

**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CITY NETWORK  
JULY/AUGUST 2006**

Thank you for your ongoing interest in strengthening early care and education. If you have any questions about the network or this Update, contact Tonja Rucker, Senior Program Associate, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, National League of Cities at: rucker@nlc.org, phone – 202/626-3004 or fax – 202/626-3043. IYEF staff wants to thank all of the members of the Early Care and Education City Network for working so diligently on behalf of young children. Your dedication and commitment to strengthen early care and education provides numerous families with resources that improve their quality of life. We look forward to working with you and continuing to build upon the successes of initiatives launched in your community.

**NLC NETWORK NEWS**

- **Upcoming YEF Institute Audioconferences:** Municipal officials and city staff are invited to register for these free, hour-long audioconferences to learn new ideas, strategies, and innovative programs to help children, youth, and families succeed.
  - **September 21; 4:00 p.m. EST** – “Building Public Will: Promoting Citizen Engagement to Improve Your City’s Schools”
  - **October 19; 12:30 p.m. EST** – “Strengthen Working Families and Local Economies: How to Mount a Successful EITC Outreach Campaign”
  - **November 16; 2:30 p.m. EST** – “Keeping Young People Safe: Effective Mayor-Law Enforcement Partnerships
  - **December 14; 4:00 p.m. EST** – “A Seat at the Table: Engaging Youth as City Leaders”

For more information, see [http://www.nlc.org/iyef/events\\_audioconferences/1607.cfm](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/events_audioconferences/1607.cfm)

- **Cities Sign Children up for Health Insurance.** Municipal officials are encouraged to join the 2006 Covering Kids & Families Back-to-School Campaign in an effort to connect parents and children with free and low-cost health insurance. Over the past several years, many cities have used the months of August and September — “back-to-school” time — as a time to help parents obtain health insurance for their children. NLC is once again a national partner in promoting the back-to-school campaign. Cities that are interested in hosting their own events to help decrease the number of uninsured children in their communities will find a wealth of resources on the Covering Kids & Families website, [www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org](http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org).

## **CITY SPOTLIGHT:**

## **DENVER, COLORADO (Pop: 554,636)**

NOTE: This spotlight provides an opportunity to gather ideas from other network members. You are encouraged to share information about your local efforts, so that we can spotlight your activities and best practices in a future update.

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper took office in 2003 and began laying the ground work for a lasting investment in the city's young children. These investments have grown to include strong public/private partnerships and numerous programs designed to strengthen families and children. Many of the programs and initiatives, such as child care, early education, and school readiness, have been launched by the Mayor's Office for Education and Children (MOEC). City leaders hope that these efforts will make Denver a more child-friendly city.

This city spotlight will highlight and describe the Mayor's Invest in Success initiative, an innovative partnership with a local business, a cultural enrichment program for young children, a new project to ascertain the community's hopes for young children, and a funding opportunity to improve quality for childcare providers who service low-income families.

### **Denver's Invest in Success Initiative**

In 2004, Mayor Hickenlooper began to organize an Early Childhood Education Invest in Success initiative to determine how Denver could provide quality early education to meet the needs of all its children. To accomplish the goals of this effort, Mayor Hickenlooper formed an Early Childhood Education Leadership Team consisting of Denver's business and civic leaders. This team serves as a champion for early childhood education, garners public support for community action, and has created an action plan for accomplishing the city's vision.

Mayor Hickenlooper's Invest in Success initiative elicited an unprecedented show of support from Denver's philanthropic community. In February 2004, Mayor Hickenlooper hosted a Summit on Early Childhood Education that convened 300 of Denver's business and civic leaders and advocates for young children. Sponsored by 10 local philanthropic foundations, the Summit launched citywide effort to make early education a top priority for Denver's young children. Summit participants joined one of four action teams and made recommendations to the Mayor's Initiative on Early Childhood Education in the areas of economic, parent investment, policy, and public engagement.

### **Four Unique Early Care and Education Efforts**

#### **Mile High H2O**

The City of Denver and Denver-based Deep Rock Water are working together to support Denver children through the creation of Mile High H2O bottled water. The product is now available at local stores, and 10 cents of every bottle sold is donated to Denver's Invest in Success early childhood education initiative. Deep Rock Water, a locally owned and operated company, bottles and sells natural artesian water from its 852-foot deep well. Mile High H2O marked the first official usage of the new Mile High City logo that was unveiled in April 2004.

