STATUS OF CHILD CARE
2014
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Most of us are familiar with the book *All I Really Need to Know I learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum “Wisdom was not at the top of the graduateschool mountain, but there in the sandpile [at kindergarten]. These are the things I learned...” The author goes on to explain all of the skills and traits he learned in kindergarten that served him well into adulthood: “Everything you need to know is in there somewhere.” He describes learning about caring for others and himself, ecology, politics, equality and healthy living.

One of my fondest lines from the book is “When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.”

What we teach our children truly does determine their path in life. They learn what we teach them (usually) and they won’t learn much of what we don’t teach them. Child care - its availability, accessibility and affordability - contributes to what children learn. Not only does it contribute to our children’s education, but to parents’ peace of mind as well so that they can focus their attention on achieving their own potential and contributing to the workforce and community.

The *Status of Child Care Report* demonstrates the importance and necessity of quality and affordable child care in central Alabama. Some of the trends may be enlightening, others may be discouraging. One thing remains constant: children are born every day and more and more often they are born to parents who are working hard to support their own family and contribute to their community. When we “hold hands, and stick together” we can accomplish so much more for our children and their futures.

Fulghum sums it up best: “And it is still true, no matter how old you are - when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.” Won’t you join hands with Childcare Resources as we work together to ensure that children do indeed get the best start in life through quality child care that is available and affordable?
Child Care: It’s Critical to Alabama’s Economy

In August 2013, in partnership with Auburn University at Montgomery, the Alabama Partnership for Children released the Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry on the Economy of the State of Alabama report. The report stated that the early care and education (ECE) industry is critical to the vitality of Alabama’s economy.

Important findings:

• The **ECE industry has a $1.03 billion impact** on the state’s economy and is responsible for an average 24,717 full time equivalent jobs.

• The ECE industry adds to the overall economic efficiency of our state by enabling parents to participate in the workforce or attend higher education.

• Comprehensive quality child care and education lays the groundwork for Alabama’s future workforce by preparing upcoming generations for school and work success. Quality ECE also attracts new business and industry to our state.

• To benefit every Alabama resident, the ECE industry stakeholders - working families, businesses, government and the child care industry - must work and plan together to maintain a high quality system of ECE that is necessary for working families and lays the foundation for school readiness that is necessary to grow a capable, productive future workforce.
According to the Alabama Department of Commerce, key target industries include aerospace and automobile manufacturing. By comparison, the ECE industry is also a large employment industry providing jobs to over 24,000 Alabamians. In turn, over 200,000 parents go to work each day in every job sector in Alabama.

"In terms of its social weight, the unique feature of the ECE industry is its potential for creating an enormous and long-lasting social economic benefit for society at large. A well-funded and well-staffed comprehensive early childhood education program can produce significant positive externalities."

M. Keivan Deravi, Ph.D., Professor of Economics, AUM

“We have known for years what young children need to develop optimally, but we have not fully understood how critical the early care and education industry is to our state’s economy," stated Gail Piggott, executive director of the Alabama Partnership for Children. “Not only do these programs provide employment in small businesses across the state, but they enable parents to go to work each day. Comprehensive early care and education also lays the groundwork for Alabama’s future workforce by preparing upcoming generations for school and work success."
Quality child care impacts the future of our children, our community and our state. Research shows that a high quality child care program beginning at birth has a critical influence on a child’s readiness for kindergarten and later school success which leads to a productive adult ready to contribute to the community.

Six Indicators of Quality Child Care

1. **Teacher to Child Ratio**: The number of teachers per children. The fewer the number of children per teacher, the more interaction each child in the group will receive. Young children need plenty of adult interaction and attention! The younger the child, the more important this is.

2. **Group Size**: The number of children in a group. The smaller the group, the better. Imagine a group of 25 two-year olds with five adults, compared to a group of 10 with two adults. Both groups have the same teacher to child ratio. The smaller group size will be a calmer and a safer environment.

3. **Teacher Education and Turnover**: Teachers with degrees and/or child development training are better prepared to work with young children. Young children do better when they have a knowledgeable, consistent teacher for at least a year.

