

**SOUTHERN REGIONAL FORUM ON CHILD CARE
OCTOBER 10-11, 2001
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**REMARKS BY SARAH SHUPTRINE, PRESIDENT
SOUTHERN INSTITUTE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

SHOW VISUAL ON INITIATIVE AND MAP

Good morning. I am Sarah Shuptrine, President of the Southern Institute on Children and Families. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Southern Regional Forum on Child Care.

The Southern Institute works across 17 southern states and the District of Columbia to improve opportunities for children and families. We have worked in collaboration with public and private sector organizations across the South to address issues that transcend state boundaries. Working together, we can work smarter to develop strategies that help us address longstanding issues.

Child care clearly falls in that category. The Southern Institute began a special initiative in child care in January 2000, with support from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. A 23-member Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care guides the initiative.

SHOW VISUAL ON TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

The Task Force is composed of representatives of 16 southern states, appointed by the governors, a representative of the District of Columbia, appointed by the Mayor, a representative of the Southern Growth Policies Board and five representatives appointed by the Southern Institute. It is my honor to serve as Chairman of the Task Force.

I'd like to recognize the members of the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care who are with us here today and would ask them to stand as they are introduced.

- Janice Broome Brooks (Mississippi)
- Pat Cronon (Florida)
- Janie Fletcher (Arkansas)
- Gwen Hamilton (Louisiana)
- Bob Harbison (Oklahoma)
- Sophia Bracy Harris (Alabama)
- Linda Heisner (Maryland)
- Diane Rath (Texas)
- Marjorie Tate (North Carolina)
- Kim Townley (Kentucky)

- Candy Waites (South Carolina)
- Sandy Wise (West Virginia)
- Carrie Thornhill (Appointed by the Mayor of the District of Columbia)
- Andy Downs (Southern Institute Appointee)
- J. T. McLawhorn (Southern Institute Appointee)

I would also like to introduce members of the Staff Work Group for the initiative.

- David Denton
- Catherine Finley
- Luis Hernandez
- Linda Hoke
- Barbara Ferguson Kamara
- Sue Russell
- Nancy vonBargen

And finally, I would like to introduce the Southern Institute staff who are with us today:

- Zenovia Vaughn, Deputy Director for Child Care
- Lovetta Williams, Child Care Policy Analyst
- Christi Stewart, Administrative Assistant
- Kristine Hartvigsen, Communications Director

- Mathew Smith, Webmaster and IT Manager
- Lynn Ammons, Executive Assistant

The first year of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care was devoted to identifying barriers to child care assistance and developing actions to improve access to child care financial aid for low-income families.

SHOW VISUAL OF REPORT COVER

The report of the Task Force was released at the National Press Club in December 2000. The report, titled ***Sound Investments: Investing in Child Care Builds Workforce Capacity and Promotes School Readiness***, contains an Action Plan for the South with 10 goals and 52 action steps. A briefing book on the Action Plan is in your meeting packets.

During the second year of the initiative, we have been making site visits to southern states to promote the Action Plan.

SHOW GRAPHIC ON STATES VISITED

We have visited 12 states thus far and plan to schedule the remaining site visits in early 2002.

We are also embarking on our work to support efforts to improve the quality of child care. We will have a survey in the field in November to gather data to help us address the policy question we have set forth for examination: **How do we use public child care funds to improve the quality of child care for all children?**

The ***Sound Investments*** report points out that child care is central to much of what the southern states are striving to achieve:

SHOW GRAPHIC ON THREE REASONS

- Building workforce capacity, a key component of a strong economy;
- Supporting the ability of low-income families to be employed, especially families who have a current or previous connection to welfare.
- Providing early learning opportunities for children in low-income families, thus greatly enhancing their school readiness.

Raising awareness of the affordability issue is critical to gaining action. The *Sound Investments* report displayed a comparison of annual costs of public college tuition to the costs of child care.

SHOW GRAPHIC ON TUITION VS CHILD CARE COSTS

This comparison shows that in every southern state, it costs more to send one four year old to a child care center than it does to pay public college tuition for one child.

This Forum is designed to help identify progress toward implementation and also to identify barriers to accomplishment of the goals. In a separate notebook are status reports submitted by eleven of the southern states to date.

We will have panels on four of the goals and will have roundtables at lunch to facilitate dialogue on the other goals. And we will board a bus tomorrow morning to travel to the Georgia Public Television Studios for a live webcast discussion on Goal 1 – which addresses the critical issue of inadequate funding.

There will be many opportunities to share information and ideas related to our collaborative work to improve access to child care assistance.

Thank you so much for being here!

And now it is my pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker, David Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence retired in 1999 as publisher of The Miami Herald to work in the area of early childhood development and readiness. He is president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and is distinguished community professor of the early childhood initiative at Florida International University. He also chairs the children's Services Council of Miami-Dade County and co-chairs their School Readiness Coalition. He was named by Governor Jeb Bush to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness board, which he also chairs, and he is a board member of the Foundation for Child Development in New York. Mr. Lawrence has received many honors and awards for his personal and professional accomplishments, and we are very pleased that he was able to join us here today.