#### **5 By 5 Program**

The 5 By 5 Program, sponsored by the Denver Mayor's Office for Education and Children, aims to provide the city's children with five cultural experiences before they reach age five. This free program is available to Head Start families and is made possible through generous in-kind and

financial support from cultural partners and corporate sponsors. The 5 By 5 Program strives to introduce arts, culture, and play to spark imagination and stimulate creativity and learning.

Each 5 By 5 family receives a “Denver Kids’ Passbook to Adventure and Discovery.” The Passbooks provide an overview of the program and free access to participating cultural venues such as: Children’s Museum of Denver, Colorado Ballet, Denver Art Museum, Downtown Aquarium, and the Denver Center Theatre Academy. As families visit each participating cultural venue and engage in developmentally appropriate and culturally competent programs, students receive stamps in their Passbooks acknowledging admission. Once a student collects five stamps, the student may show his or her Passbook to the Head Start Educator and receive a free children’s book. Families may continue to use the Passbook to enjoy unlimited access to the cultural venues.

The 5 By 5 Project has been piloted among 3,000 Denver Head Start and Early Head Start families with children under age five. The program launched May 2005 and has been very successful. In the first 100 days of the project’s launch, approximately 6,000 adults and children visited one or more of the cultural venues and a year later there has been over 18,000 visits.

### **Denver’s Aspirations Project**

In an effort to identify and document the hopes, dreams, and aspirations Denver residents have for young children from birth to 20 years, the city launched the Aspirations Project. Initially staff conducted an internal assessment to determine the current level of activities, partnerships, and programs related to children and youth services within MOEC. This was followed by collecting data on demographics, economics, health, education and other sectors to identify current status, trends, and possible implications for children and youth services. Current work involves reaching out to at least 500 respondents to identify at least five universal aspirations and hopes for children and youth well-being.

It is hoped that the project will create a framework for determining MOEC’s goals and priorities for 2007 and that recommendations will emerge for leveraging and coordinating programming in Denver. The city hopes to produce a final report later this year on the City and County of Denver’s aspirations for children and youth.

### **Quality Improvement Fund**

For a limited time, the MOEC office has funding available to childcare providers for low-income families. These one-time funds are dedicated to improving the quality and school readiness outcomes for providers with Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) fiscal agreements. The funding priorities are: Improving Quality, Strengthening Parent and Family Education, and Resource and Referral. Applicants must demonstrate how these funds will specifically strengthen a provider’s ability to improve quality of care and school readiness for the diversity of children and their families in their care. All requests must be tied to a quality plan.

For more information about Denver’s efforts contact, Susan Gallo, Deputy Director, Mayor’s Office for Education & Children at 720-913-0907 or via email at [susan.gallo@ci.denver.co.us](mailto:susan.gallo@ci.denver.co.us), or contact Bonnie Moya, Director of Child Care Initiatives at 720-913-0903 or via email at [bonnie.moya@ci.denver.co.us](mailto:bonnie.moya@ci.denver.co.us)

## **STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT: PROMOTING THE EMOTIONAL WELL BEING OF PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN**

NOTE: Strategy spotlights can help spark ideas that might be appropriate for your community. If you have additional approaches to contribute on this month's topic, please pass them along so we can add them to this list for future use.

As parents strive to help their young children grow and thrive, mothers and fathers are finding child-rearing stressful and sometimes overwhelming. Our modern day society is characterized by dual parent employment, divorce, and loss of extended family support. Now more than ever, parents feel isolated and are often unaware of resources and support systems that may alleviate some of the emotional pressure experienced by parenting. Many city programs that provide services for children younger than five may also provide some sort of parent support and outreach that address the emotional well-being of parents. These programs can provide parents with specific strategies, resources, and information that can help them achieve healthy, satisfying, and nurturing interactions with their children and other family members.

It is critical that parents of young children receive emotional support early in the parenting cycle. Concern about children's vulnerability, conflict between personal goals and children's needs, and changes in self-image can lead to psychological fatigue and diminished overall emotional well-being. Cities across the nation are equipped with personnel and resources that can provide parents with the critical information they need to boost their emotional well-being. Local elected officials are in a good position to bring attention to this issue and encourage city efforts to promote healthy emotional development among parents of young children.

### **THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS**

Parents are often torn between the wish to be with their children and the demands of work and/or other responsibilities outside the home as well as their need to unwind, complete errands, stay in contact with extended family members and friends, and pursue personal interests. For many parents with young children, the stress of juggling these different aspects of life can interfere with their ability to parent.

The demands and hassles of parenting can cause stress and can decrease overall emotional health. The pressures of finding affordable quality child care, performing well at work, and taking care of the home can, at times, make parents feel anxious or emotionally stressed. Parents need support in finding ways to cope so that they function well in their role as a parent.

