



Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education

Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts

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Goal 1: All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.

1.1 Public policy at the federal, state and local level will require planning and coordination across major systems to improve quality, including Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky statutes KRS 200.700 and KRS 200.703 established the Early Childhood Development Authority and is compiled of representatives from the following:

- Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Cabinet for Education, Arts and Humanities
- Citizens of the Commonwealth
- Department of Education
- Kentucky AFL CIO
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentucky League of Cities
- Kentucky Medical Association
- Kentucky County Judge/Executives Association
- Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education
- Ex Officio Members from the Kentucky Congress
- Urban Leagues

The Authority continues to meet at least quarterly to review progress and address issues related to KIDS NOW to improve the quality of life for Kentucky's children in all of their environments.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Partnership work group has been formed as a collaborative effort to coordinate efforts and increase partnerships across agencies. Actions listed above continue.

The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning Grant was applied for, has been awarded, and is being implemented.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

A major collaborative effort between the above named partners and others with concerns for early care and education resulted in the KIDS NOW early childhood initiative which is a 20-year plan to improve the quality of life as well as early care and education for all Kentucky children. The early phases of the initiative were implemented in 2000.

Established a statewide quality rating system, STARS for KIDS NOW, with tiered reimbursement for early care and education centers as well as family child care homes.

1.2 Public policy at the federal, state and local level will support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting education services.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The following programs continue to support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, and parenting education services:

Health/Physical Needs: To adequately meet the physical needs of children in child care settings, the Cabinet was responsible for enforcing state regulations that contained standards related to health, safety, and sanitation. In addition, rate differentials continue to be offered under the Child Care Assistance Program as a way of encouraging child care providers to care for special needs children who may have had a physical or mental condition that required special attention.

Physical and Mental Health: The following programs continue to meet the physical and mental health needs of children:

- Healthy Start in Child Care – consultants train and educate child care providers and parents in the areas of health, safety, and nutrition.
- Early Childhood Mental Health Program – provides mental health consultation to early childhood programs and assessment/therapeutic services for young children and their families.
- First Steps: Kentucky's Early Intervention Program – serves children from birth to age 3 who have a developmental delay or a particular medical condition that is known to cause a developmental delay.
- HANDS Voluntary Home Visiting Program – provides a voluntary home visitation program for first time parents in order to promote healthy growth and development of the child.
- Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program – assures that Kentucky's newborns are screened prior to discharge from the hospital.
- Immunization Program for Underinsured Children – vaccines provided to children from birth to age three who are not eligible for Medicaid or K-CHIP.
- Eye Examinations for Children – requires all children to submit evidence of an eye examination (not a screening) no later than January 1 of the first year of public school entry.
- Oral Health Education and Prevention Program – prevents caries in early childhood.

Nutrition: State regulations continue to require that licensed and certified child care providers serve meals that complied with the same meal pattern requirements as the Child and Adult Care Food Program administered by the State's Department of Education. Also, Healthy Start consultants provide nutrition information to child care providers and parents.

Economic Support: Supports for low income parents included the CCDF funded Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). In addition, any person who requests a certificate of registration or renewal of registration of any type of motor vehicle is given the opportunity to donate \$1 to the child care assistance account used to assist families with

earnings just over the eligibility limit for CCAP. Also, the Early Childhood Business Council is in place to involve the corporate community in supporting issues of importance to working families with young children.

Parenting Education Services: The Cabinet and several other partner agencies are promoting and supporting the use of a document entitled *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards*. Completed in 2003 by a team of early childhood professionals, the *Standards* document was designed to assist parents, early care and education professionals, administrators, and others in understanding what young children typically know and are able to do at birth through four years of age.

