

HB

51

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date Referred: January 22, 1991

FURTHER REFERRALS: Finance

Date of Committee Action: 2-28-91

The COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS Committee considered:

HB 51

HOUSE BILL NO. 51

APPROP: CHILD CARE GRANT PROGRAM

"An Act making an appropriation to the Department of Community and Regional Affairs for the child care grant program; and providing for an effective date."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

be replaced with _____ the same title

a new title

have attached amendments(s)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendations

individual recommendations

additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): _____ (Dept)

APPROVES PREVIOUS: _____ (Dept/Date)

fiscal impact _____

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING DO PASS:

SIGNING OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

	Check appropriate column:	Do Not Pass	No Rec	Amend
<i>Cheri Davis</i> ^{MACKIE}			X	
<i>Jerry Mackie</i> ^{DAKER}			X	
<i>John Phillips</i> ^{GRANT}			X	
<i>John C. Snyper</i>			X	

Do Not Support fiscal note

[Signature]
Chairman's Signature

Diane R. Kiss
P.O. Box 878334
Wasilla, Ak. 99687
(907) 746-9200
ext.320 (work)

To: Legislative Office H CRA committee
Date: February 25, 1991
Subj: Day Care Assistance Program
Ref: HB51

Let me introduce myself, I am a single parent of a three year old and is currently on the waiting list for the Day Care Assistance Program. My employment is the only source of income for my family (I do not receive child support or alimony) and I bring home less than \$1300 a month. I have an above minimum wage job and still barely meet my financial obligations for survival each month.

Many working parents depend on the Day Care Assistance Programs to pay for their child care, especially single parents. Single parents are fast becoming a majority if they are not already. The teenage pregnancy and divorce rates don't go down, they go up. Programs like this help keep people off welfare and become self supporting.

For example, my day care expense for one child is more than my rent. If I had assistance for even two months I could afford to get my car fixed and the insurance. Things like winter coats/boots, vehicle maintenance/insurance, and car tires are considered luxury items on my budget and take careful planning to be able to meet the needs. Without the help an exceptional friend, who took care of my daughter without charge for six months, I wouldn't be able to afford to work.

In the past, I have had to quit my jobs and go back on welfare because I could not pay rent, utilities, food, gasoline, and day care. Not to mention, the medical expenses, any loans, car insurance, or maintenance.

Please take careful consideration before this program is lost. Many working parents may have to quit working and go on welfare in order to survive.

February 25, 1991

HB 51
Child Care Grant

My name is Sue Oliphant. I am director of the RALLY before and after school program at Auke Bay School in Juneau. We currently have about 100 children enrolled either before or after school in the child care portion of RALLY. Some of the children come only one or two days a week but a majority of them are there every day for long hours, some as many as seven hours a day in RALLY. Counting the school day that's eleven hours at Auke Bay School. Many of the children are quite young, five or six years old.

A few years ago The Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth addressed the issues of quality and affordability in child care. With children spending so many of their waking hours in child care centers and homes, it is absolutely essential that quality be of the highest standards. Quality depends upon two factors, quality of staff and quality of program. The two are interdependent.

Having a quality program depends upon quality staff. Because child care depends upon parent fees to support programs, staff wages are usually notoriously low to keep the care within an affordable range for most parents. Centers and homes are forced with the unpleasant choice of having enough adults to meet the needs of children and paying them a nonliving wage, or paying a higher wage and having too many children for each adult. Too much child care depends upon untrained, temporary staff. Some try to care for far too many children. In either case the job turnover is high because of low compensation, little respect, and high frustration from an extremely demanding job. The children lose.

Good child care professionals are highly educated, self motivated, caring, sensitive individuals. They must be knowledgeable in child development so that they can provide the kind of experiences for children that will promote a child's cognitive, physical, social, and moral growth. As any parent who works knows, it's hard to find a good child care provider and even harder to keep one.

"Will you watch my child?" The phrase used to infuriate me; I thought I did so much more. Now I realize that I do watch children. I watch them closely so that I will be there at just the right moment with just the right material, or just the right question to help a child discover a new piece to this ongoing puzzle we call knowledge. Research tells me that a good teacher is a

facilitator of learning. I am that. I am also comforter when the day is a bad one and somebody needs to be held, or consoled. I am there to help children grow socially when I help them resolve conflicts by using words rather than physical force.

