

April 6, 2010

The Early Child Care and Education Committee,

On December 8, 2009, Here We Grow Learning Center (HWGLC) sent an appeal letter to the Community Development Director regarding the decision to deny our application for City of Madison Childcare Accreditation. On March 8, 2010 HWGLC was notified our request for City of Madison Childcare Accreditation was denied for the second time. This letter is in response to the denial letter dated March 8, 2010.

In our appeal letter to the Community Development Director, I provided several reasons why HWGLC should be considered for City of Madison Childcare Accreditation. The Community Development Director cited one reason for denial which is there are no pending City of Madison child care assistance families enrolled in HWGLC. While this is true, it is very similar to the proverbial phrase "putting the cart before the horse." The Community Development Director contends the lack of families with pending child care assistance means HWGLC should not be City of Madison Childcare Accredited; whereas, I contend that if HWGLC were City of Madison Childcare Accredited families enrolled and families considering enrollment would be eligible for City of Madison child care assistance; the two go hand in hand. I believe the reason for denial actually further supports the request that HWGLC be eligible for City of Madison Childcare Accreditation because City of Madison General Ordinance 3.12 states that if a child care program is located outside of the City of Madison, it may be accredited for the limited purpose of providing services to tuition aid recipients.

In addition to providing services to tuition aid recipients, I believe City of Madison Childcare Accreditation is crucial for the future of HWGLC. Annually, 75% of the children enrolled at HWGLC are from families that reside in Madison and without City of Madison Childcare Accreditation these families will be excluded from the proposed Madison School District 4K program. A recent survey of our families has shown that all other things considered equal, the families that are residents of Madison would consider a facility that participates in the Madison School District 4K program over HWGLC. The survey also showed families would stay if HWGLC was part of the Madison School District 4K program. As currently proposed, only childcare facilities that are City of Madison Childcare Accredited are eligible for the Madison School District 4K program.

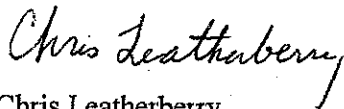
I am aware there are other child care accreditations available to HWGLC; however, I believe these are lacking in support and are basically for sale to anyone that wants to buy and renew it on a 5 year basis. HWGLC values and respects the City of Madison Childcare Accreditation program because of the commitment to the centers and the children they serve. I do not want an accreditation unless it truly represents that HWGLC is a quality child care facility. At the Madison ECCEC meeting on March 24, 2010 I discussed the issues I have with other child care accreditations options for HWGLC and the ECCEC members were understanding of my concerns and complete lack of interest in being associated with them.

Below you will find the reasons why I request that the decision by the Community Development Director to deny HWGLCs application for City of Madison Childcare Accreditation be reconsidered.

- 1) Our facility is located at 5206 Anton Dr, Fitchburg, WI 53719 and while outside the City of Madison boundaries, children at our facility can literally toss a ball over the fence and have it land in the City of Madison School District.
- 2) The main goal of the Madison Child Care Program is to support and promote high quality child care and early education for children and families living in the City of Madison. Currently at our facility 71 out of the 98 families are City of Madison residents. Denial of City of Madison Childcare Accreditation based on arbitrary boundaries penalizes the HWGLC families that are City of Madison residents
- 3) Once initiated only facilities that are City of Madison Childcare Accredited will be eligible for the Madison School District 4K Program. This will be another example where the majority of our children/families will not be able to participate. This will ultimately decrease our enrollment and future viability based on our current demographics.
- 4) Together, the Madison School District 4K Program and Quality Rating and Improvement System "YoungStar" will create the image that childcare facilities that are City of Madison Accredited are automatically better because they will automatically receive a 4 star rating.
- 5) Surrounding childcare facilities will be forced to lower their tuition rates to remain competitive due to the additional funds eligible facilities received from the 4K program.

In conclusion, the only reason for denial supplied by the Community Development Director actually supports HWGLCs position for being eligible for City of Madison Childcare Accreditation. In addition, a very high percentage of the children that attend HWGLC are Madison residents and several of these families are currently on State assistance, but are not eligible for City of Madison child care assistance because of a boundary line. This exclusion is contrary to the stated goal of the Madison Child Care Program and City of Madison Ordinance 3.12 which allows for facilities outside the City of Madison to be accredited for the limited purpose of providing services to tuition aid recipients. Based on these facts, I ask you to reconsider the decision of the Community Development Director by allowing HWGLC to be part of the City of Madison Childcare Program. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (608) 270-9000.

Sincerely,



Chris Leatherberry  
Director, Here We Grow Learning Center