Also, the Cabinet contracts with the Child Care Network (previously called the Kentucky Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies) to provide consumer education to parents.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Current KIDS NOW programs continued to expand to statewide implementation. Social and emotional issues for early care and education, included in the KIDS NOW early childhood initiative, have resulted in the hiring of 14 early childhood mental health specialists with the responsibility of providing technical assistance and support for early care and education programs that have children and families with social and emotional issues. Funding is being provided for First Steps, Kentucky's Early Intervention System; Child Advocacy Centers; an Oral Health Education and Prevention Program is being implemented statewide; and an extensive Professional Development seamless system with a Trainers Credential and in-depth training is being implemented statewide.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

There are a number of programs in Kentucky which are included in the KIDS NOW early childhood initiative that link early care and education to programs in health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, and parenting education services. Programs include: Healthy Babies Campaign; Folic Acid Campaign, Universal Newborn Hearing Screening; Immunizations for Underinsured Children; Substance Abuse Treatment Program for Pregnant and Post-partum Women; Eye Examinations for Children; HANDS voluntary home visitation program; Increased eligibility of families to child care subsidy; STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system; KIDS NOW scholarship program; Increased licensing personnel; and formation of Community Early Childhood Councils.

1.3 Federal, state and local policies and systems will ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Cabinet continues to work with collaborative partners to coordinate and improve transitions for children. The recommendations made by the work of the executive committee that resulted from the Transitions Summit have been submitted and are under review with the Division of Early Childhood Development.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

A summit was held addressing transition issues for all of Kentucky's children. An executive committee was formed to research the issues, identify barriers, and make recommendations with a plan for implementation. The committee completed the work and submitted the recommendations. The transition plan is in the process of being approved by various state agencies for release in 2004.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Programs supporting seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten are in existence.

Goal 2: Rigorous licensing requirements and/or regulatory processes will be enacted to ensure that children are adequately protected in all early care and education settings.

2.1 States will establish staff-child ratios and maximum group sizes for centers and homes that meet NAEYC¹, NAFCC², APHA³ or AAP⁴ national standards.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The minimum staff-child ratios and maximum group size for licensed type I child care centers is established in state regulation 922 KAR* 2:120 (Child care facility health and safety standards). The minimum staff-child ratios and maximum group size for type II child care home providers licensed to care for up to 12 children is established in 922 KAR 2:001 (Definitions). The minimum staff-child ratios for family child care home providers certified to care for up to 6 unrelated children is established in 922 KAR 2:100 (Certification of family child care homes). The minimum staff-child ratios for informal child care providers registered to receive a child care subsidy payment is established in 922 KAR 2:180 (Requirements for unregulated provider registration in the Child Care Assistance Program).

From 7/1/03 – 6/30/04, licensed type I, type II, and certified child care providers continue to participate in Kentucky's voluntary quality rating system known as the STARS for KIDS NOW Program. Level 4 participants in the STARS for KIDS NOW Program are required to be accredited and meet the staff-child ratios established by NAEYC or NAFCC.

*NOTE: KAR means Kentucky Administrative Regulation. All KAR's related to child care (922 KAR Chapter 2) may be downloaded from the following website:
<http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/TITLE922.HTM>

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

A STARS for KIDS NOW Advisory has been formed to guide the quality rating system. The original work groups that crafted the quality rating systems for centers and homes have met to review data and study the standards in the quality rating system.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

A voluntary quality rating system has been implemented which includes lower staff-child

ratios and maximum group sizes as indicators of increased quality. The highest level of quality also includes accreditation by state approved national accrediting bodies.

2.2 States will develop and enforce health, fire and safety requirements for all early care and education settings that reflect standards set forth by the APHA and the AAP.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Health, fire, and safety requirements for licensed type I and type II child care providers are established in 922 KAR 2:120; the same requirements for certified family child care home providers are established in 922 KAR 2:100.

The Cabinet's Office of Inspector General continue to be responsible for inspecting licensed child care providers to assure compliance with health and safety standards. The Cabinet's Division of Child Care was responsible from 7/1/03 –6/30/04 for inspecting certified family child care home providers to assure compliance with health and safety standards but this was transferred to the Office of Inspector General 7/16/04.

In addition, health and safety requirements for informal child care providers registered to receive a child care subsidy payment are established in 922 KAR 2:180. Informal child care providers are not subject to routine inspections by the Cabinet.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Minimum standards are in place.