Quality programs depend upon more than good staff. Even the most experienced, knowledgable staff can do little to provide good learning experiences for children with few materials and broken or inadequate equipment. Unfortunately too many centers and homes have to make do with poor quality equipment, few supplies, and inappropriate space.

Parent fees simply cannot pay the cost of good child care. The Alaska State Legislature has had the good sense to try to subsidize child care through the Child Care Grant. It is not the complete answer, but it certainly helps. Let me translate that help to some hard numbers.

The RALLY program at Auke Bay School is paid for by parent fees with in kind help from the Juneau School District. We depend a great deal on the Child Care Grant to help with staff and material costs. The Auke Bay program brings in an average of \$900 a month through the Child Care Grant. That's 90 staff hours or \$900 worth of materials, depending upon the use. Our primary use is in staff hours. The Juneau RALLY program pays staff \$10 an hour, which is considerably higher than the average child care worker is paid. Most of the staff at Auke Bay work less than 20 hours per week and have no benefits. The Juneau School District is making strides toward getting more benefitted staff. Most centers and home providers do not have the in kind support the RALLY program has, and have a more difficult time making ends meet. Their staff salaries are generally lower.

Auke Bay has a staff to student ratio of one to ten and one full time director who acts as support person to staff while the children are there and has a vast array of administrative responsibilities while the children are in school. I have the responsibility of running a program for 100 children for seven hours a day, overseeing and coordinating a staff of eight, collecting parent fees, and continually advocating for children in everything from space usage to speaking to this group. I make about \$25,000 a year after over six years working with school age childcare, four years classroom teaching experience, and 23 hours graduate level coursework. I'm lucky. I make far more than most child care professionals. For the most part I like my job, love the children, can with my husband's help make ends meet most of the time, and so I have stayed. This is my sixth year at Auke Bay. I have known some of the children for six years and have given some continuity to their school years. I am not the norm.

Because of high staff turnover children often have to relate to several different adults over the course of one year. That may not seem like such a big deal unless you are five years old and a year is one fifth of your life. Our children deserve to have one caring adult beside their parents who is consistent in their lives, who has the educational background to help them grow in knowledge, who is free enough from stress to love and comfort them in their stressful times. By the sheer magnitude of hours spent in the company of children this person has tremendous influence on their lives. Our children deserve to have the best person we can give them.

You can help by supporting full funding of the Child Care Grant, by making certain that House Bill 51 gets passed and becomes in full effect by the end of this legislative session.

Thank you for your attention in this important matter.

Sue Oliphant
Auke Bay RALLY
10014 Crazy Horse Dr.
Juneau, Ak. 99801
789-2110

2/25/91

Stephanie's Day Care Home
Wasilla, Alaska,

House Bill No. 51

Upon entering this teleconference today I was informed that this was a conference on the Child Care Grant program. This program affects the much needed quality in our daycare facilities. The costs for daycare facilities to run and still provide quality daycare is much more than what parents can afford. We are supplemented by the Child Care Grant program, along with other ~~pro~~ state programs. There are many unlicense daycare homes where children are given care by unqualified people that may, and recently have, put children in danger. Parents have limited choices because of income and high child care costs. Without this supplement each month I ~~would~~ would have to raise my child care costs. Most of my parents are already on day care ~~assistance~~ assistance programs and could not afford this raise. I would like to keep my daycare home open and give the best care for these children that I possible can, and to do this we need the supplement this program offers.

Stephanie Graham

Voting "Yes": Cote
Shull
Boatwright
Holman
Cruise
McCarty
Tallman
Voting "No": None
Absent: None
4 votes required for passage
Effective Date: 2/4/91

K E T C H I K A N G A T E W A Y B O R O U G H

RESOLUTION NO. 968

A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH, ALASKA, SUPPORTING LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH STABLE AND SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR COSTS INCURRED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE DAY CARE PROGRAM; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

R E C I T A L S

A. The State of Alaska Day Care Assistance program was created to help low and moderate income parents work or train for work by paying for child care costs.

