



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

The 2003 Texas Legislature enacted legislation mandating the State Center on Early Childhood Development (State Center) and its advisory group to support effective models of early learning programs that coordinate services at the local level.

The State Center designed and delivered the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM), a multi-faceted technical assistance package for eleven Texas communities demonstrating a willingness to integrate services for young children using three funding sources—child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten. The State Center also developed a quality rating system and a parent initiative to support school readiness.

Across the eleven communities, the pilot project included 220 classrooms and approximately 4,400 children. The project utilized a common approach to determining if a program intervention is effective. Within each site, half of the classrooms received the intervention and half continued “business as usual.” At the end of the four-month period in which the intervention was able to be in place, these two settings were compared with respect to changes for teachers and children. Those classroom teachers who did not receive the intervention in the first year are going to have the intervention provided in 2004-2005 school year and the first-year teachers will continue to receive the intervention.

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

The 2003 Texas Legislature created a new Office of Early Childhood Coordination within the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), as the CCDF Lead Agency, is represented on and actively participates in the statewide Advisory Committee established by that Office.

The Head Start/Child Care Pre-K Collaboration Task Force was created in the spring of 2002 to increase the coordination of services between Head Start, Child Care, and Pre-K across the state. The goals are to share best practices in early child development and school readiness and to promote and expand full-day/full year programs for children.

In addition to the above coordination activities, the 2003 Texas Legislature enacted legislation requiring information sharing among early learning programs. The legislation charged the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development (Texas Center) and its advisory committee to support early learning programs that coordinate services at the local level.

At the local level, Boards have child care advisory committees comprised of representatives from school districts, community colleges, Head Start, employers, early childhood education programs, child care providers, child care resource and referral (CCR&R) contractors, and related community-based organizations.

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

At the state level, coordination has resulted in interagency contracts and agreements with the Texas Education Agency (the state's lead agency for public pre-kindergarten programs). This interagency agreement is related to the corresponding transfer, certification, and/or coordination of funds for CCDF services. Coordination also occurs with the state's Head Start Collaboration Project in communicating with its local constituency.

Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) are required to coordinate child care rule making and planning activities with local government agencies and providers of other early childhood programs at the local level.

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 Healthy Child Care Texas Advisory Committee is using its grant funds for training child care and medical health consultants to provide information on health-related topics to child care providers based on the Jacksonville, Florida Healthy Child Care Initiative model.

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

A cooperative agreement between the Child Care Bureau and the Head Start Bureau has recently created the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. The Center's purpose is to strengthen the capacity of the Head Start system and the Child Care sector to improve the social and emotional outcomes of young children enrolled in care. Texas was invited by the Center to be one of 10 states to participate in the strategic planning process.

TWC will continue to work on improving the social emotional outcomes of children by participating in the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health State Planning Team. The Planning Team receives technical assistance from Georgetown University.

The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS) provides consumer education on choosing child care facilities through free brochures, its web site, local licensing offices, and the child care information line. Throughout the state, regional licensing consultants conduct training for parents on how to choose a child care facility through parent fairs, sessions for TANF recipients, and at community colleges.

Many Boards promote consumer education through local TV and radio advertisements, web sites, and brochures. Consumer education includes topics such as choosing a child care facility and child growth and development.

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

Staff in TWC's Child Care Services Department participates in six to eight statewide child care committees or task forces with the purpose of identifying opportunities to share child care information with local Boards. Groups include the: Texas I Am Your Child Network, Adult and Child Nutrition Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee to Texas Early Childhood Intervention, Child Care Resource Groups, Registry of Parent Trainers, Texas Information and Referral Advisory Committee, the United Way of Texas child care conference planning committee, and the State Head Start Collaboration project.

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) is the state's lead public health agency. Since 1998, TDH and TWC staff have served on the Healthy Child Care America advisory group to assure that the needs of children receiving CCDF subsidies are addressed in the project's plans and deliverables.

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

See 1.1 response.

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

The 2001 Texas Legislature enacted a law that requires local coordination between the Head Start and Early Head Start programs and the Boards' CCDF providers to increase the availability of full-day/full-year child care services to meet the needs of low-income parents who are working or who are in education or training.