Preventive and supportive measures administered by city leaders can break the emotional cycle of dysfunction and abuse that can emerge in stressed families. Abuse and neglect cost cities, not only in terms of the trauma caused to children, but also in economic terms. Economic costs include the funds spent each year on child welfare services for abused and neglected children. Effective prevention that supports the emotional well-being of children and families holds potential for greatly reducing such costs.

Prevention and support programs for parents could take on the form of effective collaborations and partnerships to promote safe and healthy families. Elected officials can serve as a conduit

that brings together members of the medical community, educators, social service agents, and community partners to intervene and provide services in supporting the emotional well-being of parents. A unified team of experts have the opportunity to recognize the manifestations of stressors in parenting, evaluate the risks involved, and determine the necessary interventions.

Local government officials can play a key role in promoting emotional well-being of parents with young children. City leaders are uniquely positioned to ensure that quality and comprehensive services are available and being provided for parents. The following is a list of some key steps that city leaders can take.

## **WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO**

- **Convene members of the mental health/medical community to promote and highlight emotional well-being.** City officials have the opportunity to promote a common vision for addressing the emotional well-being of parents. City leaders may convene key members of the mental health and medical community to highlight the benefits of emotional health and stability among family members. Health care providers can provide technical advice on health, safety, and how to contribute to the healthy development of children. Much can be accomplished by inviting providers to participate in local recreational, social, educational, civic, or philanthropic activities and associations.
- **Provide space and in-kind resources.** Municipal leaders can utilize space in a city building to house parent support groups and counseling sessions. The space could be rooms in a recreation center, an office within a community center, a library, or rental space in an apartment complex. Cities can also work with a local business to secure a donated location for workshops. In-kind resources such as municipal staff and trainers are also a great asset.
- **Help expand the scope and reach of existing parenting education programs.** If a parenting education program already exists, city leaders may consider whether the program specifically addresses the emotional needs of parents with young children or whether the classes are accessible to all parents who might want to take them. Municipal leaders can support the expansion of services at an existing family services program or community center through supplemental funding, in-kind assistance, or provision of staff.
- **Contact and partner with local religious organizations to deliver counseling services to parents.** Faith-based and community organizations have a long history of providing essential services to families, especially those that are sometimes hard to reach. Many of the benefits that faith-based organizations have are related to their presence and credibility in neighborhoods and with clients. They often have built strong relationships and trust within neighborhoods and have integrated personal relationships within the community. City leaders can encourage faith leaders to serve as a community partners to promote the comprehensive emotional well-being of families.
- **Promote family-friendly workplace policies.** One way cities and towns can emphasize the importance of supporting parents is to support municipal employees with young children. By establishing family friendly policies and procedures and offering resources to help parents provide quality care for their children, cities and towns can lead by example as a model employer in the community.

- **Advocate for increased quality child care.** Appoint an advisory board and charge them with devising recommendations and highlight strategies illustrating how the public and private industry can partner to increase the quality and supply, and build upon and improve the city's child care system to support families who live and work in the city. Conduct or utilize existing research or data to demonstrate that child care is part of the fabric of the economic infrastructure.
- **Connect families to benefits.** Host a meeting to bring together advocates and service providers working to promote a variety of benefits and programs for low- and moderate-income families. Incorporate references to a variety of supports for working families into public messages such as promoting the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Care Tax Credit. Leaders can also offer on-site personal assistance to explain benefits, screen for eligibility, and/or help families enroll.

## CITY EXAMPLES

The cities listed below are reaching out and engaging community partners to provide support services to parents of young children. Members of the community are engaged in innovative practices and service delivery to improve the emotional well-being of parents. These efforts, provided by city departments and supported by municipal leaders, lay the foundation for comprehensive health services that promote an environment that leads to optimal development in every area of life.

- **Freemont, California.** The City of Fremont's Youth and Family Services (YFS), a division of the Human Services Department, offers Fremont residents family, individual, couple, and group counseling. The program works to strengthen family relationships by helping people deal with times of stress or crisis. YFS offers a variety of parenting workshops and support groups for parents of the community. All workshops are facilitated by experienced and licensed Marriage and Family Therapists. The Infant Toddler program staff meets with parents in their home or office to discuss concerns about the infant/toddler, support parents, help parent and child to communicate, and assist parents with attaining services for their family. The program is offered to families with children under the age of five years. The counseling staff includes a clinical supervisor, professional therapists, and graduate/post-graduate level interns.
- **Phoenix, Arizona.** Young Families CAN (Comprehensive Assistance Network) began in 1987 as a partnership between the city of Phoenix Human Services Department and the Arizona Department of Economic Security. Their goal was to identify and remove barriers to self-sufficiency for single teen mothers enrolled in Arizona's welfare system. Young Families CAN now serves any eligible pregnant and parenting teens. STEP-UP (Skills, Training, Education, Employment Program for Unemployed Male Parents) began in 1990. In September 1994, the program was selected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as one of four national programs to be replicated. The city now has assumed the funding to continue the program. It is unique in that it addresses the needs of teenage fathers by addressing their responsibility to become self-sufficient and share the burden of support and parenting of their children.