B. In accomplishing this goal, certain administrative tasks are required and costs are incurred by local Day Care Administrators.

C. The current law provides for the reimbursement to local governments for the cost of administration of the program based on actual subsidy expenditures.

D. A change from the current reimbursement method to a flat rate of program allocation method would enable more dollars to be used for parent subsidies rather than lapse, unspent, at the end of the year.

E. The direct operational costs, such as rent, salaries, supplies, and of determining and monitoring parent eligibility and processing provider billings, is substantially higher than the subsidies expended, forcing local governments to make up the cost differential to keep the program stable.

F. The Assembly believes that it is in the best interest of the State of Alaska to continue to have the Day Care Program administered at the local level.

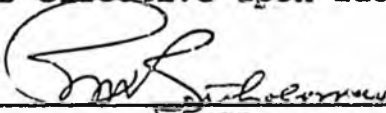
G. Under the Day Care Assistance Program, the State is responsible for providing funds for administration that are sufficient to pay the total cost of direct program operations (administration) and for maximizing the funding available for parent subsidies within each community.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH, ALASKA, as follows:

Section 1: The Borough Assembly hereby supports legislation to establish stable and sufficient funding for costs incurred in the administration of the State Day Care Program.

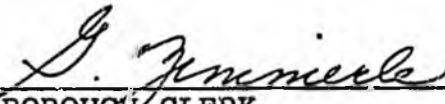
Section 2: When a contract is executed under AS 44.47.250(b)(2) or (b)(4) between the State and a municipality or an organization, the Assembly recommends that the State pay to the municipality or organization the greater of the following: (1) an amount equal to twenty-two percent (22%) of the total annual contract award for Day Care benefits paid to Day Care facilities in the geographic area administered by that municipality or organization (including any subsequently available funds), or (2) one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per year.

Section 3: This Resolution is effective upon adoption.




BOROUGH MAYOR

ATTEST:



BOROUGH CLERK

Approved as to form:



INTERIM BOROUGH ATTORNEY

Alaska State Legislature

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE FRAN ULMER

MEMORANDUM

February 22, 1991

TO: Rep. Jerry Mackie, Chair
House Community and Regional Affairs Committee

FROM: Rep. Fran Ulmer

RE: HB 51, relating to the child care grant program

HB 51 makes an appropriation of \$8,919,000 to the Child Care Grant Program in the Dept. of Community and Regional Affairs. The purpose of this appropriation is to double the amount of the grant to child care providers to reach the statutory maximum of \$50 per child per month.

The Child Care Grant appropriation for FY 91 was \$2.3 million. That appropriation has provided a grant of approximately \$25 per month, per child, to each of the 400 providers in the Child Care Grant Program (those licensed providers who agree to accept clients from the Day Care Assistance Program). The Dept. of Community and Regional Affairs estimates that the number of providers participating in the Child Care Grant program will increase by 95% if the grant amount increases to \$50. In order to accommodate the expected increase in program participants, the appropriation needs to be correspondingly increased.

The purpose of child care grants is to assist providers with operating expenses. Grant monies may be used for wages and benefits, meals for children, to purchase developmentally appropriate equipment and supplies, and to promote parental involvement. Although HB 51 would double the per child grant, the subsidy provided thereby for early childhood development is still very modest compared to the expenditures made for public education (roughly one-tenth). Studies indicate that early childhood development is just as dependent on the quality of care received as later development is on the quality of education.

Unfortunately, the child care industry is on the brink of disaster. Wages for child care workers average about \$5 per hour with few if any benefits. In Alaska, 90% of home care providers and 56% of those who work in child care centers earn below poverty wages. Since personnel costs make up 80%-85% of most center budgets, providers must keep wages low and concentrate on those ages which offer a better profit margin. Low wages and lack of benefits create a high turnover rate-- over 41% nationally and even higher in Alaska. A recent survey

District 4B — Juneau

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conducted in Anchorage showed that 48% of the child care workers there had been employed less than one year.

There is no lack of information regarding the need, the problems, and the costs of child care. All of that information tells us that child care as it now operates is not an economically viable industry. If we wish to prevent a continued decline in the availability and quality of child care, we must supplement child care providers' income. HB 51 does that under current statutory guidelines.

