



## CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL OF SONOMA COUNTY

### **Background Information**

In 2004, the Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council convened a series of community meetings in order to develop a Sonoma County Child Care Plan. A goal of that plan is to develop a definition of quality child care that the community of Sonoma County and the child care field can agree upon, and that will be useful to parents, providers, agencies and collaborative efforts related to child care.

As a community, we care that when our children are away from their families, they are cared for in environments and programs that meet a high level of quality. Overwhelmingly, research shows that when children are in child care, the quality of that care is an important determining factor in the optimal growth and development of children. Study after study indicates that children who have had high quality child care experiences have a greater opportunity to reach their maximum potential in life. Therefore, the goal of the definition contained in this document is to provide guidance about what constitutes quality child care, and to further our ongoing community effort ensuring that all children in Sonoma County are cared for in high quality settings.

The process of developing a definition began in March 2005 when the Quality Committee began to meet. Participants included representation: from Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council; First 5 of Sonoma County; Santa Rosa Junior College, Child Development Department; Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs); Maternal Child Health; Professional Association of Childhood Educators Alternative Payment Program; Community Action Partnership Head Start; Sonoma County Office of Education; and the Sonoma County Child Care Association. The group met and worked over an extended period of time and established the preceding definition of quality child care for Sonoma County.