



Family Matters

Early Childhood Care and Education Update

Volume 1 Issue 2

A Family Impact Seminar Newsletter for Wisconsin Policymakers

December 2001

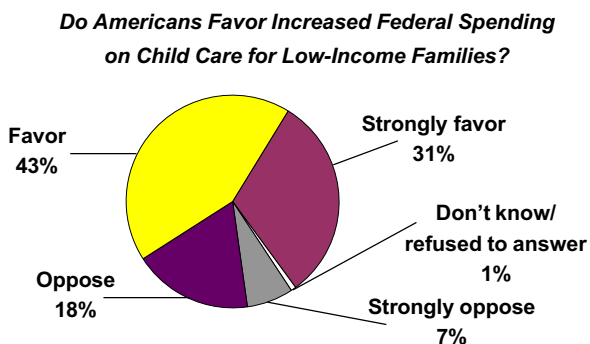
What Does the Public Believe Is Government's Role in the Child Care Marketplace?

In opinion polls, public attitudes often change. Yet one attitude has remained constant—Americans believe parents bear primary responsibility for raising their children. This attitude holds constant for parents of children of all ages, from young infants to teenagers. Yet polls also suggest that government should play a supporting role in helping parents raise the next generation.

The American public supports investments in children above other national priorities. Over two-thirds (68%) rated access to after-school programs and early childhood development programs like Head Start as a higher priority than cutting taxes. These findings come from a poll of 1,010 adults conducted by the award-winning Opinion Research Corporation.

The public's interest in our youngest children has been reinforced by research on human brain development. According to the Packard Foundation's *Future of Children* journal, "Americans overwhelmingly feel that parents need to be spending more time with their children, particularly if these children are very young" (2001, p. 55). Yet these views conflict with recent family trends. For example, in Wisconsin, more than two-thirds of mothers with children under age 5 are employed.

The passage of welfare reform also triggered public interest in child care, according to a poll by the nonpartisan opinion research firm, Public Agenda. By a three-to-one margin, parents reported it was more important for parents on welfare to use child care so they can go to work or attend school, rather than stay at home (71% to 20%). Almost three-fourths (74%) of Americans favored more child care spending for low-income families. This finding from a 1998 telephone survey of 1,762 adults by the Pew Research Center is charted below:



Note: Reprinted from the *Future of Children Journal*, 2001, p. 57.

The American public continues to draw a line between primary responsibility and government assistance. In a 2000 poll conducted by Public Agenda, only 22% of parents believe that government has primary responsibility for ensuring access to child care. One of the best examples of how a state has improved access and quality of care, while still recognizing the primary role of parents, is North Carolina's Smart Start. Executive Director Karen Ponder will describe Smart Start at the upcoming Family Impact Seminar (see announcement).

For more information, read the article cited below which is available on the web (www.futureofchildren.org).

Source: Sylvester, K. (2001). *Caring for our youngest: Public attitudes in the United States. The Future of Children Journal: Caring for Infants and Toddlers*, 11(1), p. 53-61.

The Wisconsin Family Impact Seminars
The National Conference of State Legislatures, and
The National Governors Association
Present

the 17th Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar

Early Childhood Care and Education: What Are States Doing?

Wednesday, January 16, 2002

Room 260, City of Madison Municipal Bldg.
215 Martin Luther King Boulevard

8-10:00 a.m. - Seminar

10:15-11:30 a.m. - Optional Discussion Sessions

Connecting with UW Faculty

Questions on child care and early education? Contact the following two faculty on the UW-Madison campus.

Professor Deborah Vandell

Dr. Vandell is a Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a Principal Investigator with the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, a multi-site study of the effects of child care, schools, and families on children's development. You can learn more about her research at the upcoming Family Impact Seminar. For information on whether child care quality matters, the role of government in the child care market, and what government can do to improve child care, contact Dr. Vandell at (608) 263-3883, or at dvandell@facstaff.wisc.edu.

Professor Dave Riley

Dr. Riley is a Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an Extension Child Development Specialist. His work focuses on the effectiveness of parent education programs, and statewide strategies to improve the quality of child care. His *Parenting the First Year* instructional newsletter is used by over half of the new parents in Wisconsin, and by many parents in 15 other states. He advises Wisconsin state government on its child care policies. Contact Dr. Riley at (608) 262-3314, dariley@facstaff.wisc.edu, or visit his childrearing advice website (www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/parenting).

Featured Report

The Spring/Summer 2001 Future of Children Journal: Caring for Infants and Toddlers

The latest issue of *The Future of Children*, published by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, focuses on caring for infants and toddlers. The journal addresses the revolution that has occurred in caregiving now that more than half of America's babies have a mother who works outside the home. The journal compares the caregiving that babies need with the capacity of today's parents to ensure that those needs are met. This issue features recent research, how employers and government have responded, and six new efforts to strengthen the care given to the nation's youngest children. Hard copies will be available at the Family Impact Seminar. You can also print or order the journal on the web (www.futureofchildren.org).