2.3 State law will require strict enforcement of licensing requirements. States will use a range of sanctions that will include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet requirements.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

*KRS 199.896 requires enforcement of child care licensure requirements; KRS 199.8982 requires enforcement of child care certification requirements; and 199.8994 requires that minimum standards for informal child care providers be established in state regulation.

Sanctions imposed from 7/1/03 – 6/30/04 for failure to meet statutory or regulatory requirements include denial, suspension, or revocation of a provider's license or certificate to operate a child care business or registration to receive a child care subsidy payment. Also, licensed child care providers were subject to civil monetary penalties imposed as a result of statutory or regulatory violations.

*KRS means Kentucky Revised Statute.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently strictly enforces licensing requirements and uses a range of sanctions that does include license revocation and monetary penalties.

2.4 States will conduct at least three unannounced monitoring visits per year to verify compliance with requirements.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Licensed and certified child care providers are subject to at least one unannounced monitoring visit per year. However, additional monitoring visits are made if a complaint is made against the provider or if the provider reports a change of ownership, location, or an addition to the building's usable space.

In addition, participants in the voluntary STARS for KIDS NOW Program are subject to a separate rating visit to assess the quality of the program.

Informal child care providers are not subject to routine inspection.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently conducts one unannounced monitoring visit. Budget constraints do not permit increasing visits at this point.

2.5 States will require that child care providers, early childhood teachers and others who have regular access to children in early childhood settings have federal and state background checks using fingerprinting and screening against the state child abuse registry.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

All child care providers with regular access to children (including informal child care providers registered to receive a child care subsidy payment) submit to an in-state criminal records check using fingerprint screening and a check of the Cabinet's child abuse/neglect central registry.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently requires state police background checks using fingerprinting and

screening against the state child abuse registry. It is not anticipated that we will include federal checks due to cost.

2.6 States will ensure that all licensing and early care and education staff are educated in recognizing signs of child abuse and are trained in the state's child abuse reporting laws.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

KRS 199.896 requires that employees and owners of licensed child care facilities obtain (within the first three months of employment) completion of at least 6 hours of orientation training, including training in recognizing and reporting child abuse. KRS 199.8982 requires that providers obtain (within three months of application for certification) completion of at least 6 hours of orientation training, including training in recognizing and reporting child abuse. 922 KAR 2:180 requires that informal child care providers registered to receive a child care subsidy payment obtain training in recognizing and reporting child abuse within 90 days of application for registration.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Orientation Training that must be completed by all new child care providers in the first 90 days of employment has been revised and updated and is now available via the web.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently requires this.

2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person⁵ and a system capable of providing technical assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky's regulatory workforce consist of staff within the Division of Licensed Child Care (located in the Office of Inspector General) and staff within the Cabinet's Division of Child Care. In addition to the regulatory workforce, resource and referral agency staff, such as infant/toddler specialists and quality coordinators, provide technical assistance to help child care providers increase the quality of their programs. In addition, the Healthy Start in Childcare Program consultants train and educate early care and education staff and parents in health, safety, nutrition; the benefits of early intervention; prevention of communicable diseases in-group settings; and the social/emotional well-being of children.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky established a Division of Licensed Child Care in the Inspector General's

Office. Additional licensing regulators were hired to reduce the caseload and implement the STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system.

2.8 States will ensure parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

KRS 199.898 states the following: "Parents, custodians, or guardians of children...shall have the following rights...(a) The right to have access to their children at all times the child is in care and access to the provider caring for their children during normal hours of provider operation and whenever the children are in the care of the provider..."

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently requires this in the licensing standards.

Goal 3: States will support development of quality early care and education programs for all children.

