

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHTS: Expanding Access to Child Care

STRATEGY #1: Public/Private Partnerships

Making quality child care available and affordable for all families in need of care is a critical issue for government, employers, and families alike. Recognizing that no single entity can meet the growing need for quality care, communities across the country are forging public-private partnerships. The goal of these partnerships is to leverage resources, coordinate efforts, and provide continuity over time for local child care efforts.

THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS

The Child Care Partnership Project offers the following tips for successful public-private partnerships:

- Involve all partners, including parents, right from the beginning, and find ways to allow everyone to contribute and benefit from the work.
- Involve powerful champions from different sectors who can make initiatives visible to their peer groups and to other constituencies, as well as the public.
- Set clear ground rules and establish a workable governance structure that defines partner roles and responsibilities.
- Define the partnership's goals and measure progress regularly. Update the goals as needed to maintain momentum over time.
- Move forward with a flexible, entrepreneurial mindset that allows for change as opportunities arise.
- Keep partners informed and publicly recognize the contributions that everyone makes to the effort.

For more information see: <http://nccic.org/ccpartnerships/home.htm>.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO

- **Convene public and private partners.** Local officials are well situated to convene meetings or create commissions including both government and private-sector partners (nonprofit and for-profit). People may be brought together to tackle discrete projects (e.g. setting community goals or running a public awareness campaign) or to participate in longstanding planning and coordination efforts. In Lansing, Michigan, for example, the mayor convened a diverse group

of partners, chaired by a university president and a judge, to set goals and outline action steps for the community to help children enter school ready to succeed.

- **Leverage private funding and other support.** Municipal leaders can work with businesses that are able to offer funding, resources, and expertise to public and nonprofit early childhood efforts. Cities also can use their own resources and expertise to leverage other outside dollars through challenge grants and similar incentives for private investment. In Chicago, Illinois, construction of Family Resource Centers offering child care and other services was financed through a combination of federal Empowerment Zone funding, community fundraising, a below-market loan from the city-sponsored “CD Float” program, a mortgage from Northern Trust Bank, and a loan from the Illinois Facilities Fund.
- **Use city resources and leverage to expand the supply of child care.** Municipalities can support private nonprofit child care programs and employer-operated programs in a variety of ways. Among the options: offering direct subsidies or revolving loan funds; providing free or low-cost use of public facilities; developing child care facilities at public transportation hubs to ease parents’ access to care; and working with housing developers to ensure that they plan for the child care needs of families when designing new developments. In San Jose, California, the Tamien Child Care Center was developed on property owned by the local transportation authority at a major transportation hub. Parents can park free at the station, drop off their children at the center, and ride public transit to their final destination.
- **Provide training and technical assistance.** Municipal leaders can help private early care and education providers by sharing expertise on specific topics— such as meeting licensing requirements, designing or renovating facilities, and strengthening business management. Local officials also can play an important role in assisting providers by creating mentoring programs and by working with local universities to redesign their curricula, adjust their hours, or reconfigure distance learning options to meet local child care training needs.
- **Help businesses collaborate and locate child care resources.** Often, one employer working alone will have a difficult time responding to employees’ child care needs. Local officials can help to bring groups of employers together— groups such as the five hotels in Atlanta, Georgia that are collaborating to provide an early learning and family resource facility for employees and community members. Municipalities also can play a role in linking groups of employers with emergency day care providers and child care resource and referral agencies to help workers get the care they need. Local Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Investment Boards, and other business organizations can be good partners in getting this kind of initiative off the ground.
- **Help child care providers work together.** Cities can facilitate valuable partnerships among early care and education programs. These partnerships can

range from creating family day care support networks (including joint training sessions and lending libraries for books and toys) to helping child care providers initiate pooled purchasing or worker benefit programs. Thanks to a recent Early Learning Opportunities Act grant, Elkins, West Virginia has launched “Quality Care Link,” an effort to use computers to connect isolated family care providers with training and the larger child care community.

