

# Building for the Future Our Children, Our Community

## A Countywide Plan for Child Care and Development Services Sonoma County 2010 – 2015

### Executive Summary

In January 2010, the Child Care Planning Council (CCPC) began a community process to create the new 2010-2015 countywide plan for child care and development services that would represent the needs and values of families in Sonoma County. From January to August 2010, CCPC conducted informal surveys of parents, providers and community members on emerging trends affecting children, families and child care in an effort to provide valuable input into the development of the new countywide plan. This plan is intended to be a "living document" that inspires community engagement and helps to unite various constituent groups towards our common vision. CCPC hopes to mobilize public and private resources to address identified needs, and enhance and strengthen collaboration among the children's advocacy groups and service agencies. CCPC is committed to the goal of creating a united community with a common vision, encouraging active participation by all constituents, and supporting community ownership of the plan's goals and strategies.

### Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County



*The mission of the Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County is to convene and inspire the community through collaboration, leadership and advocacy to promote and plan for quality child care and development for the benefit of all children (birth to 18), their families and Sonoma County.*

The Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County (CCPC) 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.

CCPC membership and reports are authorized by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Sonoma County Superintendent of

Schools, and the Council is governed by State mandates, Council bylaws and the Brown Act. CCPC endeavors to convene all those concerned with child care issues in community forums and meetings in order to improve and sustain valuable, quality programs and opportunities for families.

### The Countywide Plan for Child Care and Development Services

The purpose and use of this plan include:

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

# TRENDS IMPACTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES & THE CHILD CARE FIELD

CCPC conducted informal interviews with parents, child care providers, human service professionals, educators and community members asking: "What concerns do you have for the future for your children and grandchildren?" and "Can you think of any trends in our local community or State that will affect the well-being of children and those who care for them?" These four trends emerged:

## **Trend A:** Economic Downturn

The economic downturn in California has impacted every facet of life, including the care of our children. Many parents have had to shift their focus toward basic survival needs which impacts the quality of attention and care available for children.

## **Trend B:** Children with Special Needs

Programs are reporting that children and families are presenting with special needs more frequently now than previously experienced. In this context, "special needs" includes any physical, emotional, behavioral or developmental need that requires more than the usual attention, assessment and/or intervention by teachers and caregivers. It is illegal to discriminate against children with special needs; however, it is difficult to assess how many providers are trained and available to provide good care for these children.

## **Trend C:** Societal & Environmental Conditions

There is a growing dialogue among parents, providers and community members about the societal & environmental issues, such as fast-paced American lifestyle, environmental concerns, and increase in health risks and exposure to violence, disaster and war. Questions about the impact of these issues include:

1. Are these societal and environmental factors impacting normal child development in a negative way (e.g., language development, brain development, social interactions, behavioral health, etc.)?
2. How can we assure clean air, water, food, natural and manmade environments for children in child care and development programs?
3. How can we best access expertise on these topics and provide parenting guidance based on that knowledge?

## **Trend D:** Recognition of the Importance of Child Care and Development

There has been a favorable shift in attention toward children and their development with the growing scientific knowledge about brain development, the impact of environments and relationships on early childhood development, and the economic value to society of investing in children.



Photos courtesy of 4Cs Sonoma County

# GOALS AND INDICATORS 2010 - 2015

The Countywide Plan for Child Care and Development Services outlines existing conditions in Sonoma County, identifies five goals, and defines the indicators of success for each goal.

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

## **Indicators of Success:**

- 1.1 COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP:** The community at large shows an increased interest and commitment to children, families and child care and development programs.
- 1.2 SOCIAL AND PUBLIC POLICY:** Social and public policy in Sonoma County reflect the value of children as the future of Sonoma County.
- 1.3 FUNDING:** High quality child care and development programs are supported through increased funding and advocacy to meet the needs of 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.***

## **Indicators of Success:**

- 2.1 QUALITY:** All child care and development programs meet standards of high quality.
- 2.2 CAPACITY:** There is an increase in capacity of high quality child care and development programs that include infant, on-site after-school, full-day preschool and subsidized child care.
- 2.3 ACCESSIBILITY:** Families can access programs that meet their unique cultural, geographic, economic and special needs.

**Goal 3: *All child care and development 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.***

## **Indicators of Success:**

- 3.1 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:** Child care and development programs provide opportunities for family involvement on a consistent basis.
- 3.2 HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH:** Child care and development programs and family child care homes provide on-site access and referrals to health and mental health services to improve family access to services.
- 3.3 SCHOOLS:** School districts, child care and development programs, and other agencies collaborate to provide comprehensive services to children and their families.

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

## **Indicators of Success:**

- 4.1 TRAINING & INCENTIVES:** There are increased teacher and provider training opportunities and participation.
- 4.2 WAGES & BENEFITS:** Wages and benefits are commensurate with similar professions, and are reflective of the regional economy.

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

## **Indicators of Success:**

- 5.1 BUSINESS:** Business leaders understand the relationship of child care and development to employment and economic sustainability as demonstrated by their advocacy, investments and support of work/family policies and benefits.
- 5.2 GOVERNMENT:** Government and community planners understand the relationship of child care and education to housing, land use, transportation, and economic development, and include child care in all development and redevelopment plans.

## Sample of Strategies in Plan

- Launch a widespread "Partnership for Children" movement with a public education component that includes messages about promoting children-first public policy and investments.
- Research and promote social policies that prioritize the health and well-being of children and families in Sonoma County. Partner with local organizations that educate the community about social and public policy. Develop a "unified voice" with all stakeholders to promote decisions that are based on what is best for children.
- Educate businesses about the benefits of subsidizing or offering on-site or near-site child care, including best practice models.
- Promote child care competencies, standards and developmental measures throughout the county in order to achieve quality child care and early learning experiences.
- Identify, mentor and develop compensation and support services for child care providers who are interested in providing child care during non-traditional hours such as weekend care, infant care, and care for special populations.
- Survey child care providers on their training and experience in serving special populations. Develop training and mentoring programs for providers that include specialized training in serving special populations such as teen parents, agricultural workers, and children with special developmental and cultural needs.
- Provide information to program staff, families and public policy groups about the importance of family involvement in early learning and the benefits to children.
- Develop and promote a model of integrated family support that includes child care and development programs and health/mental health services. Increase collaboration between public health programs, community clinics, medical and mental health providers, law enforcement, and child care and development programs to link families to services and information.
- Sustain and expand existing collaborative relationships between schools, child care and development programs, and other agencies to refine standards and shared protocols, curricula and testing formats.
- Sustain and refine community-based bilingual training for college credit for child care and development program teachers.
- Research and distribute local and statewide wage and benefit information to strategic stakeholders and advocates in Sonoma County.
- Engage business leadership, collaborate with business partnerships and support round tables to explore ways to exchange expertise between business and child care industries and model best practices.
- Compile baseline data and information from cities and the county on existing local child care requirements. Assist child care providers in understanding and complying with city and county regulations. Develop a guide for early care and education programs and municipalities which promotes streamlined permitting and land use regulations.

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



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**The full report is available online at [www.scoe.org/ccpc](http://www.scoe.org/ccpc)**