- **San Francisco, California.** Fees for the use of parks or for new businesses can also be dedicated to child care improvements. For instance, the city of San Francisco requires that any new or renovated office or hotel building larger than 10,000 square feet include space for a child care center. If the developer chooses not to include this space, they must pay a fee to the Child Care Capital Fund, which is used to improve or expand child care facilities in the city. Through a public referendum, San Francisco's city charter was amended. The set-aside was \$.0125 of every \$100 of property taxes during the first year and \$.025 of every \$100 for the remaining nine years. Proposition J passed in November 1991 and was scheduled to remain in effect for 10 years. It was being placed on the ballot again in 2000 for a 30-year period, with an increased set-aside of \$.03/\$100.
- **Tulsa, Oklahoma.** The city of Tulsa invests close to \$80,000 a year of Community Development Block Grant funds to support the work of the Community Action Project of Tulsa County to connect residents to the EITC and other work supports. To help ensure that families receive all of the benefits for which they are eligible, Tulsa has developed and implemented a pre-screening tool call the Benefits Eligibility System for Oklahomans (BESO). BESO is a web-based tool that allows social service agencies to access information about the eligibility and application requirements of many public benefit programs, including: food stamps, energy assistance, and free or low-cost health care. BESO prompts the user to answer a series of questions, such as income level, age, and household size. It then returns information about all the benefit programs for which a resident may be eligible and lists all the documents necessary to complete the applications. Screening services are offered at tax sites during tax season as well as throughout the year in various community-based organizations.

## RESOURCES

*The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)* — NCCP is the nation's leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health, and well-being of America's low-income families and children. Using research to inform policy and practice, NCCP seeks to advance family-oriented solutions and the strategic use of public resources at the state and national levels to ensure positive outcomes for the next generation. For more information see: <http://www.nccp.org/>.

*The Maternal and Child Health Bureau* — The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) oversees five major programs that address the health needs among the maternal and child populations in the state. These programs include: Child, Adolescent and School Health; Data Resources; Immunizations; Oral Health; Reproductive Health; and Women, Infants and Children (WIC). The Bureau addresses preventive efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and support for at-risk families. For more information see: <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/about/default.htm>.

*The Head Start Bureau* — Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families. They are child-focused programs and have the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. For more information see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/>.

*The National Parenting Center* — The National Parenting Center was founded in July of 1989 with the intention of providing the most comprehensive and responsible parenting advice to parents everywhere. The advice provided is furnished by some of the world's most respected authorities in the field of child rearing and development. The National Parenting Center created and maintains interactive systems allowing parents to access expert panels. Additionally, parents may obtain the advice of the experts through written transcripts, letters, brochures, newsletters, the internet, etc. For more information see: <http://www.tnpc.com/>.

#### **Useful websites:**

*Safer Child, Inc.* — Safer Child's mission is dedicated to providing parents, caregivers and educators worldwide with the resources and information they need in order to help all children grow up healthy, safe and happy. The organization hopes to assist anyone looking for information and assistance on issues related to parenting, care giving, child health and safety. For more information visit: <http://www.saferchild.org/support.htm>.

*Healthy Parenting Today* — The goal of this website is to give parents useful information and advice to help them raise their child in a positive and healthy environment. Healthy Parenting Today offers advice, tips, and tools designed to help parents in every stage of their child's lives, from infancy to the teenage years. Remember to visit this site often, as we will continue to update this page with helpful materials. For more information visit: [www.ehealthyparenting.com/](http://www.ehealthyparenting.com/).

#### **Publications:**

*Promoting Mental Health, by the Head Start Bureau.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 1998. This technical training guide encourages mental health promotion for all members of the Head Start community. Activities build skills in creating responsive, respectful relationships with coworkers, parents and children are an integral part in building programs that promote the ability of children and families to respond well to challenge and adversity. Available at: <http://www.bmcc.edu/Headstart/Trngds/Mentalhe/>.