3.1 States will provide all early care and education providers with resources to help them improve the quality of care and education they deliver, such as technical assistance and training, accreditation support, grants to meet health and safety requirements and grants to support family child care home networks.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Kentucky Child Care Network continues to provide technical assistance to improve the quality of care provided by early care and education programs through the STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system. Eighteen (18) Quality Coordinators and eighteen (18) Infant/Toddler Specialists conduct environmental rating scales to measure quality and provide technical assistance on improvement areas. There are several grants available to programs for assistance with national accreditation. The CDA, NAEYC, NAA, and NAFCC Mini-grants assist programs with the costs for on site evaluations. Kentucky also offers a fencing grant to applicants of certified family child care who have outside safety hazards that require fencing of playground areas. There is also a \$300 mini-grant that can be used to purchase liability insurance or make improvements in programming. The community Early Childhood Councils continue to award grants in their communities to improve locally identified needs to improve early care and education as well as health and safety.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Fourteen Mental Health Specialists have been hired and trained to meet the needs of young children and families accessing child care services.

One hundred and three Community Early Childhood Councils representing all 120 counties have been established and 86 have received funds to improve local needs to improve early care and education.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Free technical assistance is available through 18 Quality Coordinators, 18 Infant/Toddler Specialists and 14 Professional Development Counselors which reside in the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. Eighty-eight Health Start Consultants have been hired in health departments and serve all 120 counties in the areas of health, safety, and nutrition.

3.2 States will have Child Care Resource and Referral networks to deliver quality early care and education enhancement support services to providers, such as outreach, training and technical assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Network and the 10 statewide Child Care Resource and Referral agencies continue to provide training and technical assistance to child care providers.

The Kentucky Child Care Network coordinates services statewide provided by 10 child care resource and referral agencies. On-site visits are offered to programs involved with the STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system. Environmental rating scales are conducted and technical assistance is provided. Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies also provide numerous training opportunities throughout the state that meet the ongoing training requirements. The following is some of the major training components:

- Orientation training for new child care providers
- Resources training for early care trainers
- How to start training for potential family child care providers
- Registered provider training for non-regulated providers
- Core content curriculum for the 60 Commonwealth Child Care Credential

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently has this in place.

3.3 States will implement a rating system to recognize providers for incremental levels of quality.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky's STARS for KIDS NOW voluntary quality rating system continues to recognize and reward providers for incremental levels of quality. In addition to a one-time achievement award for each level of quality attained, they also receive incentive payments based on the level of quality achieved and the number of subsidy children served. The payments are figured for one year and dispersed quarterly.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Kentucky's STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system, a voluntary rating system, was implemented in 2001 for centers and in 2002 for family child care homes.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

No response.

3.4 States will implement tax and other incentives to develop and expand early care and education programs that demonstrate a higher level of quality.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Motor Vehicle Child Care Assistance Account, funded through donation by citizens requesting a certificate of registration or renewal registration for any type of motor vehicle, was established and shall be used as determined by the Cabinet, pursuant to KRS 186.040 (5)(b), to assist families whose income exceeds the state income eligibility limits for public child care subsidies to pay for their child care expenses. These funds are dispersed through the Child Care Assistance Program agencies based on a plan submitted and approved by the Division of Child Care.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky supports a plan that allows all citizens to donate additional funds to a child care fund when registering their vehicles. We do not anticipate the implementation of any taxes or tax exemptions.

3.5 States will use a formal mechanism to seek parental input in program evaluations and will use that information in making policy decisions related to early care and education programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Parents continue to be part of workgroups, committees and boards of early care and education programs, as well as local Community Early Childhood Councils that evaluate and recommend policy revision or enhancement for programs.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Parents are part of work groups, committees, and boards of early care and education programs as well as local Early Childhood Councils that evaluate and develop policy for programs.

3.6 States will identify and support the use of effective research based curricula.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Cabinet and several other partner agencies are promoting and supporting the use of a document entitled *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards*. Completed in 2003 by a team of early childhood professionals, the *Standards* document was designed to assist parents, early care and education professionals, administrators, and others in understanding what young children typically know and are able to do at birth through four years of age.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

A seamless professional development system is available which includes core content for educators of young children from entry level to masters degreed professionals. Colleges and Universities are aligning their curriculum with the Early Childhood Core Content.