CITY EXAMPLES

- In Seattle, Washington, the city provides funding to a nonprofit organization to facilitate business-child care partnerships, allowing local employers to contribute money, supplies, equipment or *pro bono* services to local child care programs. Seattle also has worked to leverage its own child care investments through the development of an innovative “Opportunity Fund” launched in association with a number of philanthropies in the Northwest. For every \$2 invested by the philanthropies, the city invests \$1. Participating grantmakers can choose to invest the pooled funding in any project that matches the strategies guiding the city’s Project Lift-Off early childhood initiative.
- Developed in the mid-1990s, the Chicago Accreditation Partnership is a collaboration between the City of Chicago, Illinois and a number of corporations and foundations. The partnership works to help Head Start and child care programs in the city raise their quality standards so they can become accredited. Programs navigate the accreditation process with the aid of three technical assistance providers contracted to work with the partnership. These firms also administer funds to pay for associated costs, including application fees, professional development, and facility improvements.
- In 1994, employers in Opelika, Alabama got together to create the Employers’ Child Care Alliance (ECCA). Among ECCA’s roles: providing enhanced child care resource and referral services to employees of participating businesses; offering training to improve the quality of local child care providers; and recruiting and training family child care providers who can operate during nontraditional hours.

RESOURCES

Child Care Partnership Project— This web site is designed to provide practical information on creating and maintaining public-private partnerships to increase and improve child care in states and communities throughout the country. It draws from the experiences of successful partnerships at the national, state, and local levels to provide tools and materials for existing and future initiatives. For more information see: <http://nccic.org/ccpartnerships/home.htm>.

STRATEGY #2: Child Care Facility Development¹

The difficulty of finding, building, or converting appropriate facilities can limit the supply of quality child care in a community. Local officials can play an important role in helping providers overcome barriers to facility development.

THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Early care and education are important to the economic and social health and the viability of all cities and towns. But providers of these services face four key barriers when they try to create high-quality physical space to house their programs and meet their communities' needs:

- **A scarcity of appropriate sites.** Quality child care facilities require a significant amount of square footage— ideally, 80 to 100 square feet per child in the overall building. State licensing generally requires that child care centers be located on the first floor of a building and adjacent to adequate outdoor play space. Ideally, a child care center should be accessible to transportation, convenient to residential neighborhoods, and in a location suitable for children's services. Finding space that is large enough and lends itself well to its child care purpose can be daunting.
- **Lack of real estate expertise.** Providers, often nonprofit organizations, are skilled in caring for children but frequently lack the real estate know-how and ready cash to move quickly to secure control of a site and proceed through the steps to renovate or build a facility. They need the services of consultants and others with experience putting together real estate transactions and planning capital improvements.
- **Financing challenges.** Because of the economics of child care, providers typically need a source of capital subsidy in addition to attractive financing to make a project feasible. Moreover, child care facilities are expensive to build or retrofit because of their specialized requirements. The capital cost of developing an appropriately designed and equipped child care facility can be 40 to 50 percent more than a comparably sized commercial building.²
- **Confusing and restrictive rules.** Code compliance— building, zoning, fire safety— can be troublesome for child care providers because the regulations are open to interpretation. Adding to the challenge, inspectors, like the rest of us, are

¹ Portions of this Strategy Spotlight were prepared by Amy Gillman, Senior Program Director, Community Investment Collaborative for Kids, Local Initiatives Support Corporation. For more information: <http://www.liscnet.org/resources/childcare/>. Other information is from the website of the Local Investment in Child Care (LINCC) Project of the National Economic Development and Law Center: http://www.nedlc.org/programs/lincc_projectcont.html

² The U.S. General Services Administration, which developed 100 child care centers in federal office buildings, found that the child care space cost 43 percent more to construct than the rest of the building in which it is located. The reason: the amount of plumbing, child-sized fixtures, protective finishes, built-in cabinetry and other features that contribute to a high-quality children's space.

protective of young children and therefore err on the side of caution. Child care often is not treated as a specific use in codes and regulations and, as a result, can sometimes be hard to classify. All of this leads to challenging issues and potential obstacles that have to be overcome before a new center can be developed and opened.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO

