

Child Care Provider Training

Helping Early Childhood Educators Provide Quality Care for Today's Children

http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/child_care/index.php

Relevance

The demand for quality child care continues to rise as children are spending more time in contexts outside of the family. Over 60 percent of children from birth through age 6 (not yet in kindergarten) receive some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2007).

The Texas Workforce Commission estimates that there are over 100,000 child care providers caring for more than 760,000 children under the age of 13 in licensed or regulated child care facilities in the state of Texas. Additionally, child care is the 16th largest industry in the state, generating over 145,000 jobs and \$2.3 billion in wages for Texans (Texas Workforce Commission, 2003).

With the demand for child care at an all-time high, researchers and policy makers have become increasingly concerned with the quality and accessibility of child care. Large-scale studies conducted across the U.S. have found that the quality of care on the national level tends to be poor to mediocre (Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). At the same time, findings from longitudinal research have clearly established the fact that quality does matter when it comes to child care. Children who receive high-quality care (e.g., warm sensitive caregiving, well educated child care staff, low child-to-adult ratios, small group size) develop better language,



math, and social skills; exhibit fewer behavior problems; and tend to be better prepared for entrance into school (NICHD, 2006).

Having a well-trained child care workforce is essential to providing the high quality child care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Evidence indicates that professional preparation (i.e., more formal education and content-specific training in child development) is linked to higher quality care environments for children (Zaslow, Tout, Maxwell, & Clifford, 2004).

Response

Current and/or prospective child care providers, managers, and early childhood educators can enhance their knowledge and skills related to the care and education of children through regional child care conferences, county workshops, online courses, newsletters, and self-study courses provided by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Providers completing the above programs can acquire the necessary annual training hours and continuing education units determined by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS).

Child Care Provider Conferences. Extension agents organize single- and multi-county training conferences to meet the training needs of child care providers across the state. Extension specialists are available to conduct general and concurrent workshops at these conferences on a variety of topics related to child care.

Web-Based Training Program. Texas AgriLife Extension Service's *Web-Based Early Childhood Educator Training Program* provides early childhood educators with a convenient, flexible, and affordable way to obtain contact hour credits required by the state of Texas. Extension's online courses meet the minimum standards established by TDFPS for self-study training. All courses are based on the latest research in each subject matter

area and can be completed anytime – day or night – via the Internet, as long as the client has access to a computer and an Internet connection. Cost per 1-hour course is \$5.00 and can be paid online by using a major credit card. The program is hosted on the Family and Consumer Sciences website and can be accessed at <http://childcare.tamu.edu>.

Currently, there are 16 courses available to early childhood educators. Courses will be added periodically throughout the year.

Child Care Connections Newsletter. The Child Care *Connections* newsletter targets child care, family care, and school-age care providers. Four times a year, newsletters are made available to agents for distribution in their respective counties. The newsletters are available at http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/child_care/connections_newsletters.php. Nearly 50,000 *Connections* newsletters are downloaded annually in PDF format.

Results

In 2008, county Extension agents and their collaborators conducted 20 child care provider training conferences throughout the state of Texas for approximately 2,700 child care providers and directors who provide care for over 30,000 children enrolled in more than 650 child care centers or family day homes. A total of 14,932 clock hours of training were provided to child care professionals seeking to meet state-mandated training requirements established by the state of Texas.

A 2008 evaluation study with more than 2,300 early childhood educators was conducted. Participants in this study were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of items related to the trainings. Four specific domains were assessed (i.e., acquisition of new information, intent to use information, training's influence on provider/program quality, and relevancy of training) along with an "Other" category.

Results indicate that child care providers found the trainings to be very beneficial. Over 90 percent of participants acquired new information from

the conferences (97 percent), considered the trainings to be very relevant to the work they do (94 percent), plan to utilize the information gained at the conferences to improve their programs (96 percent), consider themselves better equipped to work with the children in their care (97 percent), and consider the trainings to be very cost effective (94 percent). Moreover, 75 percent of child care providers rated the quality of the trainings "Better" or "Much Better" compared to other trainings they have attended that were not conducted by Extension.

In addition to the face-to-face conferences, early childhood educators have enrolled in and/or completed over 3,000 online courses since January 1, 2008.

Feedback from child care providers who have completed online courses and attended face-to-face child care conferences has been very positive, as illustrated by the quotes below:

- "I really enjoyed taking this course online. It saves time and money since I do not have to travel to another location to take a class. Also, I can fit these classes in when I have time rather than having to rearrange my schedule to try and get my hours. Thank you so very much."
– *Online Course Participant*
- "I wish to emphasize my appreciation for this type of training to be available to all of us. It helps us to stay informed with new ideas, provides refreshers for things we have already learned... I have been taking care of children for 22 years. This was the best training I've been to since I started in 1987. Thanks again."
– *Child Care Conference Participant*
- "I really enjoyed this workshop... the information was very interesting and helpful."
– *Child Care Conference Participant*
- "All [of the] material was very valuable and will be very useful when working with my children."
– *Child Care Conference Participant*

References for this brief are available upon request.

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