Beginning in June of 2003 the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards are being distributed with a 3 hour training seminar for Head Start, state funded preschool, early care and education facilities, and family child care homes staff.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky currently does this.

Goal 4: Staff in early care and education settings will be appropriately credentialed and adequately compensated.

4.1 States will maintain a professional development system that ensures, at a minimum, providers in early care and education settings meet standards set forth by NAEYC, NAFCC, APHA or AAP.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky has adopted a core content framework which incorporates national accreditation standards set forth by NAEYC and the Council for Professional Recognition, which issues the Child Development Associate Credential. The framework is the foundation for determining training content, course content, and competency standards for early care and education professionals and includes the specific knowledge, competencies, and characteristics necessary for early care and education professionals to work effectively with young children and families.

Kentucky currently offers three credentialing programs for early care and education professionals based on the core content framework.

Kentucky Administrative Regulation, 922 KAR 2:250 establishes the requirements for early care and education professionals to obtain the Commonwealth Child Care Credential, an entry level credential which requires 60 hours of instruction with field based assignments. Annual renewal requires 15 clock hours of training.

Regulation 922 KAR 2:230 establishes the requirements for early care and education professionals to obtain a Director's Credential, which provides education in the skill areas necessary to manage early childhood programs and requires 12 college credit hours in 6 subject areas at an approved institution of higher learning.

Kentucky is in the process of adopting a Kentucky Early Childhood Trainer's Credential Regulation mandating that all trainers of Kentucky's early care and education professionals be required to hold a Kentucky Early Childhood Trainer's Credential. The Early Childhood Trainer's Credential addresses the training competencies of Kentucky early childhood trainers. Applicants must meet educational and experiential requirements.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Professional Development program continues to expand. The STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system includes requirements of professional development plans for staff, increased training, and incentives/support for professional development of providers.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Professional development is a part of the KIDS Now initiative and regulations ensure minimum training requirements for providers.

4.2 States will require approved ongoing annual professional development for staff, appropriate to their education levels and job requirements, as specified in APHA and AAP. States will provide and implement a professional development system that verifies trainers, approves training and tracks the training of participants.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky requires all early care and education professionals working in licensed centers/homes and certified family child care homes to complete six hours of orientation training during the first 90 days of employment (two hours – health, safety and sanitation; one hour – recognizing and reporting child abuse/ neglect; three hours – recommended practices in early care and education). Registered providers are required to complete three hours of orientation training covering first aid, health, safety, sanitation and recognizing and reporting child abuse/neglect.

Kentucky requires early care and education professionals working in licensed centers/homes to complete 12 clock hours of training annually; certified family child care providers are required to complete six clock hours of training annually.

Kentucky has adopted a core content framework used by child care resource and referral agencies, Regional Training Centers, individual trainers and local and statewide conferences when planning/developing training.

Kentucky is in the process of adopting a Trainer's Credential Regulation mandating that all trainers of Kentucky's early care and education professionals be required to hold a Kentucky Early Childhood Trainer's Credential (awarded based on the trainer's education, expertise and experience).

Kentucky is exploring using the automated system state government uses for tracking state employee training to track the training records of Kentucky's credentialed trainers and early care and education professionals. A workgroup has been formed to determine what information would need to be captured in the system and determine how to set up the most effective pilot project.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

All trainers of early care and education providers will be required to be credentialed according to their expertise and experience by January 1, 2004. Training will be provided according to the core content by higher education, CCR&R's, Regional Training Centers, and local and statewide conferences.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

This is in development.