In addition to the above coordination activities, the 2003 Texas Legislature passed a law requiring specific information sharing among early learning programs. The legislature charged the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development (Texas Center) and its advisory committee to support early learning programs that coordinate services at the local level. Texas Center also is responsible for developing pilot projects for service integration across the state.

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

TWC annually awarded competitive grants to independent school districts for the purpose of expanding and improving wrap-around (after school) child care programs at school sites. In addition, Boards work with school districts to meet the needs of working parents, including the development of Pre-K and wrap-around child care programs offering full-day/full-year services and services during school holidays and breaks.

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, and June 30, 2004

No new action.

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

TWC continues to maintain the TRS program. The 2003 Texas Legislature charged the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development to develop a rating system for all early childhood education programs.

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

The Texas child care licensing minimum standards do not meet all NAEYC, NAFCC, or APHA/AAP national standards.

TWC established the Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider Certification Program, formerly known as the Texas Designated Vendor Program. TRS facilities voluntarily exceed the state's regulatory standards for health and safety, group size, child to caregiver ratio, caregiver training, and age-appropriate curricula. These standards do not meet NAEYC, NAFCC or APHA/AAP national criteria.

2.2 States will develop and enforce health, fire and safety requirements for all early childhood 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

Registered family child care homes will no longer be required to meet fire inspection requirements.

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

No new action.

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

TDPRS minimum standards incorporate various standards or parts of standards from the *National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs* by the American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. For example, TDPRS minimum standards require outdoor play each day that weather permits for all ages of children, including infants. However, the parameters regarding wind chill and heat index specified in *Caring for Our Children*, standard 2.009 are not specified in TDPRS rule.

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.

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

No new action.

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

TDPRS may revoke a facility's license or registration or may suspend a facility's license or a family home's registration for a definite period rather than deny or revoke the license or registration if TDPRS finds repeated noncompliance with standards that do not endanger the health and safety of children. To qualify for license or registration suspension under this subsection, a facility or family home must suspend its operations and show that standards can be met within the suspension period.

If TDPRS finds a facility or family home is in repeated noncompliance with standards that do not endanger the health and safety of children, the department may schedule the facility or family home for evaluation or probation rather than suspend or revoke the facility's license or the family home's registration. TDPRS must provide notice to the facility or family home of the evaluation or probation and of the items of noncompliance not later than the 10th day before the evaluation or probation period begins. TDPRS must designate a period of not less than 30 days during which the facility or family home will remain under evaluation. During the evaluation or probation period, the facility or family home must correct the items that were in noncompliance and report the corrections to TDPRS for approval.

TDPRS will take adverse action including the revocation or denial of a permit, when deficiencies pose a risk that endangers the health and safety of children, or there are indications of a continued failure to comply with the licensing minimum standards, rules, or law.

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.

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

No new action.

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

TDPRS must inspect all licensed or certified facilities at least once a year and may inspect other facilities or registered family homes as necessary. TDPRS must investigate a listed family home, a provider who is compensated for regular child care but does not meet the minimum licensing standards, when the department receives a complaint of abuse or neglect of a child. At least one of the annual visits must be unannounced and all may be unannounced.

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.

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

No new action.

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

TDPRS requires each person, 14 years or older (other than clients of the operation), including volunteers counted in the child/caregiver ratio, who will regularly or frequently be present at child care operations, to undergo a criminal history check, conducted by the Department of Public Safety for crimes committed in the state of Texas, as well as a TDPRS Central Registry check. The Central Registry is a database of people who have been found by TDPRS Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or Child Care Licensing to have abused or neglected a child.

Requests for criminal history and central registry checks must be submitted with an application for a permit, submitted within two days of hiring a new employee, or adding a volunteer or household member and again every 24 months after each person's name was first submitted.

TDPRS requires child care personnel to undergo a criminal background check through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) when a person resides outside of Texas and works in Texas. TDPRS also requires a FBI background check when there is reason to believe that a person applying for a child care position has a FBI history. In these instances when background checks are conducted by the FBI, fingerprinting is a part of those background checks.

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.

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

TDPRS requires all employees of a licensed child care center, and all caregivers and household members 14 years of age and older, who are regularly or frequently present in a child care home, while children are in care, to attend an overview of symptoms of child abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse and the responsibility for reporting these.

