents' status that affect eligibility for subsidies



# Use Subsidy Policies to Encourage Linkages with Prekindergarten

---

- ❑ Pay full-day reimbursement for care provided at least 5 or 6 hours to encourage prekindergarten-child care collaboration
- ❑ Allow child care programs with higher quality ratings to provide prekindergarten



# Questions for Discussion

---

- ☐ Can we set expectations for child care to promote children's school readiness that are realistic and encourage progress, but do not set child care up for failure?
- ☐ What resources are necessary for child care to support school readiness?
- ☐ How can we talk about child care so that the public and policy makers see it as school readiness?



# Contact

---

Helen Blank, Director of Leadership and Public Policy

■ [hblank@nwlc.org](mailto:hblank@nwlc.org)

Karen Schulman, Senior Policy Analyst

■ [kschulman@nwlc.org](mailto:kschulman@nwlc.org)

National Women's Law Center



For more information, visit: [www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)

---