



## 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, and June 30, 2004**

Coordination between programs continues through various initiatives including the Better Baby Care Campaign, Early Learning Guidelines Committee and the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness.

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

To foster planning and coordination at the local level, Oklahoma has hired a capacity building specialist at the state resource and referral network agency to provide technical assistance to communities on collaboration models.

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

Representatives from agencies involved in early care and education met periodically to share information.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

The children's mental health consultation project has expanded to 12 counties.

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

The Dept. of Human Services and the Dept. of Mental Health are working together to fund children's mental health consultants that work with child care providers to better serve children with challenging behaviors and their families.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

No action taken.

**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 NAEYC<sup>1</sup>, NAFCC<sup>2</sup>, APHA<sup>3</sup> or AAP<sup>4</sup> national standards.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

Effective August, 2003 the definition of infants in center licensing requirements for purposes of staff-child ratios changed from 0 – 10 months to 0 – 12 months.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

Effective October, 2003 the licensing law was revised to require licensure for public and private schools caring for children under three years of age.

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

Effective August 2003 revised center licensing requirements increased health and safety requirements and require that fire inspections be made by trained and authorized inspectors.

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

Some of these standards were incorporated into licensing requirements for centers and homes.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No new action taken.

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

Licenses are revoked or applications denied when the provider is unable or unwilling to meet and maintain compliance with licensing requirements.

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

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No new action taken.

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

At least three unannounced monitoring visits are made per year to all licensed facilities.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

Child care providers, household members over 18 years of age, volunteers and others who have unsupervised access to children must obtain a state criminal history check (does not require fingerprinting). Center owners and family child care home providers are screened against the state child abuse registry.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

Effective August 2003 new center licensing requirements require that new staff will receive additional information as part of Entry Level Child Care Training.

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

Center staff must receive orientation within one week of employment and prior to having sole responsibility for a group of children that includes the definition, identification and mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse reporting is mandated in the family child care home requirements. Licensing staff is trained in signs and reporting.

**2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person<sup>5</sup> and a system capable of providing technical assistance.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Current licensing caseloads average 60 cases of both child care centers and family child care homes.

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

The licensing staff training program continues to be strengthened.

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

Licensing staff receives initial and on-going training in regulatory administration and child development. The average statewide caseload of centers and homes is 55.

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

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No new action taken.

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

Parental right of access is required in both licensing requirements and in the child care subsidy contract.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

Effective August, 2003 all new child care center teachers are required to complete a 20-hour entry level course within three months of employment. The course is also available in an on-line version.

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

No new action taken.

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

The Center for Early Childhood Professional Development provides statewide resources for child care providers, including training, technical assistance, accreditation support grants, educator registry, professional development registry, director's credential, model observation sites and video lending library.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No new action taken.

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

Oklahoma has a CCR&R network agency that contracts with nine community-based agencies statewide.

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

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

An additional tiered level to help providers move from one star to two stars was implemented in July 2001.

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

A tiered quality and reimbursement system called Reaching for the Stars was implemented in February 1998.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

The tax credit law was revised in 2002 to limit expenditures for employees' child care costs to care provided at a two stars or higher level.

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

A tax credit of 20% of allowable expenses was available to employers who incurred expenses relating to child care.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

Input from parents was solicited for the 2001 and 2003 State Child Care Plans through press releases, public hearings and a survey posted on our web site.

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

No action taken.

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

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

The Center for Early Childhood Professional Development is piloting a 40-hour Creative Curriculum course in different parts of the state.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

Effective August, 2003 directors were given until January 1, 2005 to obtain an Oklahoma Director's Credential.

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

No new action taken.

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

The Center for Early Childhood Professional Development provides a system of services for providers (see 3.1, 4.3 and 4.5).

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

CECPD maintains a professional development registry to track provider's training and an educator registry of approved trainers. In August 2003 CECPD implemented a three-tier training approval system.

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

Minimum licensing requirements require annual training of 20 hours for directors and 12 hours for teachers and family child care providers.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

The provider scholarship program is no longer a T.E.A.C.H. affiliate but contains many of the components previously included.

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

Travel costs will no longer be paid effective July 2003 due to budget constraints.

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

The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program was implemented in 2000 and includes all of the recommended components for providers seeking a credential or two-year degree.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

The Scholars for Excellence in Child Care program was created in 2001. Two-year colleges are providing varying levels of coursework, including remedial courses, and courses are offered in a variety of formats and schedules. Coordinators at each college recruit, mentor and support students in obtaining their credential or degree.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

The REWARD wage supplement program was created in May 2001. Providers receive bonuses every six months based on educational achievement.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

When public schools collaborate with child care centers for the pre-kindergarten program, the Pre-K teachers receive public school salaries and benefits.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

This is gradually improving on a school-by-school basis.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

There are now eight instead of nine community-based agencies but they are providing enhanced services on a statewide basis.

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

No new action taken.

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

Oklahoma has a CCR&R network agency that contracts with nine community-based agencies statewide that provides those services with the exception of tracking vacancies.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

The Better Baby Care Campaign conducted a poster contest on successful parent involvement strategies with the winner receiving a trip to the NAEYC conference.

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

Requirements for parent involvement were strengthened in the August 2003 center licensing requirement revisions.

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

One of the Reaching for the Stars criteria is enhanced parent involvement activities and the use of parent surveys to establish program improvement goals.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

Effective September 1, 2003, the eligibility ceiling for families applying for assistance was lowered to 67% of SMI. It remains at 83% for families receiving assistance prior to that date.

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

The subsidy eligibility level is at 85% of the state median income.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

Family share co-payments were reduced but ranged up to 17% of gross income at the higher income levels.

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

No action taken.

- 6.6 *States will set payment rates at no less than the 75<sup>th</sup> 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

Rates vary based upon the age of the child, the child care setting, the geographic area and the Star status. With the exception of metro school-age care, rates approached or exceeded the 75th percentile in the geographic metro and standard rate areas for two and three star facilities.

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

New rates were established and increased as the tiered quality and reimbursement program, Reaching for the Stars, was implemented.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

No action taken.

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

Quality-rating level payments are made to providers.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

The state increased child care subsidy funding by \$10 million in the 2004 legislative session to offset the loss of TANF Reserve funds.

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

As TANF reserve funds are depleted, advocates, policy makers and legislators are seeking new financing options.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

No new action taken.

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

Brochures with applications for subsidy are made readily available in the community, and information is on the agency's website.

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

No action taken.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness is in the process of developing a strategic plan.

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

The Dept. of Human Services Division of Child Care has a strategic plan for quality improvements that is continuously reviewed and evaluated. The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness was created in legislation in 2003 and will be formally launched in October 2003; stakeholders will develop a strategic plan within the first year.

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

No action taken.

- 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, and June 30, 2004**

Research findings on the Stars tiered quality program were completed, shared through press releases and posted on the agency's website. The agency also funded a study and report, The 2003 Economic Impact of Oklahoma's Child Care Industry which is posted on their website.

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

No new action taken.

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

The Division of Child Care publishes an annual report with data and achievements that is distributed widely.

**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, and June 30, 2004**

Programs receiving funding for quality enhancement activities each have their own quality assurance systems, and their findings are evaluated closely.

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

The Dept. of Human Services Division of Child Care has a strategic plan for quality improvements that is continuously reviewed and evaluated.

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

No action taken.

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<sup>1</sup> NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

<sup>2</sup> NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

<sup>3</sup> APHA – American Public Health Association

<sup>4</sup> AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

<sup>5</sup> 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.