All newly employed child care licensing workers are required to undergo basic job skills training which involves 3 weeks of intensive classroom instruction and exercises. The

classroom training is interspersed with on-the-job training that is under the tutelage of the worker's supervisor and documents proficiencies attained through computer-assisted testing. The training focuses on the state's licensing standards, policies and procedures; and it also covers the health and safety issues (including child abuse prevention, recognition and reporting) that form the basis of the state's minimum standards.

The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), the state's regulatory agency for child care providers, also has a voluntary worker certification program which involves continuing education beyond the basic job skills training. Promotions within that agency are dependent upon completion of the worker certification course.

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

TDPRS does not require training on recognizing the signs of child abuse for licensed facilities.

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, and June 30, 2004

No new action. The State of Texas does not address average caseload for child care licensing. TDFPS must offer consultation to potential applicants, applicants, and license, listing, registration, and certification holders, about meeting and maintaining standards for licensing, listing, registration, and certification and achieving programs of excellence in child care.

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

Same as below.

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

The State of Texas does not address average caseload for child care licensing. TDPRS must offer consultation to potential applicants, applicants, and license, listing, registration, and certification holders, about meeting and maintaining standards for licensing, listing, registration, and certification and achieving programs of excellence in child care.

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.

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

TDPRS minimum standards require that the permit holder ensure parents have the

opportunity to visit the child care center or child care home during all hours of operation to observe their child, the home's operation, and program activities without having to secure prior approval.

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

TDPRS allows parents to visit their child's facility anytime during its hours of operation.

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

The State Center is designing a technical assistance network to provide support to early childhood education programs that desire to obtain a school readiness rating.

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

In addition, TDPRS provides training materials, technical assistance, and newsletter articles on infant and toddler needs, development, and quality care practices to every licensed, registered, and listed child care provider in the state. TDPRS maintains some of these materials on their web site and has incorporated best practices into the minimum standards publications and web site. TDPRS also requires that all caregivers who care for children younger than 24 months take a minimum of one hour of annual training on recognizing and preventing shaken baby syndrome, preventing sudden infant death syndrome, and understanding early childhood brain development. Other training requirements include child growth and development, child guidance and discipline, age-appropriate curriculum development, and teacher-child interaction.

Several Boards provide training and technical assistance to child care programs that TDPRS has placed on a more frequent monitoring plan.

TWC contracts for publication of *Texas Child Care*, a quarterly magazine for the child care industry with articles of practical use for providers. The magazine also issues a related four-page letter for parents, *Texas Parenting News*. The magazine includes articles on training staff, improving services to families, and managing business efficiently. Although licensed child care directors are the magazine's primary audience, direct caregivers; registered family home providers; public school administrators and teachers; college child development instructors; high school work-prep teachers; and parents benefit from its articles. Of the 26,000 copies printed quarterly, 24,000 are distributed free to regulated child care facilities in Texas, and the remainder are sold by subscription throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas military bases.

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

TDPRS offers consultation to potential applicants and permit holders about meeting and maintaining standards for licensing and achieving program excellence.

TWC established the Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider Certification Program, formerly known as the Texas Designated Vendor Program. TRS facilities voluntarily exceed the state's regulatory standards for health and safety, group size, child to caregiver ratio, caregiver training, and age-appropriate curricula. State law requires that TRS facilities receive a higher reimbursement rate. That rate must be at least 5 percent more than the Board's maximum rate for non-TRS facilities in the same category of care. Some Boards have established tiered reimbursement rates for TRS facilities that are higher than the 5 percent increase. Some Boards also award bonuses to TRS facilities based on a facility's level of assessment.

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

In fiscal year 2004, TWC partnered with the Health and Human Services Commission and its 2-1-1 system for child care information and referral services. This partnership allows TWC to maximize its resources, increase the current level of services, and expand its child care referrals and information services to the entire state, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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

Eight CCR&R agencies continue to receive funds from TWC as well as private sources to provide R&R services.

In fiscal 2003, TWC conducted a business plan to investigate the inclusion of child care resource and referral (R&R) services into the Texas 2-1-1 Information and Referral Network offered by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). A partnership with HHSC and the 2-1-1 system in fiscal 2004 would allow TWC to maximize its resources, increase the current level of services, and expand its R&R services to the entire state, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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

TWC has established a statewide CCR&R to manage the statewide development and coordination of local child care resource and referral agencies. The State Network Office is responsible for facilitating the development and coordination of local resource and referral activities to support each local workforce board's child care service design, conducting research on supply and demand, providing training and consultation, performing funds development, and providing grants to local resource and referral agencies operating within the state.