- 4.3 *The federal government and states will provide universally available, comprehensive scholarships to early care and education providers who are pursuing a CDA or two- or four-year degree in child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education or child care administration. Scholarships will address the costs of tuition, fees and books and will support components such as travel costs, paid release time and child care.***

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Universally available comprehensive scholarships are provided for early care and education professionals who meet the following qualifications as stated in State Regulations 11 KAR 16:0640 and 11 KAR 16:0660:

- Must be a Kentucky resident and U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident
- Be enrolled in no more than nine (9) credit hours per academic term in the scholarship program curriculum; pursuing one of the approved credentials/degrees, and maintaining satisfactory academic progress.
- Employed at least 20 hours weekly in a participating early childhood facility or provide training in early childhood development at least 12 times per year for an approved organization. Or be employed as a preschool associate teacher in a state funded preschool program pursuing a CDA, Director's Credential, or two-four year degree in early child care disciplines.
- Not eligible to receive state or federal training funds through Head Start, a public preschool program, or First Steps
- Have no unpaid financial obligation to KHEAA
- Agree to a service commitment based on the credential/degree pursued

Early Childhood Development Scholarships for the college/university level are part of Kentucky's early childhood statewide initiative, KIDS NOW. The college/university scholarship programs are administered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) and provide financial assistance, to the extent of available funds, in the form of tuition scholarships for Kentucky students who are pursuing:

- An Associate Degree in early childhood education or Bachelor's Degree in interdisciplinary early childhood education or a related program approved by the Early Childhood Development Authority.
- Kentucky Early Childhood Development Director's Credential
- Child Development Associate Credential

Programs that address the cost of travel, paid release time and/or child care, are presented as "best practice" for child care facilities participating in the STARS for KIDS NOW initiative. The implementation of actual policies/procedures is at the determination of individual employers.

Early care and education professionals enrolled in the KIDS NOW Scholarship program are eligible to receive textbook reimbursements. The initial scholarship application includes an agreement, agreed to and signed by the employer, to pay the employee a book allowance. The allowance is for the amount of the actual cost of the book(s) up to \$50.00 a semester or term within 15 days following the receipt of proof of purchase from the student.

Additional scholarship opportunities are available to early care professionals qualified to pursue non-college early care and education credentials that articulate to the CDA and or higher education degrees. Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Division of Childcare, provides scholarship dollars for the following non-college early care credentials:

- Commonwealth Child Care Credential
A scholarship (\$200.00), is awarded to an approved training organization on behalf of a scholar, for the required 60 training hours needed for a Commonwealth Credential.
- Child Development Associate Credential
A scholarship (\$200.00) is awarded to an approved training organization on behalf of a scholar, for the second 60 training hours required for a CDA.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Kentucky has increased the amount of funding for scholarships and related expenses. Budget constraints do not permit making such support universally available.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Some scholarships and other monetary supports are a part of the KIDS NOW early childhood initiative.

4.4 States will work with educational institutions to ensure that coursework is accessible in order to meet the early care and education workforce training needs, such as courses offered at night, on weekends, in accelerated formats, on-line and in various languages. Courses will address the varying educational levels of the workforce.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky continues to work with the state's educational institutions, training organizations, and individual credentialed trainers to ensure coursework is accessible to the early care workforce.

- Currently higher level educational institutions provide evening and weekend interdisciplinary early childhood or related program courses that meet the employment and educational needs of early care professionals.
- E-Cool, a 6 clock hour Orientation training is available on-line for newly hired early care professionals.
- The Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Division of Child Care, has a contract with 14 state-wide training organizations to deliver Commonwealth Credential and CDA training in the local communities to early care professionals. Training is also conducted within the local community during evening and weekend hours as well as during the week.
- A majority of the approved training organizations are located within local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. These agencies provide training to their local child care community at various locations, including on-site training at individual child care facilities. The agencies also provide training material that addresses the need of child care professionals who speak other languages. The training hours early care professionals earn from approved training organizations may articulate to early child care college/university course hours.

Through the KIDS NOW initiative, Kentucky has developed an early care professional development system that allows for newly hired or limited educational level, professionals to obtain entry-level courses and credentials that will articulate to an AA, BA, Masters, or Doctorate degree in early care and education. For example: an early care professional with a GED can obtain an entry level Commonwealth Child Care Credential which articulates to the next 60 hours required for a CDA or may also articulate to 3-credit hour interdisciplinary early childhood education course.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Kentucky continues to increase the availability of training through a variety of sources. Articulation documents are in place between 2- and 4- year institutions. Articulation documents between secondary schools and higher education are currently being revised.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does this.

