



Position Paper on Child Care

Revised March 2010

Statement of the Issue

The accessibility, availability and quality of child care affect our children, families, businesses, economy and community. Child care not only allows families to earn a living, but it provides early childhood education, parental support and education, prevention and intervention services for at-risk families, and prepares children for success in school, work and life.

Child care is only recently being recognized by the community, small and large business, Federal and State governments, the military and others as directly linked to quality of life, education, future workforce development, gang/drug/crime prevention and national security.

Accessibility Issues:

Child care in Sonoma County is generally perceived to be a need primarily for young children and for low income families; however families of all income levels require child care to meet a variety of needs. The majority of families with young children in Sonoma County have two working parents or a working single parent. These families need a complete continuum of child care, including before- and after-school supervision and activities, nighttime and weekend care, and care for children who are sick.

The cost of child care comprises 25-34% of a Sonoma County family's income. Only a fraction of children from low-income families who are eligible for subsidized child care are receiving services, and there are thousands of eligible children on the Centralized Eligibility List waiting for funding.

Availability Issues:

There is a shortage of child care of all types in Sonoma County. Currently there are waiting lists for many programs. Lack of licensed infant care spaced forces families to accept less than ideal care during the most important part of a child's life. Lack of school-age care often forces young children into self-care, which can be emotionally and physically dangerous.

Quality Issues:

Due to inadequate funding, child care programs face often insurmountable challenges in providing the high quality child care services that have proven successful outcomes for children. High child care workforce turnover, inconsistent or inadequate training, minimal wages/benefits, and low professional status result in diminished quality of care. Children with special physical, emotional and educational needs are entering child care in greater numbers, and teachers and caregivers need additional training and skills to meet their needs.



CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY

Sonoma County Definition and Statement of Quality Child Care

All Sonoma County children (0–12 years of age) in child care and early learning programs, (including family child care homes, school based child care and center based care), will be cared for in programs that are safe and healthy, nurturing, stimulating, interactive, culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of all children.

Child care programs in Sonoma County will plan and implement programs that support the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of children. The success of programs is dependent upon a well-educated workforce, strong linkages to a supportive community, and healthy relationships between caregivers and families.

The specific standards for quality child care will be the existing quality standards:

- Title 5 Regulations,
- Head Start Performance Standards,
- National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Criteria for Accreditation,
- National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) Quality Standards, and
- Environment Rating Scales

Which Standards Apply to Which Child Care Settings?

The documents outlining high quality child care are specific to various programs:

- Title 5 contains required regulations for all child care programs under contract with the Child Development Division of the California Department of Education.
- Head Start Performance Standards are requirements for Head Start Programs.
- The NAEYC Criteria can be used by any center program and are the avenue towards becoming accredited if a program desires.
- The NAFCC Quality Standards serve the same purpose for family child care programs.
- The various Environment Rating Scales address centers, infant/toddler centers, Family Child Care Homes, and After School programs.

Programs that are required to adhere to particular standards or regulations may also incorporate the NAEYC/NAFCC criteria in their programs.



CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY

Statement on Culturally Responsive Early Care and Education

Our Vision For Children	All Sonoma County children (0–12 years of age) in child care and early learning programs, (including family child care homes, school based child care and center based care), will be cared for in programs that are safe and healthy, nurturing, stimulating, interactive, culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of all children.
Our Understanding of Cultural Diversity	We understand and believe that culture includes race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, immigration status, gender identity, age, socio-economic status, religion, etc. We want to emphasize that quality early care and education and cultural responsiveness are directly connected.
Culturally Responsive Early Care and Education	<p>We believe that a strong foundation in child development, combined with a disposition toward flexible thinking, acceptance and openness, and respect for meeting a child’s individual needs, prepares early childhood professionals to create culturally responsive programs.</p> <p>We believe that culturally responsive practices require more than the presence of children from different backgrounds; practices must focus on the full and active participation of all children and their families in community activities, services, and programs. Although a family’s preferences may at times seem to conflict with the needs of the group or best practices within ECE, we believe that sincere dialogue can help uncover areas of agreement and ways in which caregivers and families can work together to support the child and family.</p> <p>Intentional focus on the following professional development concepts and program policies will prepare ECE professionals to successfully meet these goals.</p>
Professional Development	<p>To prepare ECE professionals to both create and sustain culturally responsive settings, coursework and training opportunities must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information, activities and time to practice building a disposition toward lifelong learning, and self-reflection that increases awareness of one’s own biases and privileges and power; ▪ Information on children’s development of (1) identity, (2) awareness of differences, and (3) awareness of and participation in prejudice and bias (racial, ethnic, gender, ability, etc.); ▪ Curriculum and activities that support children’s identity development