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

The State Center is currently developing a school readiness rating system for early childhood education providers and communities.

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

TWC continues to maintain the TRS program. The 2003 Texas Legislature charged the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development to develop a rating system for all early childhood education programs.

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

TWC established the Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider Certification Program, formerly known as the Texas Designated Vendor Program. TRS facilities voluntarily exceed the state's regulatory standards for health and safety, group size, child to caregiver ratio, caregiver training, and age-appropriate curricula. State law requires that TRS facilities receive a higher reimbursement rate. That rate must be at least 5 percent more than the Board's maximum rate for non-TRS facilities in the same category of care. Some Boards have established tiered reimbursement rates for TRS facilities that are higher than the 5-percent increase. Some Boards also award bonuses to TRS facilities based on a facility's level of assessment.

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.

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.

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.

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

The 2003 Texas Legislature passed legislation charging the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development and its advisory committee to improve early education program coordination and professional development. The legislation requires a parent representative on the advisory committee.

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

Child care contractors that are licensed centers, are required to establish a Parent Advisory Group consistent with Chapter 44 of the Texas Human Resources Code.

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

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

The State Center has achieved unprecedented results in terms of impacting children's school readiness with an intense intervention model that combines previously successful Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) intervention tools with advanced technologies, such as the Personal Digital Assistants.

The State Center conducted research on the effectiveness of the intervention program, which used research-based curriculum in all eleven TEEM pilot projects. In the TEEM intervention classrooms, the State Center found that teachers across all types of program settings were successfully able to implement research-based language, literacy, and math curricula.

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

In December 2002, Governor Perry created the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development (Texas Center) and named Dr. Susan Landry the Director. Under the leadership of the Texas Center and its advisory committee, the existing Pre-K guidelines will be reviewed and modified to be more meaningful to children in all care settings and more inclusive of all child development domains.

The early learning guidelines will be voluntary for child care facilities but will become a consideration for Texas Rising Star Provider Certification guidelines in the future.

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

In December 1999, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) completed Pre-K guidelines with the assistance of a statewide work group. TEA presented the Pre-K guidelines to professional organizations for their input. The Texas Education Code, Chapter 29.153, contains statutory requirements related to Pre-K, directing that Pre-K programs be designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills. The guidelines provide a means to align the Pre-K programs with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) by describing specific goals for Pre-K children in specific content areas.

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

The Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office (THSSCO) led a work group on the statewide online trainer registry system. The registry is a professional development resource for early care and education providers and trainers in the state. It is anticipated that trainer registry will go on-line in January 2005.

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

In the spring of 2003, the Head Start State Collaboration Office renewed its efforts to implement the trainer registry statewide. A work group has been formed to revisit and modify requirements for the training registry. It is anticipated that trainer registry information will be available in November 2003, and Phase I of a newly designed, web-based registry will go on-line in January 2004.

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

The professional development plan is outlined in The Early Care and Education Career Development System maintained by the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office. The Early Care and Education Career Development System describes the core knowledge and skills needed for career-path advancement for all early child care teachers, including Pre-K and Head Start teachers. This system was developed over a 10-year period from 1990 to 2000 by a collaboration of agencies and organizations.

The Early Care and Education Career Development System addresses all categories of early care and education programs including Head Start and Pre-K. The system features a locally administered and operated system that relies upon a statewide, standardized system of components that are carried out at the local level. Forth Worth, San Antonio, and Houston are currently using the system. A plan for statewide implementation is being explored at this time.

TWC recognizes the importance of professional development for employees working in the child care industry. TWC requires Boards to meet performance measures directly related to the number of child care providers trained.

Since 1977, the Texas Child Care Magazine has offered child care and early education programs methods of training staff, improving services to families, and managing business efficiently. Although licensed child care directors are the magazine's primary audience, direct caregivers; registered family home providers; public school administrators and teachers; college child development instructors; high school work-prep teachers; and parents benefit from its articles. Of the 26,000 copies printed quarterly, 24,000 are distributed free to regulated child care facilities in Texas, and the remainder are sold by subscription throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas military bases.

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

See 4.1 response.

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

See 4.1 response.