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

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February 4, 1991

POSITION PAPER

RE: House Bill 51

SPONSOR: Representatives Ulmer, Kopenen, B. Davis, Ellis, Brown

Program Effects of the Bill

The bill increases the base amount for the Child Care Grant Program to the \$50 maximum as is allowed under AS 44.47.305(3)(c).

Comments

The Department of Community & Regional Affairs agrees that this amount would be necessary to support the increase in base to the \$50 maximum. At present, there are approximately 15,648 licensed child care spaces statewide. We anticipate 95 percent participation at the higher base rate, which would equate to approximately \$8,919,000. We also anticipate the development of additional child care facilities statewide and these additional spaces will add to the impact on the program even if the percentage of providers using the program is not constant at 95 percent. The higher rate encourages providers who otherwise would not bother with the additional paperwork to participate in the program and take advantage of the funds.

The Department of Community & Regional Affairs supports the Governor's budget. However, if additional funds are received, we would be more than amiable to administering the program in as efficient and cost effective manner as possible.

Edgar Blatchford

Edgar Blatchford, Commissioner



STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

ALASKA COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

POSITION PAPER

House Bill 51: Making an Appropriation to the
Child Care Grant Program

The Child Care Grant Program, once unique to the State of Alaska, has become a national model for improving the quality of care we provide to the children of working parents. Components of Alaska's Child Care Grant Program were incorporated into the federal child care bill passed last year by Congress, which was the first major piece of federal child care legislation in fifty years.

The Child Care Grant Program provides a formula-based subsidy to child care centers and homes. The formula is based on the number of children for whom care is provided on a full time basis, and requires that the applicant be licensed by the state. Although the statutory maximum allowed under the Program is \$50., the amount currently being paid to providers is \$25. and has been as low as \$10.

The purpose of the Program is twofold: to promote quality in child care, and to offer incentives to increase the supply of child care spaces. Applicants are permitted by regulation to use the subsidy to partially fund operating expenses, most especially wages and benefits, meals for children, developmentally appropriate equipment and supplies, and to promote parental involvement.

Child care providers in Alaska receive an average salary of approximately \$5.00 per hour. They sacrifice a fair and equitable salary to provide a desperately needed service. In fact, they subsidize the industry.

Quality child care in this state will soon evaporate if staff wages, benefits and status do not improve. In the last fiscal quarter alone, the number of child care programs in Anchorage has decreased because providers cannot afford to stay in business. We must recognize child care as a profession or settle for inadequate, low quality warehousing of children.

The Child Care Grant program begins to fill the gap between what child care really costs and what parents can afford to

pay. In a Fairbanks study done in 1988, it was noted that the true cost of child care - factoring in a wage and benefits package, nutritious meals, a safe facility, and an adequate supply of toys and educational materials - was approximately \$800. per month per child. There is probably not a working family in this state who could afford to pay the true cost of care. Consequently, the industry absorbs those costs - in the form of low wages, no benefits, an untrained staff, and high turnover - in order to make child care affordable for working parents.

The Child Care Grant Program, when funded at the statutory maximum, will allow child care programs to increase wages and improve quality, encourage more people to become child care providers and increase the availability of child care, and keep the cost of care at a level working parents can afford.

The Alaska Commission on Children and Youth has advocated for increases to the Child Care Grant Program since 1987, and we urge your strong support of this bill.

Contact: Carla Timpone, Executive Director

CHILD CARE DIRECTOR'S ASSOCIATION-FAIRBANKS
1414 23rd Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

February 22, 1991

Representative Fran Ulmer
Post Office Box 'V'
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representative Ulmer,

The Child Care Center Director's Association-Fairbanks is an organization representing the thirty-four (34) licensed child care centers in the Fairbanks area. These centers are licensed to care for over fourteen hundred (1,400) children. We believe children to be Alaska's and our country's most precious resource, and that advocating for their welfare is one of our responsibilities as providers.