## **RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITIES**

**Health Insurance Coverage for Young Children** — Lately, an increasing amount of attention has been given to the more than 8 million children living in the U.S. without health insurance. In addition to Covering Kids and Families Back-to-School Campaign, described in this newsletter under NLC News, a number of new resources and reports offer strategies and ideas to address this problem.

- *The Most Affordable Cities for Children's and Family Health Insurance.* From eHealthInsurance. July 19, 2006. This new report lists the City of St. Louis, MO as the number one city in the country in terms of affordable health insurance for children. The City of Grand Rapids, MI is the top-ranked city for family health insurance, with a monthly premium per person of \$39.77. To learn more and see the full list, visit [www.ehealthinsurance.com/content/ReportNew/07192006MostAffordableCitiesFinal.pdf](http://www.ehealthinsurance.com/content/ReportNew/07192006MostAffordableCitiesFinal.pdf).

- **Kaiser Family Foundation’s StateHealthFacts.org**— In July, the Kaiser Family Foundation released data revealing that the state you live in affects how much you pay in health insurance. The website lists profiles for each state, including information on the each state’s health care coverage for children. Visit [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org).
- **Campaign for Healthy Kids: Care.Click.Vote!**— Another campaign to increase children’s health care coverage was launched by Parents’ Action for Children, earlier this summer. This campaign is designed to help parents take action to insist on improved health care coverage for children. See [http://center.parentsaction.org/main/careclickvote\\_takeaction](http://center.parentsaction.org/main/careclickvote_takeaction).

## **RESEARCH AND REPORTS**

**Child Care & Early Education *Research Connections***— This comprehensive online database contains a searchable collection of more than 9,000 resources related to early care and education. <http://www.childcareresearch.org/discover/index.jsp>.

**2006 Kids Count Data Book.** From The Annie E. Casey Foundation. The latest Kids Count data book reveals that the U.S. is no longer steadily improving in all indicators of child well-being. Three of the ten indicators used to create an index of child well-being have worsened since 2000, including the number of children living in poverty, the percentage of babies born at a low birthweight, and the number of children living in a household where no parent has steady employment. The full report as well as an interactive database is available online at [www.acef.org/kidscount](http://www.acef.org/kidscount).

***Parent Employment and the Use of Child Care Subsidies***, by Stephanie A. Schaefer, J. Lee Kreader, and Ann Collins. From Child Care & Early Education Research Connections, 2006. This literature review looks for answers to the question, “What parent employment outcomes are associated with the use of child care subsidies?” The study finds that mothers who use subsidies are more likely than other low-income mothers to work at a job, work more hours, work standard schedules, sustain employment, and earn more. To read the full report, visit <http://www.childcareresearch.org/PDFDocs/rc9511.pdf>.

***Recognition and Response: An Early Intervening System for Young Children at Risk for Learning Disabilities***, by The University of North Carolina’s FPG Child Development Institute has recently completed a review of research that underscores the importance of recognizing and responding to critical early warning signs of learning difficulties in young children. The paper discusses the challenges for early educators and parents in addressing the learning difficulties of pre-school age children. The research paper was written in collaboration with the National Center for Learning Disabilities and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. To read the full report, visit <http://news.publiceducation.org/t/5220/216421/99/0/>.

***The Economic Promise of Investing in High-Quality Preschool***, released by The Committee for Economic Development (CED) concluded that implementing preschool programs for all can be expected to generate \$2 to \$4 in net present-value benefits for every dollar invested and provide a boost to long-term economic growth. To read the report, go to [http://www.ced.org/docs/report/report\\_prek\\_econpromise.pdf](http://www.ced.org/docs/report/report_prek_econpromise.pdf).

***Pre-K and Latinos: The Foundation for America's Future***, released by Arizona State University's Eugene Garcia and Pre-K Now's Danielle Gonzales pull together a comprehensive, research-based picture of pre-K with regard to the fastest-growing segment in American society. The report looks at pre-K in light of demographic and socio-economic trends, patterns of access and attendance, language issues and obstacles to effective outreach to Latino families. Read the report at [http://www.preknow.com/documents/Pre-KandLatinos\\_July2006.pdf](http://www.preknow.com/documents/Pre-KandLatinos_July2006.pdf).

***The Effects of Investing in Early Education on Economic Growth***, by William T. Dickens, Isabel V. Sawhill, and Jeffrey Tebbs. From Brookings Institute, April 2006. This policy brief analyzes the impact of a high-quality universal preschool policy on economic growth, concluding that such a policy could add \$2 trillion to annual U.S. GDP by 2080. The full report is available at <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb153.htm>