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

See 4.1 response.

- 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

TWC awarded grants to three Boards to set up child care *Teacher Education and Compensation* pilot projects. A total of \$647,887 was awarded to the three Boards for the project period: May 1, 2003, through April 30, 2004. The purpose of the pilots was to increase teacher retention and compensation by providing the participating teachers with scholarships and other incentives. In addition, child care employers of participating teachers received incentives in the form of age-appropriate equipment and materials. Each of the three Boards were to implement their respective pilot programs in collaboration with local organizations that would invest in financing and sustaining the projects beyond the pilot period. Grant funds provided scholarships to a total of 282 child care teachers to continue their education in child development or early childhood education. A total of 181 of the participating teachers completed their CDA certification. A total of 56 completed their subsidized coursework in child care-related postsecondary education, 51 in pursuit of an associate's degree and 5 working toward a bachelor's degree. TWC is still evaluating the outcomes related to compensation, retention, and program sustainability.

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

In fiscal 2003, TWC awarded grants totaling \$648,887 to three Boards to increase the retention of child care teachers through collaborative efforts that provide eligible teachers employed in early child care, educational opportunities, scholarships, incentives, and recognition in the field of child development. The Cameron County, East Texas, and Tarrant County Workforce Development Boards operate these grant-funded pilot programs. Over the next year, grant funds will provide scholarships to a total of 307 child care teachers to continue their education in child development. In fiscal 2004, TWC plans to continue the grants based on the success of the three pilots.

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

TWC established the Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider Certification Program, formerly known as the Texas Designated Vendor Program. TRS facilities voluntarily exceed the state's regulatory standards for health and safety, group size, child to caregiver ratio, caregiver training, and age-appropriate curricula. State law requires that TRS facilities

receive a higher reimbursement rate. That rate must be at least 5 percent more than the Board's maximum rate for non-TRS facilities in the same category of care. Some Boards have established tiered reimbursement rates for TRS facilities that are higher than the 5-percent increase. Some Boards also award bonuses to TRS facilities based on a facility's level of assessment.

Action by the State Legislature designated CCDF funds for the scholarships beginning fiscal 2000. TWC is responsible for administering this program that grants awards up to \$1,000 for professional child care training to eligible recipients. Recipients must be seeking a Child Development Associate or a Certified Child Care Professional credential, a Level One College Certificate, or an Associate Degree in early childhood education or child development, and agree to work in stipulated child care facilities for at least 18 months after receiving the subsidized training.

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.

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

Educational institutions continue to meet the education needs of child care workers.

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

In 1997, The Texas State Legislature enacted legislation to mandate the newly created Interagency Work Group on Early Care and Education programs to study and report on training programs for early childhood education workers. Major components of the state early care and education career development system included: professional standards; coordinated and articulated training across educational and instructional systems; and a practitioner and trainer registry.

While the state is not involved in working with educational institutions in this area, the higher education community has been responsive to the education needs of child care workers.

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

See response to 4.3 above.

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

See 4.3 response.

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

See 4.3 response.

- 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.

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

No new action.

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

Action by the Texas Legislature designated CCDF funds for the child care student loan repayment program in fiscal 2000 to facilitate the stability of workers in the child care industry and improve the quality of care. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating board has created a student loan repayment program for child care workers seeking degrees or associate degrees in child development or early childhood education and who agree to work in designated facilities. This program allows workers who have with student loans to receive assistance in repaying up to 15 percent of the loan per year in return for signing a work agreement and promissory note.

- 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 action.

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.

- 4.8 *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.

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

At local discretion, Texas high schools have formal articulation agreements with two-year community colleges to accept early childhood education courses taken in high school. Such locally initiated articulation agreements are prevalent across the state. In addition, two-year and four-year higher education institutions have formed independent articulation agreements to transfer early childhood education course work from one type of institution to another.

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

In 1997, the Texas Legislature enacted legislation to mandate the newly created Interagency Work Group on Early Care and Education programs to study and report on training programs for early childhood education workers. Major components of the state early care and education career development system included: professional standards; coordinated and articulated training across educational and instructional systems; and a practitioner and trainer registry. As part of this process, Texas mandated articulation agreements between all two-year and four-year institutions of higher education for four early childhood education courses totaling 12 credit hours, including:

- Introduction to Early Childhood Education;
- Family and Community;
- Child, Growth and Development; and
- Nutrition and Health.