4. **Health and Safety**: The environment inside and outside of the program should be clean, organized and free from hazards. Programs should have appropriate discipline and medicine policies. Teachers should be trained in infant and child CPR and First Aid.

5. **Family Involvement**: Involved parents build a strong partnership with their child’s caregiver and program. Parents should be welcome to participate and share ideas with the program.

6. **Accreditation**: Child care providers may attain national accreditation in an effort to reach and maintain a higher level of quality standards that are beyond state licensing minimum standards.

Accredited Child Care Providers in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker Counties

36/646 or 5.6% of providers are accredited
The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) Child Care Services Division began work on a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in 2009. Stakeholders from across the state came together to develop increasing levels of quality criteria beyond the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers. The result of that work is the Alabama Quality STARS, comprehensive QRIS containing standards for five STAR levels of quality for center-based programs.

Currently, Alabama Quality STARS is being piloted in partnership with the University of Alabama’s Department of Human Resources and Family Studies with some funding provided by the Alabama Department of Children’s Affairs.

According to Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr., division director for child care services for the Alabama Department of Human Resources, “Alabama Quality STARS will enable parents, providers and decision-makers in our state to identify the levels of quality in child care centers. We will also be able to ascertain quality gaps that exist in child care, target funding and support to address those gaps, and empower parents to make informed choices about their child’s care. We will no longer have to guess what quality child care means in our state. Through Alabama Quality STARS we not only define what quality child care means here in Alabama, we also establish clear quality benchmarks for child care programs with a framework for improving child care for Alabama’s most precious citizens.”

Information from Alabama Partnership for Children Smart Start Update – March 2014
According to the VOICES for Alabama’s Children 2013 Alabama Kids Count Data Book, there are over 65,659 children under age five living in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker Counties. Based on the number of employed mothers with children under five, approximately 33,428 of these children are in some type of child care program. On average, children spend 36 hours per week in child care.

Highest Level of Educational Attainment by Alabama’s Child Care Workforce 2008

2008 Alabama Child Care Workforce Study
Alabama Partnership for Children, with assistance from the Alabama Technology Network -- Auburn University
Dr. Valora Washington, chief executive officer for the Council for Professional Recognition stated in Spotlight on Teacher Wages, ExchangeEveryDay, http://www.childcareexchange.com/eed, March 7, 2014, “I am compelled to shine a spotlight on an issue that, while not new, rarely gets the attention it deserves. I have witnessed first-hand the paradoxical nature of teaching. On one hand, according to the latest research, there is a direct correlation between a well-trained teacher workforce and the performance of our youngsters. Yet, tragically, the compensation of early educators lags behind the rest of American society. When we know that staff quality is partly defined by salary, we’ve turned our children - in their most formative years - over to a dedicated, yet underpaid workforce."
Professional development is a continuous process that begins with the knowledge, skills and abilities that teachers have upon entering the field. Child care teachers can refer to the Alabama Child Care and Education Professional Development System (Alabama Pathways) for guidance in determining their career path. Professional development and early childhood training are available through a variety of resources: professional development organizations, DHR quality enhancement contract agencies, colleges and universities.

The Alabama Pathways Professional Development Lattice reflects eight levels of training and education to guide caregivers and teachers on a path that promotes high quality care and education. Levels include training, credentials, certificate and degrees in Child Development and Early Childhood Education with a focus on knowledge and skills specific to early care and education.

**Assistance for Professional Development**

DHR provides quality enhancement funding for two scholarship programs, Leadership in Child Care and T.E.A.C.H., that provide support for professional development. These programs are available for individuals interested in obtaining a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA), Certificate, Associates Degree in child development or early care and education, or a Bachelors Degree in early childhood education.

