

The State of the State for Missourians with Disabilities

CHILD CARE

"When the child care system fails, everyone suffers. Children receive substandard care, the field is plagued by high turnover, workplace productivity is sapped and children enter our schools not fully prepared to succeed. Society misses an opportunity to prepare children for the future at the time they are most ready to learn. We can do a better job of caring for our youngest citizens."¹

Our Beliefs

The mission of the Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (MPC) is to "assist communities in their efforts to include all people in every aspect of life." The council believes in the importance of individual and family supports which are flexible, based on need, and provided in a culturally sensitive manner. The MPC supports the federal outcome that children and families benefit from a range of inclusive and flexible child care options. MPC has supported, and continues to support the goal of increasing the number of providers of inclusive early child care and education and the number of children with special needs who are supported within inclusive child care.³

"Early childhood care and education begins at birth. It can have either a positive or negative effect on children and their long-term development. The state of Missouri will assure the provision of quality early childhood care and education that promotes positive results for all its residents."

Committee on Early Childhood Care and Education appointed by former Governor Mel Carnahan (1997)²

What the Research Says

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, child care centers are considered to be a public accommodation and may not discriminate on the basis of disability. Reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures must be made in order to accommodate special needs of children with disabilities and special healthcare needs.⁵ *Because the child care setting may be the first environment in which a child's disability is identified, it is critical that child care programs have the knowledge and skills to serve children with special needs.*

Although the ADA prohibits discrimination based upon disability, many parents of children with special

needs face difficulties when seeking child care. One barrier to accessing inclusive child care is that some daycare providers are unwilling to accept a child with a disability because of the need for specialized care or because providers have no experience in caring for children with disabilities. Another barrier is the lack of parental knowledge of services and systems in terms of available programs and legal rights.⁶

Since 1990, the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has been the primary source of child care funding to the states from the federal government.⁷ However, only 14% of urban accredited child care centers, and 4% of rural accredited centers accept subsidy funds.⁸ Research by the National Women's Law Center indicates that without additional funding, in the midst of rising poverty rates, approximately 400,000 children are expected to lose child care assistance by 2011, in addition to the estimated 250,000 children who have already lost assistance since 2000.⁹

One study, which examined a cross-section of eight cities in the nation, found that child care was consistently the largest monthly expense for families, at times costing twice the average housing expense.¹⁰ For many families, especially lower-income families, such costs are simply unaffordable.¹¹ Single parents are especially hard-hit by child care expenses, a consideration in light of the high divorce rate for families with special needs children.

What Missourians with DD and Their Families Are Saying⁴

Statewide Needs Assessment Results

Child Care Choices

Respondents thought families of children with disabilities were *most likely* to use:

(70%) care provided by family/friends

Respondents thought families of children with disabilities were *least likely* to use:

(49%) regular child care

(41%) segregated or special child care

Adequacy of Child Care Options

(78%) segregated child care rated inadequate/fair

(73%) regular child care rated inadequate/fair

(69%) friends/family rated good/excellent

Opportunities for Community-Based Child Care

(75%) inadequate/fair

(26%) good/excellent

Challenges in Child Care for Children with Disabilities:

- Lack of options
- Systems limitations (i.e., age caps on children)
- Lack of available family/friends to provide child care
- Lack of care during alternative work hours (night shift)
- Need for quality, licensed providers
- High turnover at daycare

"There is no child care within our area that will accept special needs children."

"It's sad when you can't work because you can't find child care."

The State of the State in Child Care

Child care helps our economy today by making it possible for parents to work and helps the economy of tomorrow by preparing our future workforce.¹² A survey in Minnesota revealed that a significantly higher number of parents of children with special needs reported child care problems that interfered with their ability to accept or keep a job during 2004, as opposed to parents whose children did not have special needs.¹³ Missouri families often find that locating early learning programs that meet their needs is difficult, and these same problems are particularly pronounced for families with children with special needs.¹⁴

Currently, there is insufficient data regarding inclusive child care in Missouri. In a survey of child care providers within Midwestern states, only 1/3 of providers reported including one or more children with a disability in their program. Children with disabilities were enrolled in 1/2 of the center-based programs and merely 1/4 of the family homes.¹⁵ Unfortunately, these numbers leave the majority of children with special needs under-served and left with few options. It is, therefore, no surprise that opportunities for community-based childcare were rated as *inadequate or fair* by 75% of Needs Assessment respondents.¹⁶

“When children reach age 12 they can’t go to regular child care. Providers can apply for a waiver but there are no incentives for the provider.”¹⁷

Finding adequate child care for children with special needs is a particular challenge within rural areas of Missouri. 42% of Missouri’s children lived in rural areas in 2005.¹⁸ Yet, the supply of center-based early childhood programs, as well as after-school programs, is lowest within the rural area of Missouri.¹⁹

In order for parents of children with disabilities to work, childcare must be available, accessible, and affordable. Statistics show that a middle-income Missouri family of four with an infant and preschooler in care could spend between 18% and 32% of its annual income on child care.²⁰ To have two children in daycare costs more than Missouri public college tuition.