An additional 3 credit hours (for a total of 15) may be included in articulation agreements if independently agreed to at the local level. Such local articulation agreements are widespread across the state.

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

In fiscal year 2004, TWC partnered with the Health and Human Services Commission and its 2-1-1 system for child care information and referral services. This partnership allows TWC to maximize its resources, increase the current level of services, and expand its child care referral and information services to the entire state, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In addition, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill (S.B.76) that requires early childhood education providers to share kindergarten readiness indicators with parents.

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

In fiscal 2003, TWC conducted a business plan to investigate the inclusion of child care resource and referral (R&R) services into the Texas 2-1-1 Information and Referral Network offered by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). A

partnership with HHSC and the 2-1-1 system in fiscal 2004 would allow TWC to maximize its resources, increase the current level of services, and expand its R&R services to the entire state, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Each of the 270 Texas Workforce Centers provides access to information about the availability of child care services. The information includes an overview of subsidized child care services as well as the application process; and, in many cases, a list of available providers; steps to choosing a child care facility; eligibility requirements; and parent costs. Boards also engage the local media to make information regarding child care services available to the public. Child care contractors participate in informational fairs, numerous community coalitions and community activities for children in order to disseminate information to the public. Contractors also collaborate with workforce centers, social service agencies, school districts, colleges and universities, and private businesses to disseminate information and conduct on-site enrollment of children. TWC provides information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, including the internet, and general information and technical assistance lines. Boards are also required to provide parents with a consumer guide to child care providers within the workforce area.

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

TWC provides grants to most of the state's eight Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies for special activities targeting employer support for child care. In addition, \$1 million a year supports the Statewide CCR&R Network, which expands agency capacity to serve parents and collects data on child care supply and demand across the state.

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

As part of the State Center's early child care and education integration pilot projects, the State Center developed a parent initiative to support school readiness skills at home. The parent initiative was composed of several activities, including:

- Developing a parent packet, "Learning Side By Side," that communicates the importance of parental involvement in their children's learning;
- Coordinating parent workshops to help parents understand the importance of language and literacy and explain how to use and model the contents of the parent packet;
- Drafting a monthly newsletter with literacy activities that are easy and fun to do at home; and
- Creating a quality pre-kindergarten indicator checklist.

Teachers were also trained to use Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) learning reports in individual discussions with parents. These PDAs are palm pilots used for teacher records assessments, child portfolios, child assessment, and teacher evaluations. In addition to assisting teachers with curriculum and classroom planning, the PDA learning reports help teachers communicate with parents about their child's learning and types of activities parents can do at home with their child.

The State Center designed the Texas School Readiness System pilot project to demonstrate a quality rating system for pre-kindergarten programs, child care facilities, and Head Start programs. The pilot project includes a parent component that provides parents with the tools to make informed decisions about their children's early childhood experience.

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

No new action.

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

Child care contractors, that are licensed centers, are required to establish a Parent Advisory Group consistent with Chapter 44 of the Texas Human Resources Code.

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 action.

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

Does not apply.

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

Does not apply.

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

Does not apply.

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

Does not apply.

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

Does not apply.

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

Does not apply.

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

No new action.

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

No new action.

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

TWC has instituted the Continuity of Care policy that states enrolled children shall receive child care as long as the parent remains eligible for any available source of Commission-funded child care with some exceptions.

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 action.

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.

- 6.6 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, and June 30, 2004

No change.

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

No change.

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

Not required. "Equal access" per 48 CFR 98.43 is required.

- 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.

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

No new action.

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

TWC established the Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider Certification Program, formerly known as the Texas Designated Vendor Program. TRS facilities voluntarily exceed the state's regulatory standards for health and safety, group size, child to caregiver ratio, caregiver training, and age-appropriate curricula. State law requires that TRS facilities receive a higher reimbursement rate. That rate must be at least 5 percent more than the Board's maximum rate for non-TRS facilities in the same category of care. Some Boards have established tiered reimbursement rates for TRS facilities that are higher than the 5-percent increase. Some Boards also award bonuses to TRS facilities based on a facility's level of assessment.

- 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

No new action.