The Council for Professional Recognition, based in Washington, DC, promotes improved performance and recognition of professionals in the early childhood education of children ages birth to 5 years old. The Council works to ensure all professional early childhood educators and caregivers meet the developmental, emotional and educational needs of our nation’s youngest children. The Council’s Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program™ is a one-of-kind, comprehensive system that continues to be the nation’s premiere credential for early educators. If you move to another state, you can be confident that the Council’s CDA is the only portable, transferrable, valid, competency-based national credential recognized in all 50 states, territories, District of Columbia, community colleges and the U.S. Military. This credential program utilizes multiple sources of evidence – experience, training, observation and a computerized exam – to ensure that early childhood professionals possess the essential competencies to work in their appropriate setting. For more information please visit www.cdacouncil.org.
The **Leadership in Child Care Scholarship** program provides financial assistance (tuition and selected fees) to qualified child care professionals working in child care centers, family and group day care homes to obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, Short-Term Certificate, Certificate, or Associate in Applied Science/Technology Degree in Child Development/Early Care and Education studies. For more information visit [www.accs.cc](http://www.accs.cc).

**T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood Alabama** scholarship program is administered by Smart Start Alabama Partnership for Children. The scholarship program was developed to increase the level of education and effectiveness of early learning professionals by making the educational process more affordable, increasing wages and reducing staff turnover rates. Scholarships are currently offered for the CDA Assessment Fee, Associates Degrees in Child Development and Early Care and Education, and Bachelors Degrees in Child Development and Early Care and Education. The scholarships are available for child care professionals working in a licensed child care center, staff in First Class Pre-K programs or a family day care home. For more information please visit [www.smartstartalabama.org](http://www.smartstartalabama.org).

**Sarah’s Path to Success**

Getting my degree was a dream come true. When I started with T.E.A.C.H. in 2003, I thought I would get my CDA to help me professionally. I got all A’s. I decided to take a few more classes and continued to achieve A’s and B’s. I graduated cum laude from Jefferson State Community College. Getting my education has built my confidence as a professional working with young children and families. I encourage others to reach for their dreams! -- Sarah Kelsey

Sarah Kelsey works as a co-lead teacher of 3 and 4 year olds at Harris Early Learning Center in Birmingham.
Child Care Availability

Families searching for child care often face challenges in locating care. The most frequent obstacles are cost, lack of available night/extended hours of care, care for a child with special needs, and lengthy waiting lists. These obstacles combined with a declining number of providers in Alabama make locating care a difficult and time-consuming process.

Decline in Alabama’s Child Care Providers

As the graph below illustrates, the number of licensed child care providers continues to decrease as the number of exempt providers continues to increase.

Number of Licensed and Exempt Child Care Providers in Alabama, 2000-2012
Head Start – Early Head Start

Head Start, a federally-funded national program provides comprehensive child development services to low-income, pre-school children and their families. During the 2012-13 school year, Head Start–Early Head Start served 19,644 children throughout the state and most programs maintain a waiting list.

Alabama’s First Class Pre-K

First Class is Alabama’s state-funded pre-k program. The Office of School Readiness in the Alabama Department of Children’s Affairs administers First Class Pre-K providing and monitoring grants to support high-quality pre-k classrooms in a variety of settings.

★ Ranked #1 in the country for quality 7 years in a row.

Only 9 percent of four-year olds have access to the program.

★ $1 invested in high-quality pre-k now saves taxpayers up to $7 in the future.*

Affordability of Child Care

Families are paying a significant amount of their earnings for child care. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers 10 percent of family income for child care as a benchmark of affordable care. In central Alabama:

- Child care is one of the highest household budget items for families
- The average annual cost for one child in a licensed child care center is over $6,000 annually. The average annual tuition for public college in Alabama is over $8,000. The 2013 fiscal year median annual family income in Birmingham (Jefferson County) was $57,100.
- High cost makes child care unaffordable for many low-income working families

The Rising Costs of Child Care in Central Alabama

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Average Cost for Infant Care in 2007</th>
<th>Average Increase in Cost for Infant Care by 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blount</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>14% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>10% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>4% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>5% increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Childcare Resources data on infant child care in a licensed child care center

When families can comfortably afford the cost of quality child care, they:

✔ Have more viable child care options
✔ Pay for necessities (housing, clothing, food and health care)
✔ Maintain employment
Quality child care that is available and affordable to all families who need it is a monumental and significant vision. One entity alone can only do so much toward this goal, but when we join forces with others we can get much closer to achieving this goal for more children and families.