- **Help ensure that sites are available for child care.** There are numerous ways in which cities can use their ownership of properties or their regulatory authority to facilitate the process of developing a facility. Municipal officials can work with providers to identify city-owned or surplus space that lends itself to child care. Then, the municipality can either provide a long-term lease or convey the sites to providers or community-based developers to be converted into child care centers.
- **Link providers with real estate expertise and other technical assistance.** Cities can help connect nonprofit child care providers to organizations or professionals with real estate development expertise. A municipality could use Community Development Block Grant funds to pay for the services of a development consultant, architect, or other professionals who can advise a child care provider on how to develop a facility. Cities also can refer child care providers to potential real estate partners— for example, by introducing providers to nonprofit community development organizations and other developers active in the neighborhood where the facility will be developed.
- **Help providers access affordable financing.** City governments can provide favorable financing and/or a capital subsidy to support the development of child care facilities. Among the options: setting up a child care fund to offer loans or grants for pre-development of a site; leasing a municipally owned facility at a highly concessionary rate, such as \$1 a year; or conveying ownership of a site for a nominal price. Cities also can partner with local financial institutions to encourage banks and credit unions to expand loan funds for child care providers.
- **Help providers navigate burdensome regulatory obstacles.** By identifying regulatory obstacles as a barrier to expanded child care services, mayors and other city leaders can create a compelling context for change. Another way to try and remove some of the obstacles is for the mayor to convene an interdepartmental code enforcement task force. This group could meet periodically with project developers to identify issues early on in the process and explore strategies for achieving compliance. Finally, a group of cities might work together to encourage the development of building codes that speak specifically to child care facilities as a separate use with unique characteristics.

CITY EXAMPLES

- Eight new child care centers have been built thanks to San Jose, California's "Smart Start" program, which provides technical assistance and funding for facilities development, renovation, or expansion.
- In New Haven, Connecticut, the city donated a large parcel that had been vacant for many years to a nonprofit child care provider. This enabled the group to develop a 10-classroom early childhood facility for 172 children.
- In San Mateo, California, the city and county governments adopted child care as a mitigation measure for all new large developments in the county.
- In Cleveland, Ohio, the city transferred ownership of a long vacant, historic library to a local community developer for \$100. The city also provided favorable financing for renovation of the building as a new child care center and children's reading center, along with office space for the organization.
- In San Francisco, California, the city encouraged the expansion of child care services by earmarking \$10 million of borrowing authority under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and pledging city general funds to repay up to 80 percent of the debt on these loans.

RESOURCES

National Child Care Information Center— For more information see:

<http://www.nccic.org/ccb/ccb-ja96/innovapp.html> or
<http://www.nccic.org/faqs.html#StartingFacility>

National Children's Facilities Network— For more information see: <http://www.ncfn.org>

National Child Care Information Center— For more information see:

<http://www.nccic.org/user/providers.html#facilities>

CA: Building Child Care— For more information see: www.buildingchildcare.org

CT: Connecticut Children's Investment Partnership— For more information see:

http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/partnership.pdf

DC: Washington Area Community Investment Fund— For more information see:

<http://www.wacif.org/>

IL: Illinois Facilities Fund— For more information see:

<http://npo.net/nponet/alerts/iff.html>

MA: Child Care Capital Investment Fund— For more information see:

<http://www.cccif.org/index.htm>

MN: Development Corporation for Children— For more information see:
<http://www.dcc-corner.com/about.html>

Publications:

Removing Barriers to Childcare Facilities Development, Gretchen Anderson. Available at: <http://www.designchildcare.com/book.html>

“Capital Finance: Are There Effective Public-Private Strategies for Building Early Care and Education Facilities?” Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center. Available at: <http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org/handouts/Capital%20Finance.pdf>

Building for the Future: A Guide to Facilities Loan Funds for Community-Based Child and Family Services, Carl Sussman, The Finance Project. Available at: <http://www.financeproject.org>

STRATEGY #3: Collaborations Among Service Providers

Services for young children and families are funded through a wide range of federal, state, and local programs. Head Start, child care, pre-kindergarten, and a variety of other programs address issues ranging from child health and developmental delays to family literacy and parent education.

City leaders can play an important role in identifying opportunities for strategic partnerships to improve the local early childhood system. In some cases, the city itself will be a part of these collaborations. In other cases, leadership is needed simply to convene stakeholders and to identify joint initiatives that could help local providers achieve shared goals. These partnerships often require little or no new money and can yield significant community benefits.

THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Strategic early childhood partnerships can:

- **Increase the availability and stability of services for families.** For example, if a half-day preschool program partnered with a full-day child care provider, families requiring full-day care could take advantage of the preschool's more intensive early education, while still ensuring coverage for the rest of the day. Alternatively, an individual family day care provider can link up with other family providers or a nearby center to provide back-up coverage when the lone provider is sick or needs a vacation.
- **Improve the quality of early care and education.** A Head Start program could partner with a child care provider to provide full-day, year-round services. One result: collaboration with the Head Start program could help improve the quality of the child care provider's services. In addition, children receiving care in both places could have access to Head Start's health screening, as well as other family services that may not have been available through child care alone. Public libraries also make great partners for early childhood programs. The libraries can expand the programs' access to children's books and educational programs for children and families.
- **Help maximize facilities and other resources.** A lending library of children's books and toys for a group of programs ensures that the children in each center or home are exposed to a wider variety of developmental experiences. Transportation also can be combined so that elementary school buses or child care vans are used by other programs during off-hours.
- **Strengthen the local early childhood system.** City leaders should think creatively about the many ways to strengthen the early childhood system by promoting collaboration. If a local Head Start program has regular nurse visitors, explore whether a nearby home-based program could bring children to the center

once a month, or if the nurse could visit other centers periodically. Child care programs also can gain economies of scale through partnerships, whether through pooled purchasing or a common health insurance package for workers.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO

- **Find out what programs in the community currently serve young children and their families.** Local child care resource and referral agencies can be an important resource in identifying local service providers.
- **Convene all relevant agencies and organizations.** Bring representatives of all service providers together to discuss existing services, common goals, and opportunities to partner.
- **Pursue productive collaborations.** Form a working group (or groups) of service providers who can pursue specific partnership ideas. Encourage all partners to clarify their expectations up front (in writing whenever possible).
- **Identify resources to support collaborations.** Determine if resources are available from public and private entities to facilitate or strengthen these partnerships. Engage businesses and foundations in the effort, and use state and federal grants, if possible.

For more ideas on creating early childhood partnerships between Head Start, child care, and pre-kindergarten programs, see the QUILT project website (www.quilt.org).

RESOURCES

National League of Cities Audioconference Transcript: *Building Public/Private Collaborations and Partnerships*— For more information see: http://www.nlc.org/iyef/events_audioconferences/1607.cfm

STRATEGY #4: Support For Care During Nontraditional Hours

In today's 24-hour, global economy, nontraditional work schedules are becoming more common. For parents who work nights, weekends, holidays, or rotating shifts, managing family life can be a challenge. And, finding child care during these hours can be almost impossible. According to one estimate, 30 percent of employees are required to work nights, while fewer than 10 percent of child care centers and family child care homes operate during these hours.

THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Although nonstandard work schedules may not be the ideal situation for parents with young children, many do not have a choice. Cities can play a role in supporting families who work off-hours by helping to expand the supply of nontraditional-hours care. Given the fact that many cities attract businesses that require employees to work nonstandard schedules, it is a strategy with clear implications for the local economy as well.

Examples of industries that often demand off-hours work from their employees include hotels, restaurants, airports, retail businesses, factories, and hospitals. Having a sufficient supply of appropriate child care increases the number of residents who can work nonstandard hours and can make a city or town more "business ready." An added benefit is that when parents have safe, reliable care for their children, they tend to be more productive.

The bottom line: Quality nontraditional-hours child care enables working parents to make a living without sacrificing their child's well-being.

Cities alone cannot solve the mismatch of supply and demand for nontraditional-hours child care. But, by offering support to child care providers and working with other partners, including businesses that require nonstandard work hours, cities can help ease the child care crunch and support families in their community.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO

- **Assess the need in the community.** Cities can bring together stakeholders— such as businesses, parents, and child care providers— to discuss the demand for and the supply of nontraditional-hours child care. Understanding the need in the community, as well as any barriers to this type of care, can help focus efforts to address the situation. For example, are city regulations or zoning laws preventing family child care providers from offering this care? Are workers in the city's nonstandard-hours industries concentrated in particular areas of the community? Is there sufficient access to public transportation to get workers to and from off-hours child care?
- **Partner with employers.** Cities can team up with employers that require nonstandard hours work to support existing care or establish new programs. For

example, in San Francisco, California, a partnership among city and county government, labor unions, the San Francisco Airports Commission, and individual community members funded construction of the Palcare Child Care Center. The Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for use by employees of the San Francisco International Airport and those in the surrounding Bay Area communities.