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	<p>within their own cultural community and within the broader community of Sonoma County and California;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information about anti-bias education with opportunities for mentor and peer support through onsite practical experience; ▪ Information on and practice with handling difficult conversations about bias and prejudice with children, families and co-workers; ▪ Opportunities to learn about a community and it's strengths and forming community partnerships; ▪ Opportunities to learn about specific cultural groups (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning [LGBTQ], dual language, mixed race families) and to explore teaching practices that support children who live within these groups; ▪ Information on how culturally responsive care is provided in a mono-cultural community; ▪ Opportunities to collaborate and network with other professionals to support the commitment to culturally responsive care.
<p>Program Policies</p>	<p>To institutionalize the practices needed to provide culturally responsive ECE, programs must incorporate the following into their existing processes and policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Program policies that specifically reference a commitment to family-educator partnerships; opportunities for ongoing dialogue with families about their child care preferences and cultural practices; ▪ Multicultural materials and curriculum that are authentic reflections of the staff, children and families within the program and the broader community of Sonoma County and California; ▪ Expectations that representatives from staff, families, and program administrators/board members participate in regularly scheduled diversity training as well as the presence of books, videos, etc. to support ongoing development related to providing culturally responsive care; ▪ Regularly scheduled family/educator meetings to discuss classroom practices, parent/caregiver questions and diversity topics; ▪ Ongoing staff and program evaluation to ensure that practices are in line with the goal of providing culturally responsive ECE. <p>Note: the terms “staff” and “program administrators” include family child care providers</p>



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A Call to Action	<p>Culturally responsive ECE allows children to be who they are, like who they are, get along well with others who are different than themselves, ask for what they need and feel is right, and stand up for themselves and others. It fosters children’s capacity to thrive in school and in life in an increasingly multicultural country and interconnected world.</p> <p>The Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council urges all those who work with children and their families to create culturally responsive programs to support our children in reaching their full potential.</p>
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Position and Recommendations

The Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County (CCPC) supports affordable, available, accessible, and quality child care for all families in Sonoma County.

It is essential that families have available child care to meet a variety of needs, including infant care, school-age supervision and activities, ill child care, back up care, all hour care, and care for children with special needs.

CCPC believes that quality child care must be affordable and available to meet the needs of families at all income levels.

Accessible child care services are important for all families due to the variety of transportation, language, cultural, and physical needs. We encourage business, government, schools, and community developments to explore opportunities to increase available child care in their planning, much in the same way that they plan for schools, libraries, or parks.

We support family-friendly policies from business, government and schools. Policies such as flexible work schedules and assistance with child care encourages a productive workforce and a stronger community.

It is important that parents and the community be provided with information about available child care options.

CCPC supports quality child care that provides our children with a safe and nurturing care environment that is conducive to healthy child development. It is essential that all parents know what quality child care means. In addition, it is imperative that all child care providers (relatives who provide care, family child care providers, child care center providers, and youth activities supervisors) have access to early childhood education.



CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY

ADVOCACY PLATFORM

The Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County (CCPC) supports affordable, available, accessible, and quality child care for all families in Sonoma County. While families (parents and guardians) are the primary caregivers of their children, child care and development programs are vital to the children and families they serve, and to the overall quality of life of in Sonoma County. Quality child care fosters children's health and development, and is a critical part of our economy, allowing our businesses and community to grow strong. The child care profession merits equal respect and compensation as other professions and industries. Training and retention of child care and development professionals are fundamental to quality child care services.

Therefore, the Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County advocates for the changes necessary to realize the following goals:

- All families have access to high quality learning experiences and child care programs that address the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development of each child.
- All children are cared for in child care and development programs that are safe, healthy, nurturing, stimulating, interactive, culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of each individual child.
- All child care programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and their families and focus on the strengths of each individual family and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.
- All families have access to available child care that meets a variety of needs, including infant care, school-age care, care for mildly ill children, back up care, all hour care, and care for children with special needs.
- Child care services are affordable and available to meet the needs of families at all income levels, and subsidized child care services are available for all eligible children.
- The child care and development workforce is highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits, commensurate with professionals in comparable fields. The retention of professionals is integral to quality child care.
- Government adopts streamlined, affordable processes for building and developing licensed child care facilities, including zoning and licensing.
- Quality, affordable, and accessible child care and development programs are recognized as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the County's economic growth and community development.
- Individuals, business, schools, government, and community collaborate to provide our children and families with family-friendly policies, flexible work schedules, and assistance with affordable, accessible, and quality care.



CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY

Summary:

The Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County believes child care enables Sonoma County children to achieve optimal outcomes and our businesses and community to thrive. Child care is part of our economy and contributes to the quality of life in Sonoma County. Child care can contribute to easing some of the issues facing Sonoma County.

CCPC urges the cooperation and collaboration of individuals, business, schools, government, and our community to provide our children and families with affordable, accessible, and quality child care.