

Sample of Strategies in Plan

- m Study national and regional models such as “Is it good for the Children?” that have established campaigns to promote the inclusion of child and family issues in policy-making and planning at all levels of the community.
- m Develop social policies that prioritize the health and well-being of children and families in Sonoma County. Establish these social policies with local governments as the basis for public policy and decision-making at all levels.
- m Educate businesses about the benefits of subsidizing or offering on-site or near-site child care, including best practice models.
- m Adopt and promote countywide child care competencies, standards and developmental measures in order to achieve quality child care and learning experiences.
- m Support collaborative efforts to develop School Readiness, Universal Preschool and Early Literacy programs that are accessible to all children in Sonoma County.
- m Promote inclusion of child and family issues in strategic planning and political agendas.
- m Provide information to program staff, families and public policy groups about the importance of family involvement in early learning and the benefits to children.
- m Develop and support child care and learning programs that incorporate access to mental health services and support.
- m Promote a model of integrated child care and health support, where multiple services and information can be provided to families including health insurance.
- m Promote the development of schools as neighborhood “hubs” for the provision of services and information to families.

*This is a sample of the 69 strategies listed in the report.
For complete list of strategies, please refer to the full report.*

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The full report is available online at www.scoe.org/scccpc.

For the Children: A Comprehensive Plan for Child Care and Learning Programs Sonoma County 2005-2010

Executive Summary

From June 2003 to January 2005 the Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council (SCCCPC) held a series of community planning sessions to develop a comprehensive Child Care Plan for Sonoma County. It was the Council's hope that the process would serve to unite the community in a common vision for the future and result in active participation and community ownership of the Plan's goals and strategies. The community defined its goals and strategies for the future of child care programs and child related services in this comprehensive plan, and created an instrument that places the welfare of Sonoma County's children at the forefront of all planning and development activities. The SCCCPC is committed to helping the community reach its goals by convening groups and forums related to the goal areas, and continuing to seek active partners for the implementation of specific strategies. Each year, the SCCCPC will convene community partners to review and comment upon the implementation of the plan and make recommendations on the progress Sonoma County has made in reaching its goals for children.



Photo courtesy of Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)

Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council

The Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council was established in 1991 in accordance with state law AB 2141 to provide a forum for the identification of local priorities for child care and to develop policies to meet the needs identified within these priorities. One of its state mandates is to create a comprehensive countywide plan for child care and learning programs.

SCCCPC is sanctioned by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools. Council members are appointed to 3-year terms and represent a cross section of the community including parents, child care providers, agencies serving children and families, public officials and community members.