At our Association meeting on February 21st, it was unanimously agreed that the Association, individually and collectively, would vigorously support the passage and enactment of the following bills currently before the legislature as PRIORITY legislation:

a. House Bill 51--Funding of the Child Care Grant at \$8,919,000.00 for FY 92.

b. House Bill 32--Reimbursement of Alaska Student Loans for individuals trained in and subsequently working in early childhood education programs.

c. House Bill 50--Appropriation of \$4,000,000.00 to the principal of the Alaska Children's Trust Fund.

d. House Bill 43--Child Support Payments to go first to the families, rather than to the State for reimbursement for assistance previously received.

While ALL of the above are considered ESSENTIAL items of legislation requiring enactment, they are listed in the order we consider of greatest significance.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts in the interest of quality, affordable child care for our children.

Sincerely,



GREG WILLIAMS
President

A WAGE AND BENEFITS STUDY
OF ANCHORAGE
CHILD CARE CENTERS

Details of wage scales, benefits and working conditions as well as sizes
services and hours of operation in 41 Anchorage Child Care Centers

February 1989
CHILD CARE CONNECTION, INC.
Mia Oxley, Executive Director

HIGHLIGHTS

Wage Scales

- * The average hourly wage scales offered by Child Care Centers are:
 - Caregivers - \$4.74 - \$7.62
 - Assistant Directors - \$7.51 - \$8.74
 - Directors - \$7.50 - \$19.23

- * Non-profit centers offer higher average pay than private proprietary centers.

Benefits

- * Centers are most likely to provide benefits to Directors and Assistant Directors and least likely to provide them for Caregivers.

- * Most child care centers in Anchorage provide no benefits to their lowest paid Caregivers.
 - 86% - no retirement or pension plan
 - 67% - no health insurance
 - 54% - no sick or personal leave
 - 34% - no paid vacation

- * Non-profits are more likely than private proprietary centers to offer benefits to all paid employees.
 - Paid Vacation - 68% vs. 42%
 - Paid Sick Leave - 40% vs. 33%
 - Health Insurance - 36% vs. 8%
 - Retirement Plan - 8% vs. 0%
 - Inservice Training - 92% vs. 58%
 - Education - 80% vs. 58%

- * Most child care centers (83%) offer reduced child care fees as a benefit to all or some of their employees.

Turnover

- * 48% of child care center employees have been in their current place of employment less than 1 year.
- * 70% of child care center employees have been at that center fewer than 2 years.

Educational Levels

- * 34% of centers report a 4 year degree or better as the highest educational attainment of their lowest paid caregivers.
- * 58% of center directors have a 4 year college degree or better.

This study revealed that 48% of the employees of Anchorage centers have been there less than one year - and a full 70% less than 2 years. National surveys have repeatedly shown a strong correlation between turnover and rates of pay. It is highly unlikely for us to see more stability in the child care workforce until working conditions improve.

Shortages

The operations section of this report confirms that few centers offer the kinds of care currently in short supply in Anchorage. More operators may begin to offer these services now that the need is identified. In most cases, however, there are economic reasons behind the status quo. Infant care, for example is more expensive to offer because of the lower required adult to child ratio. The result is that cost-conscious operators choose to focus on ages that offer a better profit margin. There are similar disincentives for irregular hours care, and school age care requiring transportation.

Non-profit vs Proprietary

The study revealed consistently better wages and benefits in non-profit centers than in proprietary ones. The reason is simple economics. For the most part, parent fees must cover all the costs of running a center. There are limits on the fees parents can afford to pay. Personnel costs make up 80 - 85% of most center budgets. The easiest - perhaps only - way to generate a profit is to keep wages and benefits low.

Quality

Can we have an adequate supply of high quality child care with low wages and high turnover? Most observers say we can not. Quality child care is provided by workers who understand child development. That understanding comes with training and experience. It is not innate, nor learned overnight. High turnover and limited training preclude good quality.

Conclusions

Poor working conditions are the most serious obstacles we face in our efforts to build an adequate supply of high quality child care. Unless we increase wages and add some benefits to deter turnover, the problems of low quality and shortages of care will continue.



CHILD CARE: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Quality

BACKGROUND

RECOMMENDATION

Salaries/Child Care Grant Program:

20

Child care providers in Alaska receive an average salary of \$4.50 an hour. They sacrifice a fair, equitable salary to provide desperately needed service. They subsidize the industry. "Low wages, long hours and very demanding responsibilities make turnover a persistent problem in the field," wrote Marian Estelle, director of the Petersburg (Alaska) Child Care Center. Quality child care in this state will soon evaporate if staff wages, benefits and status do not improve. We must pay professional scale wages or face consequences that include inadequate, low quality warehousing of children, more children left without supervision and ever fewer qualified child care professionals.

