



Provider Caucus: Policy Challenges 6/29/09

Family child care, child care center, and afterschool providers gathered on May 22, 2009 and identified the following challenges providing high-quality early learning and afterschool programs.

Child Care Subsidies

Low Subsidy Rates (10)

- Since the subsidy rate is substantially lower than the cost of providing child care, there is less money available for professional development and wages impacting quality
- The low subsidy rates undercut wages and make it hard to find qualified staff
- The low part-time rates are especially challenging

High Co-Pays (3)

- High co-pays are challenging for parents to pay and providers to collect
- If parents receive a raise their co-pay jumps substantially
- Co-pay should be no more than 10% of parent's income

Authorization, Eligibility and Payment

- Providers spend significant amounts of time and other resources following up on authorizations and payments due to discrepancies, inconsistencies, delays and communication issues (6)
- Delays in notifying providers of changes in a family's authorization often result in providers not being paid for services provided
- Parents' paperwork has been lost at the CSO
- Short eligibility/authorization period is challenging for families and providers (3)
- Low number of (or no) absence days results in even lower monthly payments for providers (Private pay families typically pay the same rate each month no matter how many days the child is absent.)
- Field trip fees and registration fees disappeared or not paid (2)
- Challenge getting paid by DSHS for non standard hours
- Payment delays (e.g. delay of 3 months for one child/family)

Professional Development and Compensation

Access to Professional Development (10)

- Cost of training is high and there are not enough scholarships
- Hard to attend classes operating a family child care home or working full-time in a program
- The cost of increasing one's professional development is not likely to result in higher wages
- Concern about increasing professional development requirements without increasing access to professional development
- Challenging for afterschool providers to access scholarships, resources and relevant training with increasing focus on children birth-5 years
- Need increased availability and better selection of online classes
- Increase transferability of providers' community based training to community and technical colleges
- More coursework on infant/toddler development



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- Implement student loan forgiveness

Compensation Linked to Professional Development Requirements

- Limited access to Career and Wage Ladder (4)
- A provider can take massive amounts of training without increasing levels of pay
- Child care or afterschool providers who get a degree are likely to move to higher paying jobs in Head Start or public school or another field

Access to Health Coverage (3)

- I want to provide health coverage for my staff
- Health care is so expensive and the plan available to family child care providers through the union is hard to get on

Licensing

- Inconsistent interpretation of WACs by licensors (5)
- Negotiated rulemaking team is working on making policies clear and concise; concern re end of funding in December (2)
- Challenging for family child care providers to compete with unlicensed care including part-day preschool (4)

Diversity of Early Learning and Afterschool Programs

- Need to maintain diverse delivery system with continuum of options for families (4)
- Need for Early Head Start expansion (4)
- It is challenging for parents to navigate the silos of the early learning system
- Lack of public understanding that quality and type of programming can be the same in child care as it is in preschool (2)

Children's Health

- Children's access to health care (4)
- Adequate medical coupon system for children of teen parents

Other Areas

- Slow rate of policy and funding changes to improve the quality of early learning and afterschool programs (4)
- Challenging providing early learning and afterschool programs in communities where school districts or employers are implementing 4-day and/or ½ day weeks (2)
- Rising food costs and other expenses; food program reimbursement doesn't cover costs
- Access to liability insurance
- More parents dealing with depression and issues with alcohol and drugs
- CPS-DLR complaints could be handled in a much faster and streamlined manner