Family Matters

Wisconsin Family Impact Seminars
University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension
1300 Linden Drive, Room 130
Madison, WI 53706-1524



Family Matters is a newsletter for state policymakers published by the **Wisconsin Family Impact Seminars** (WISFIS). WISFIS connects research and policymaking, and examines the impact of policies on families. The seminars provide objective, state-of-the-art information on a range of policy options. WISFIS is a joint effort of University of Wisconsin-Extension and the Center for Excellence in Family Studies in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

This newsletter was written by Bettina Friese, Karen Bogenschneider, Karla Balling, and Jessica Mills, and designed by Meg Wall-Wild.

The director of WISFIS is Professor Karen Bogenschneider and the state coordinator is Karla Balling.

For further information, contact the Family Impact Seminar Office at (608) 262-5779, fis@ssc.wisc.edu, or Karen at (608) 262-4070, kpbogens@facstaff.wisc.edu.

Family Matters is on the web at:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/familyimpact/newsletters.htm>

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Check Out These Websites on Early Childhood Care and Education

The National Child Care Information Center
<http://nccic.org>

The National Child Care Information Center (operated by the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services) provides resources on topics such as brain development, faith-based child care resources, public/private partnerships, child care quality, child care statistics and data, tribal child care, and welfare reform.

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/cc.htm>

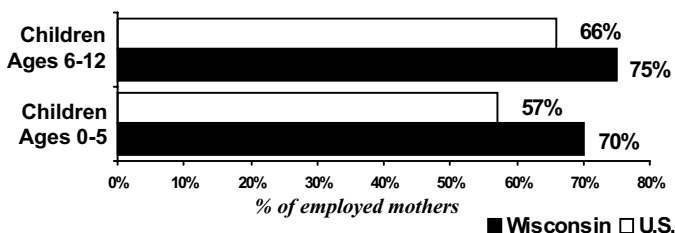
NCSL provides an excellent summary of child care and early education activities in the 50 states including laws enacted between 1997 and 1999 and state legislative trends in 2000. Information is also available on topics such as child care financing and corporate tax incentives.



How Many Wisconsin Children Receive Nonparental Child Care?

Compared to national averages, more mothers in Wisconsin are employed. In Wisconsin, 70% of mothers of children under 5 are employed compared to only 57% nationwide.

What Percent of Mothers in Wisconsin and the US Are Employed?



Source: Urban's Institute's 1997 National Survey of America's Families

These figures are good news for Wisconsin's employers because high rates of maternal employment expand the labor pool. But if these mothers are going to be satisfied with their employment, they need child care that they can trust.

The majority of Wisconsin's children receive nonparental child care. For example, more than three of four children under 5 in Wisconsin are cared for by someone other than their parent when their mother is working.

Over one-third of Wisconsin's children spend more than 35 hours per week in nonparental child care. Of children under 5 who are in nonparental care, two out of five are in more than one nonparental child care arrangement each week.

Families who need child care are typically beginning jobs or careers and are at the low end of their earning potential. So, child care expenses can be a considerable financial burden. Low-income families spend \$1 out of every \$6 they earn on child care (\$224 per month). Higher-income families spend \$1 out of every \$11 they earn on child care (\$279 per month).

Source: K. Snyder & G. Adams (2001). *State Child Care Profile for Children with Employed Mothers: Wisconsin*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute (http://newfederalism.urban.org/pdf/Childcare_profile_WI.pdf).

Does Early Childhood Education Have Effects 15 Years Later?

One of the nation's largest studies of public early childhood education shows that early education produces benefits that persist into early adulthood.

Children who participated in the Chicago School District's Child-Parent Center Program performed better on several educational and social milestones than a similar group who attended another preschool program. For example, 3 year-olds who participated in the program for 1 or 2 years benefitted in ways that could be observed 15 years later:

- ✦ Lower dropout rates,
- ✦ Higher graduation rates,
- ✦ More years of education completed, and
- ✦ Lower rates of juvenile crime and violent arrests.

Both preschool and school-age participants in the Child-Parent Center Program were also less apt to be held back in school or assigned to special education services.

This federal program is similar to Head Start. It has served 100,000 families in some of Chicago's highest poverty neighborhoods since 1967.

According to Arthur Reynolds, the UW-Madison researcher who published the study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, "We haven't had this level of long-term scientific evidence for public programs until now."

In other studies of the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, parent involvement was associated with school success above and beyond the child's program participation and family background. For example, more parent involvement in the child's early education had long-term benefits—higher reading achievement, lower grade retention, and fewer years in special education at age 14.

Professor Reynolds' office is on the other end of State Street. For further information, contact him at (608) 263-3837 or ajreynol@facstaff.wisc.edu