4.5 *The federal government and states will provide financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.***Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004**

Kentucky offers scholarship programs to assist early care and education professionals with fees for training and education. The Milestone Achievements Award is a monetary incentive given to those who have completed various levels of education through one of

the scholarship programs offered. The cash reward is offered at 60 clock hours of training for the Commonwealth Child Care Credential, through a master's degree in Early Childhood. The amount of the reward is dependent upon the education level. The Related Education Award is given to those who are enrolled in a college credit early care and education program. The reward assists with the purchase of books and materials needed for classroom study. The Quality Achievement Award is a one time cash reward given for successful participation in the STARS Program. The Quality Incentive Award is issued quarterly to those programs participating in STARS and who have children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Milestone achievement awards are a part of the KIDS NOW early childhood initiative.

4.6 *The federal government and states will provide college loan forgiveness programs for persons earning an approved degree who work for a specified period of time in early care and education programs.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Currently, Kentucky does not have program for loan forgiveness

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

No response.

4.7 *States will work toward a system whereby staff with approved degrees or credentials will receive employment benefits and compensation at comparable levels to the state's public education system.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Some of Kentucky's voluntary STAR rated centers have used portions of their STAR's reimbursement for children receiving child care subsidies to enhance staff salaries and benefits. Budget constraints have not permitted Kentucky to implement a statewide system at this time. Several possible options have been discussed/considered (i.e. tiered reimbursement), but none have been implemented due to budget constraints.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Budget constraints do not permit this at this time although the topic is being considered.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Budget constraints do not permit this at this time.

4.8 States will ensure meaningful agreements and processes to enable the transfer of credits between and among approved two- and four-year degree programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky offers a tiered system of articulation. The first sixty (60) hours of the Commonwealth Child Care Credential articulates into the One Hundred and Twenty (120) hours required for the Child Development Associate (CDA). The Early Childhood Development Authority and several institutions of higher education have signed agreements that will allow articulation of hours taken toward a CDA into early care and education college credit programs.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Kentucky has agreements in place.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky is working on this.

Goal 5: Families will have the information to make well-informed decisions about the quality of their child's care and education and to be actively involved in their child's care and education.

5.1 States will support Child Care Resource and Referral networks that are easily accessible to parents and that provide information on child development, quality indicators, provider choices, vacancies and linkages to additional information.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky contracts and works closely with the NETWORK, the lead agency for resource and referrals. CCR & Rs are located statewide and have 800 lines that improve accessibility for parents if the agency does not have an office located in the parent's county. All have websites with information available to parents and providers. A quarterly report is submitted with data supporting technical assistance provided, referrals and parent education provided, and quality improvement efforts.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does this.

5.2 States will support early care and education providers in promoting parental involvement and in seeking parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Cabinet and several other partner agencies are promoting and supporting the use

of a document entitled *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards*. Completed in 2003 by a team of early childhood professionals, the *Standards* document was designed to assist parents, early care and education professionals, administrators, and others in understanding what young children typically know and are able to do at birth through four years of age.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does this.

Goal 6: Quality early care and education programs will be financially accessible to all children.

6.1 *Federal and state governments will adjust the child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the cost of quality care.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

According to Federal regulations, if a state social services agency pays a person a nontaxable amount to reimburse some of their child and dependent care expenses, that person cannot count the expenses that are reimbursed as work-related expenses. However, if eligible individual does not meet the filing requirements to file a federal income tax return but would have been entitled to the federal child and dependent care credit, an individual may claim the child and dependent care credit for Kentucky tax filing purposes. No further adjustment to the child care tax credit expense limits are planned at this time.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does not do this.

6.2 *States with income taxes will establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky allows a Child and Dependent Care Credit Tax credit based on 20% of federal credit expenses allowed.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

No response.