Childcare Resources is intentional about partnering with others in our community to achieve the best opportunities for young children to succeed in school and life. Recently we have been fortunate enough to work alongside others to achieve improved health and safety regulations for child care centers in Jefferson County, to introduce early science concepts to students attending Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity Head Start, and to provide child care financial assistance to homeless women with children at Pathways to mention a few.

If you are interested in exploring ways that we can together accomplish a healthy beginning for children that optimizes their potential and future success, please contact us. We welcome your ideas and willingness to partner so that ALL children and their families have access to quality and affordable child care.

Alabama and its children are counting on us!
Accomplishment of our vision and mission involves engaging stakeholders in promoting key issues relative to our purpose. Stakeholders include the general public; business leaders; elected officials; parents; child care professionals serving families in a range of settings: child care centers, family child care homes, relative care, and schools; and concerned citizens who can advocate for children – the ultimate beneficiaries of our work. Messages are distributed through various methods including speaking engagements, agency publications and media outlets including social media.

We invite you to familiarize yourself with these issues and how they affect you, your family, your work and your community. We encourage you to take action on issues that seem most important to you. Get involved as a child advocate. Learn the issues, exercise your right to vote, contact elected officials through letters, emails, phone or personal visit. Voiceless children need your influential voice. Contact us for more information on how you can support quality and affordable child care for children and their families.

The core of our work is to make QUALITY and AFFORDABLE child care happen. Our key issues and central messages stem from this.

**Key Issues and Central Messages**

- Quality child care will be available and affordable to all families who need it.

- Quality is a reflection of the education level and professional development of child care providers, safety of the facility, number of children per caregiver and class size, among other factors.

- In 2013, child care costs in central Alabama averaged over $6,000 per year for one child in care. Public college costs in Alabama averaged just over $8,000 annually. Average family income in the Birmingham area was $57,100.
Issues of Quality and Affordability

✓ **Expand access** to high quality pre-K by increasing funding for state-funded First Class Pre-K sites. Join the Alabama School Readiness Alliance in support of increased access to pre-K at www.alabamaschoolreadiness.org.

✓ **Child care keeps Alabama working** – with approximately 60 percent of women in the workforce who have young children, employers rely on the availability and affordability of quality child care for the current and future workforce.

✓ **Resource and Referral** – families need access to information to select quality and affordable child care.

### Issues of Quality

✓ **Require background checks**, including fingerprinting, for all child care workers regardless of license status.

✓ **Increase awareness** of regular inspections and oversight of child care programs. For information on child care regulations in Alabama read "Don't Be In The Dark About Child Care"? at www.alabamachildcarefacts.org.

✓ **P-20 Councils** – children are born learning. Education begins early. Educational attainment and workforce development goals must consider early care and education in an education continuum.

✓ **Strengthen health and safety** in child care centers in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker counties through child care regulations.

### Issues of Affordability

✓ **Reauthorize** Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds to support families through child care subsidies.

✓ **Supplemental Child Care Program (SCCP)** – working families need access to affordable child care.
Our mission...

To make quality care and education of children happen by providing information, education and assistance to families, providers of child care and the community.

Our vision...

Quality child care will be available and affordable to all families who need it.

Childcare Resources is central Alabama’s only child care resource and referral agency. Chartered by United Way of Central Alabama in 1984, Childcare Resources has met the varied needs of a growing number of working families with young children for 30 years. Services include financial assistance for low-to-moderate income working families, quality training and technical assistance for child care providers including our free Early Learning Resource Library and mobile Resource Library service, research-based parent education program and assistance to families seeking quality child care options for their young children. Since 1996, Childcare Resources has been accredited as an Authorized Provider by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET). Read more at www.iacet.org.

Childcare Resources makes quality and affordable child care happen in central Alabama and we expect our agency to aspire to the same standards of quality that we promote. In 2012, Childcare Resources became the first and only child care resource and referral agency in the south to achieve National Quality Assurance for best practices from Child Care Aware of America. This designation was recently extended to 2017. Read more at www.naccrra.org/programs-services/naccrra-best-practices-program. By providing quality customer service, professional programs and services that are delivered at low to no cost, Childcare Resources is committed to strengthening our community by preparing children to succeed in school and life.