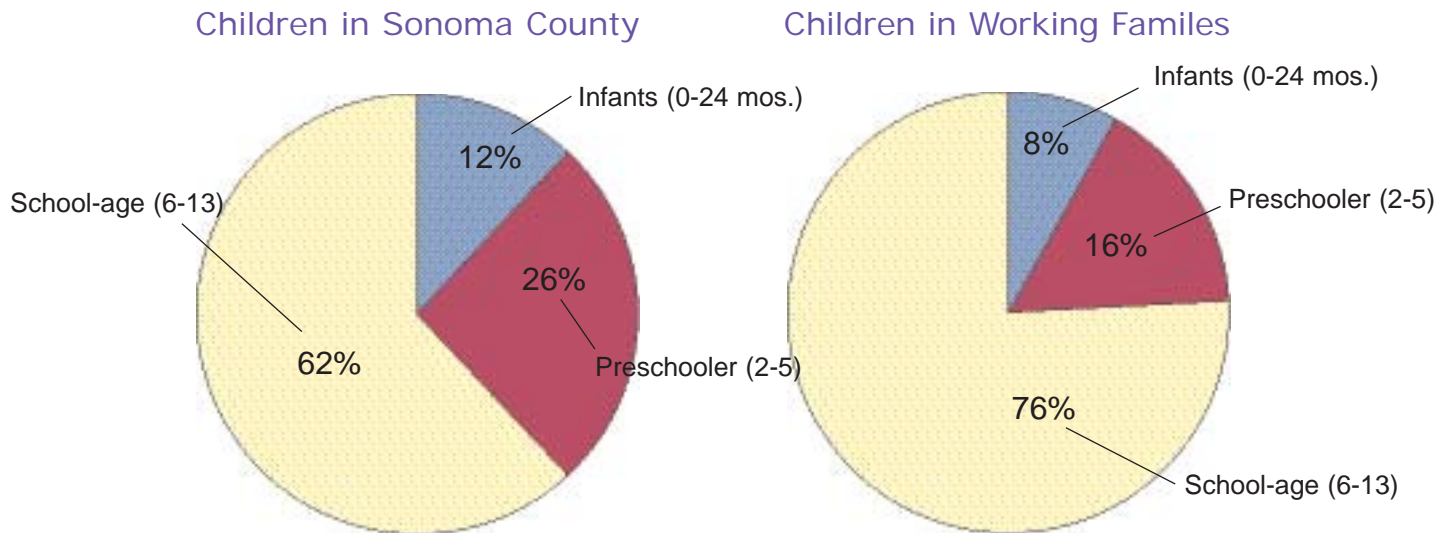
The Comprehensive Countywide Plan

This plan will be used to:

- w Increase awareness of the importance of quality child care and learning experiences for all children, families and communities;
- w Provide all stakeholders with a common frame of reference for future action;
- w Expand partnerships to implement strategies;
- w Provide a platform that will lead to coordinated planning, integrated action and advocacy for specific policy changes;
- w Mobilize public and private resources to address identified needs; and
- w Recommend priority areas for development of programs and funding.

Sonoma County

Sonoma County is located approximately 50 miles north of San Francisco. The county is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Marin County on the South, Napa and Lake Counties to the East, and Mendocino County to the North. As of 2000, 458,614 people live in Sonoma County; the County's overall growth rate has been at 18 percent since 1990. Approximately 19 percent of the population is under 14 years of age, the age up to which child care is typically provided. Of these children, 12 percent are infants (0 to 24 months), 26 percent are preschoolers (2 to 5 years), and 62 percent are school-age children (6 to 13 years).



An Expensive County for Families

Although less expensive than several of its Bay Area counterparts, Sonoma County is an expensive county in which to raise a family. The overall cost of living in Sonoma County is far above the state average. The cost of child care - \$8,450 per year for an infant - is among the highest in the state.

Working Families in Sonoma County

Welfare reform triggered a dramatic increase in the number of women in the workforce. Of families with children under age six, 58% are families in which both parents or single head-of-household are in the workforce. Of families with children ages six through fourteen, the rate increases to 70%. These families rely on some type of child care for their children while they are at work. For parents who choose licensed child care and learning programs, the demand exceeds the supply of such programs in Sonoma County.

Low Income Families

27% or one in four children in the county lives in a family making 75 percent or less of the state median family income, approximately \$39,000 for a family of four. The high cost of child care presents a challenge to all families seeking care, but it is particularly burdensome for low-income families. Families unable to get the assistance they need must often settle for less expensive and potentially lower-quality care in order to maintain employment.

Quality Care is a Good Investment

According to a recent Economic Impact Report of Child Care in Sonoma County, child care is a \$91 million dollar industry in the county, placing it just below dairy receipts. Children thrive in high quality child care and are more likely to be ready for kindergarten and later learning than children who are in low-quality programs. Economists have calculated the savings to society generated by every dollar invested in high quality child care and learning programs: \$7 saved for every \$1 spent. It is expected that child care supply will not meet the growing demand without partnerships between business, government, and the child care industry.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES 2005-2010

The Comprehensive Countywide Child Care Plan outlines existing conditions in Sonoma County; identifies five goals; lists desired outcomes; recommends strategies; and identifies potential partners. The goals and outcomes are:

Goal 1: Child care and learning programs and the children and families they serve are valued by the community at large as vital to the overall quality of life of Sonoma County residents.

Outcomes: Government, business, labor, education and the non-profit sector collaborate to fund and support child care programs. Social and public policy in Sonoma County represent the needs of the community's children and families.

Goal 2: 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.

Outcome: Quality, accessibility and capacity of child care programs are increased and sustained.

Goal 3: All child care and learning programs include integrated, comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families. These programs focus on the strengths of each individual family, and incorporate principles that respect and value culture and diversity.

Outcomes: Comprehensive and coordinated services are integrated with child care programs. Centralized access to information and resources for all programs is increased.

Goal 4: The Child care and learning workforce are highly trained, valued as professionals, and fairly compensated for their work, including benefits commensurate with professionals in comparable fields.

Outcomes: Recruitment and retention rates of the child care and learning program workforce are improved. Educational standards and opportunities for the child care and learning program workforce is increased.

Goal 5: Quality, affordable and accessible early care and education programs are considered as a critical part of the infrastructure that sustains the economic growth and community development of Sonoma County.

Outcome: Child care programs and facilities are integrated into the Sonoma County infrastructure.