- **Support providers.** Cities can offer in-kind support— including supplies (e.g., sleeping materials), transportation, or training— to child care providers who offer nontraditional-hours care or are interested in adding it to their services. To help pay for extra food for dinner and nighttime snacks, cities could help providers connect with the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Administered through the states, CACFP provides reimbursements to child care centers and homes for their meal costs. Cities also could establish a support network for nonstandard-hours child care providers. The network could facilitate sharing of advice and resources or help coordinate a rotating relief system, allowing providers to take a few nights off a month.
- **Provide or leverage funding.** Because nonstandard-hours care is more expensive to provide, cities may want to offer incentives to child care providers to increase their hours of operation. Cities can use general funds to support an incentive program or work with businesses and/or county and state governments to raise money. For example, the state of Maine recently allocated \$1.7 million from its tobacco settlement money (the Fund for Healthy Maine) to support incentives for providers to offer care during odd hours. Other states, including Illinois, Ohio, and Tennessee, are offering similar programs. Cities should check to see if their states provide these types of incentives. If not, cities can work with other stakeholders to advocate for a state initiative. As high-visibility leaders, municipal officials can make a difference in convincing state legislators that nontraditional-hours child care is an important issue for working families.

CITY EXAMPLES

The cities of Auburn and Opelika, Alabama are part of the Employer's Child Care Alliance, which includes public and private employers that are working to improve the quality of child care. In addition to supporting child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and provider training, the Alliance recruits family child care providers to provide nonstandard-hours care, emphasizing licensing and capacity issues.

RESOURCES

Publications:

"Child Care's Night Shift," Morris County (NJ) Daily Record. Available at: www.dailyrecord.com/news/children/childcare.htm

Innovative Approaches: Partnerships for Child Care at Nontraditional Hours, The Child Care Partnership Project. Available at: www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships/facts/fs4.htm

Care Around the Clock: Developing Child Care Resources Before Nine and After Five. Available at: www.nccic.org/pubs/carecloc.html

STRATEGY #5: Addressing Cultural Issues To Improve Accessibility And Quality

The U.S. population continues to grow more diverse. By 2030, children in families of European origin will make up less than 50 percent of the population under the age of 5. In order to ensure that all children in a community are receiving quality early care and education, it is important that cities understand and address cultural issues that can affect families' access to and use of quality care.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO

- **Identify underserved groups and cultural barriers that may keep them from using quality services.** Where do young children of different racial and ethnic backgrounds live? Are there early childhood programs in all areas? Do programs exist along major transportation lines? Do they accommodate differing work schedules and meet parents' language needs? These are among the questions that city leaders can help to answer through a local mapping effort. Mayors and councilmembers also can host community forums to identify cultural barriers to early care and education, as well as to better understand family attitudes and preferences.
- **Make note of different preferences and perspectives.** Local officials should recognize that the preferred mode of early care and education varies among cultural groups. Cities should therefore work to ensure that efforts are under way to promote quality in all forms of care. For instance, for families who prefer to put their children in relative care or family day care, cities can develop support networks and training to improve the quality of these child care providers.
- **Take action to address cultural barriers to quality care.** City leaders can appoint child care task forces or family advocates to serve as liaisons with various cultural groups in the community. Mayors and councilmembers also can facilitate partnerships linking culturally focused neighborhood organizations, early childhood providers, and schools to improve the continuity of care. Also, cities should keep in mind the full range of cultures and all the languages spoken in the community when designing information campaigns and engaging in other outreach— for example, by providing child care resource and referral services in more than one language.
- **Support culturally appropriate staff recruitment and training.** Cities can take a number of steps to ensure the development, delivery, and maintenance of culturally competent services. These include: strengthening recruitment to attract more culturally diverse caregivers; providing support networks for new caregivers (for example, by using experienced teachers as mentors); creating a speakers bureau of high-quality, bilingual, bicultural trainers; providing high-quality, culturally relevant materials, resources, technical assistance, and training; and working with a local college to develop accreditation programs in Spanish (or other prominent languages spoken in the city).

- **Build cross-cultural connections and communications.** City leaders can take the lead in facilitating cross-cultural initiatives to share ideas, create new partnerships, and broaden support for improvements in the quality of care. The cities of Los Angeles, California and Miami, Florida, together with the state of New Jersey, are involved in a two-year early childhood initiative to cultivate and strengthen cross-cultural partnerships between key leaders and constituents of low-income African American and Latino communities. Cities also can improve cross-cultural relations by requiring that all licensed providers have a specified number of hours of anti-bias training, including culturally relevant content.

CITY EXAMPLE

In Seattle, Washington, the city's child care outreach includes liaisons for various cultural groups (African American, Hispanic, Asian American/Pacific Islander). The goals: to ensure that parents can find accessible care they are comfortable with; and to offer caregivers the support they need to provide high-quality, culturally appropriate care.