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

TWC anticipates that Boards will execute more than 200 local match agreements in fiscal 2004 and again in fiscal 2005. These local agreements will produce approximately \$19.7 million annually in local matching funds and will draw down

approximately \$29.8 million annually in federal matching funds for a total of approximately \$49.5 million more each year that will be available for direct child care services and quality enhancements across the state.

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

Boards pursue agreements with public and private entities for the donation of private funds and the transfer and certification of eligible public funds to be used as state match for CCDF Matching Funds.

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

In fiscal year 2004, TWC partnered with the Health and Human Services Commission and its 2-1-1 system for the provision of child care information and referral services. In addition to direct child care referrals, the system provides related information such as cost of care, sources of financial aid, parent co-payment requirements, and the array of services offered by various providers (transportation, meals, field trips, etc.).

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

In fiscal 2003, TWC conducted a business plan to investigate the inclusion of child care resource and referral (R&R) services into the Texas 2-1-1 Information and Referral Network offered by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). A partnership with HHSC and the 2-1-1 system in fiscal 2004 would allow TWC to maximize its resources, increase the current level of services, and expand its R&R services to the entire state, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Each of the 270 Texas Workforce Centers provides access to information about the availability of child care services. The information includes an overview of subsidized child care services as well as the application process; and, in many cases, a list of available providers; steps to choosing a child care facility; eligibility requirements; and parent costs. Boards also engage the local media to make information regarding child care services available to the public. Child care contractors participate in informational fairs, numerous community coalitions and community activities for children in order to disseminate information to the public. Contractors also collaborate with workforce centers, social service agencies, school districts, colleges and universities, and private businesses to disseminate information and conduct on-site enrollment of children. TWC provides information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, including the internet, and general information and technical assistance lines. Boards are also required to provide parents with a consumer guide to child care providers within the workforce area.

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

TWC established a statewide CCR&R Network to manage the statewide development and coordination of local child care resource and referral agencies. The State Network

Office is responsible for facilitating the development and coordination of local resource and referral activities to support each Board's child care service design, conducting research on supply and demand, providing training and consultation, performing funds development, and providing grants to local resource and referral agencies operating within the state.

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 Texas Legislature gave the State Center in September 2003 the charge of promoting school readiness. S.B. 76 called for the State Center to convene an Advisory Committee and develop a report with recommendations for:

- Effective models of child care coordination;
- Promotion of school readiness through early child care and education programs;
- Effective administrative structure at the state and local level to make better use of child care resources; and
- Revision of statutes and policies to facilitate child care coordination.

The legislation also called on the State Center to develop pilot projects to:

- Demonstrate coordination of resources for integration of early care and education services for preschool children;
- Demonstrate a quality rating system for pre-kindergarten programs, child care facilities, and Head Start programs; and
- Create a parent initiative to support school readiness skills at home.

To implement this work, the following teams were established:

- An Advisory Committee;
- A Resource Panel;
- A School Readiness Task Force; and
- A Blue Ribbon Expert Panel.

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

The State Center for Early Childhood Development will convene an Advisory Committee representing early education program stakeholders in September 2003. The Committee must prepare and deliver a report to the governor that identifies the types of data collected and maintained by government-funded child care providers, including Head Start program providers and child care contractors. The report must also include recommendations for:

- (1) Effective models of child care coordination;
- (2) Effective administrative structure at the state and local level to facilitate coordination of child care resources;
- (3) Revision of statutes and policies to facilitate child care coordination;

- (4) One or more methods of including the collected and maintained data identified; and
- (5) Promotion of school readiness through early child care and education programs.

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

The State Center is required to submit a progress report on the Texas Early Education Model pilot projects to the Texas Legislature by September 1, 2004. The State Center will also report on the progress of the Texas School Readiness System and the Parent Initiative pilot projects in the fall of 2005.

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

Same as 7.1 and 7.2 responses.

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

TWC prepares the Texas State Plan for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Services every two years. In developing the CCDF State Plan, TWC consults Boards, Texas Education Agency, Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, Head Start Collaboration Office, and tribal governments that receive CCDF funds.

As part of the CCDF State Plan process, TWC sends a survey to each Board requesting information on local policies, public/private partnerships, coordination among local providers of early childhood services, and activities to improve the quality and availability of child care services.

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

It is anticipated that the reports from the State Center, referenced in 7.2 immediately above, will influence the direction of state policy over the next few years.

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.

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.