6.3 *State and federal child and dependent care tax credit income-eligibility and expense limits will be indexed for inflation.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky does not currently do this and with current budget constraints, it is not expected to be considered in the near future.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does not currently do this.

6.4 *Federal, state, local and private funds will be sufficient to meet 100% of the need for direct early care and education financial aid, based on initial eligibility levels at 85% of the state median income. Federal law will allow and states will implement redetermination policies that allow families to retain early care and education financial aid until they reach 100% of state median income.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Current budget constraints do not make this possible.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Budget constraints do not make this a possibility.

6.5 *Federal and state governments should develop policies and systems to assure families receiving financial aid pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky has a sliding fee scale of co-payments for families receiving Child Care Assistance. For families with income under \$900/month, the copay is \$0. No family receiving Child Care Assistance pays more than 10% of their income for child care.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky families receiving child care assistance do not pay more than 10% of their gross income in co-payment.

- 6.6 States will set payment rates at no less than the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years for each level and type of care. Annual inflation adjustments to payment rates will be made between market surveys.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky currently reimburses child care providers at approximately 73% based on the market rate survey conducted in 2003. A new market rate survey is scheduled to be completed in 2005.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Kentucky has not changed its payment rates, but is now at 73% of the latest market rate survey.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky is at the 75th percentile of the last market rate survey.

- 6.7 States will implement payments to providers commensurate with the quality-rating level achieved by the early care and education programs.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky continues to award Quality Incentive payments to providers voluntarily participating in the STARS for KIDS NOW program commensurate with the quality rating achieved (Levels 2-4). These payments are based on the level achieved and the percentage and age of Child Care Assistance children served.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Providers participating in the STARS for KIDS NOW voluntary quality rating system receive achievement awards when they increase their rating and receive incentive payments quarterly, based on the number of children they serve in the child care assistance program, the size of the program, the ages of children served, and their level of quality.

- 6.8 States will examine the financing of quality early care and education in their state and work toward providing payment rates that recognize the cost commensurate with the standards set forth in this action plan.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky did not make any changes in financing during this year. The state continues to operate on a spending plan with the failure to reauthorize TANF and CCDF also contributing to the lack of change.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

A market rate survey was conducted in spring 2003. Kentucky did not increase rates due to budget constraints. However, Kentucky still pays in the 73rd percentile.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky is reviewing payment rates.

6.9 States will design and aggressively implement outreach initiatives to provide families with easy-to-understand early care and education financial aid information and application assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky continues to work to improve the dissemination of easy to understand information and application assistance through its contracted agencies and community partnerships.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program was frozen May 2003. There are currently 10,000 families on the waiting list.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky continues to work to improve the dissemination of easy to understand information and application assistance

Goal 7: States will ensure that accountability is built into all systems, programs and activities undertaken to achieve the goals of this action plan.

7.1 States will convene appropriate stakeholders to develop written strategic plans for improving the quality of early care and education programs in the state. These plans will include key goals, quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for all quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Kentucky's Early Childhood Authority, which includes representation from appropriate stakeholders, continues to meet regularly and review the 20 year strategic plans for updates, revisions, and evaluation.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

The KIDS NOW Early Childhood initiative and 20 year plan is a result of such an activity.

7.2 States will collect and analyze data and produce written annual reports on progress toward identified goals. Reports will be made readily available to the public.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

The Early Childhood Authority is reviewing an evaluation report on the KIDS NOW initiative prepared by the Universities of Kentucky and Louisville.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does this.

7.3 States will use data and annual reports to make continuous policy improvements and evaluate quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004

Data from NACCRRAware, annual reports from contractors, and status reports from the Early Childhood Authority undergo internal review to make continuous policy improvements and to evaluate enhancement activities.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No response.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement began January 1, 2001)

Kentucky does this.

¹ NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

² NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

³ APHA – American Public Health Association

⁴ AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

⁵ American Public Health Association & American Academy of Pediatrics. 2002. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance – Guidelines for out-of-home child care programs*. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.