MO Avg Annual Out-of-Pocket Expenses to Families 2004²¹

Child Care – 1 Child, Full-time	\$3,910	15-18% of Total Income
Child Care – 2 Children, Full-time	\$7,820	-
Public College Tuition	\$5,858	5-7% of Total Income

Source: Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Missouri’s income cutoff for qualification for child care assistance has now fallen to the lowest in the nation. A family of three in Missouri now has to make below \$18,216 per year, 110% of the federal poverty

level, in order to qualify for child care subsidies.²² In 2005, the earnings of a single parent working full-time at minimum wage covered just 40% of the estimated cost of raising two children.²³ It is important to note that a Minnesota study indicated that households with low incomes are more likely than households with higher incomes to have a child with special needs (13% versus 5%).²⁴

What We Recommend

Many of the recommendations below are repeated within many recent studies that outline specific areas of improvement. They are intended to enhance the basic assurances for inclusion of children with disabilities within community settings already provided within the ADA and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) laws.

- A comprehensive assessment of the state of child care for children with disabilities in Missouri to identify:
 - Accurate measures of the current need for inclusive child care across age groups.
 - Evaluation of current capacity of all child care settings to provide for children with disabilities.
 - Barriers to the development of further capacity for inclusion in Missouri, from the perspective of providers, including a review of regulations and statutes, the infrastructure and processes for coordination of services, and collaboration among providers.
 - Barriers to the use of child care from a parent perspective.
- Increase education of child care providers and parents regarding the rights and requirements of the ADA that relate to the provision of quality child care.
- Efforts to expand the use of existing Quality Rating System tools in conjunction with technical assistance to support quality improvement should be an area of focus, while developing quality measures specific to inclusive care practices.
- Expand competency based training regarding inclusion should be provided to child care providers in conjunction with other required trainings, to support consistency of provided information. Follow-up, hands-on training is often valuable in addressing needs of children with complex needs and challenging behaviors.
- As the Missouri Governor’s Coordinating Board for Early Childhood considers financing, as well as the state of Missouri’s children, increases in eligibility cut-offs for child care subsidies should be strongly considered.
- Differential subsidy reimbursement rates should be considered, with higher-quality child care receiving higher reimbursement. This would act as a dual incentive for programs to raise their quality level, and for programs with higher quality to accept child care subsidies.

- A liaison should be established to advise the Department of Mental Health representative to the Missouri Governor's Coordinating Board for Early Childhood regarding child care needs of children with developmental disabilities from the perspective of the MPC.

CHILD CARE ENDNOTES

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¹⁰ Allegretto, S. (2005). "Basic Family Budgets: Working Families' Incomes Often Fail to Meet Living Expenses Around the U.S." Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved on 12/11/06 at <http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/bp165>

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¹⁴ "Child Care Quality for Children with Disabilities". 2004. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Center for Family Policy & Research. Retrieved on 12/4/06 at <http://MUCenter.missouri.edu>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Rinck, C., Graybill, T., Berg, R., & Horn, W. (2006).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Thornburg, K. & Mumford, J. (2006). "The State of Missouri's Children: 2006". University of Missouri, Columbia: University of Missouri Center for Family Policy & Research. Retrieved on 12/6/06 from <http://MUCenter.missouri.edu>

¹⁹ Thornburg, K. & Mumford, J. (2006). "The State of Early Childhood Programs: 2006". University of Missouri, Columbia: University of Missouri Center for Family Policy & Research. Retrieved on 12/6/06 from <http://MUCenter.missouri.edu>

²⁰ "Child Care Keeps Missouri Working: The Missouri Child Care Industry Economic Impact Report". (2005).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Schulman, K., & Blank, H., (2006).

²³ *The State of America's Children 2005*.

²⁴ "Child Care for Children with Special Needs: Fundamental Facts from the 2004 Minnesota Child Care Survey". (2006).