The Alaska program that directly funds child care is the Child Care Grant Program. Licensed child care centers or homes that will accept Day Care Assistance children are eligible to receive a payment each month for each child who attends. The program now has 190 centers and 170 homes under contract. It promotes quality child care in licensed homes and centers by partially funding operating expenses such as wages and benefits, food, staff training, materials and parent education. The FY88 state appropriation was \$600,000, which paid \$10 per full-time child for each month in care, with some geographical adjustments. This program indirectly benefits parents by increasing child care quality in centers or homes paid these grants. The maximum allowed by statute is \$50 per child in full-time care. The state has never paid that amount.

Child Care Grant Program funds should be increased to the statutory maximum of \$50 per full-time child per month to provide additional resources for such purposes as increased staff salaries and professional training.

Child care providers in Alaska receive an average salary of \$4.50 an hour. They sacrifice a fair, equitable salary to provide desperately needed service. They subsidize the industry.

To have affordable, quality child care, Alaska must recognize that society as a whole, and not just parents, is responsible for the care of our future generation.

In Alaska, the Municipality of Anchorage offers a choice of benefits to non-union employees and parents can pick child care at pre-taxed dollars. ARCO-Alaska's Dependent Care Task Force has developed a range of options for that company. Many small professional corporations offer a full range of child care benefits.

Anchorage's Providence Hospital and Ketchikan General Hospital have been among the few employers to offer employees on-site child care.

A partnership of public and private employers, parents and the community must work together to support quality child care in Alaska.

Operating Costs for Quality Child Care

<u>Expense</u>	<u>Cost/Month/Child</u>	<u>Description of Allocation</u>
Teachers	\$300	Full-time teachers @ \$2000/month (\$11.50/hour) and Part-time teachers @ \$1000/month
Food	120	2 meals @ \$2.25 each and 1 snack @\$1/day
Rent and Property Tax	54	\$1 per square foot @ 35 sq. ft./child, 65% usable
Staff Benefits	80	7.5% Social Security, \$75/month health insurance, 2 weeks vacation and 12 days sick leave and reduced child care cost for one-half of one child
Administrators	60	Average of \$2160/month @ 1.6 per program
Supplies and Educational Materials	50	Office, kitchen, classes and equipment
Support Personnel	40	Cook \$1500/month, bus driver \$1500/month, part-time janitor \$1000/month
Utilities	20	2.47% of budget
Maintenance	20	2.47% of budget
Miscellaneous	10	1.23% of budget
Total	<u>\$754</u>	per child per month

Assume a child care program with one class of maximum enrollments in each age group with all children attending full time. Enrollment income would be as follows:

5 infants	@ \$425/month	\$ 2,125
6 toddlers	@ \$375/month	2,250
10 preschoolers	@ \$325/month	3,250
15 kindergartners	@ \$225/month	3,375
20 school age	@ \$150/month	3,000
Total		<u>\$14,000</u>

To calculate staff and benefits costs, assume an average wage of \$5.50 per hour, which while higher than the current average is still not adequate compensation for the level of responsibility, commitment and knowledge required to do a good job.

Benefits were computed as follows:

- 1 day/month sick leave
- 10 days per year vacation time (for full-time employees only)
- 7.5% of gross wage for Social Security
- 2.34% of gross wage for ESC taxes
- 0.47% of gross wage for workman's compensation insurance
- 66% of health insurance premium (no dependent coverage)
- No retirement
- 50% reduced child care charge for first child

Based on the above assumptions, the following are staff costs:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Wages and Benefits/Month</u>
1.5 infant teachers	\$1,923
1.5 toddler teachers	1,923
1.5 preschool teachers	1,923
1 kindergarten teacher (6 hours/day)	1,078
1 school age teacher (3.5 hours/day)	553
1 bus driver (5 hours/day)	787
1 janitor/maintenance (5 hours/day)	787
1 cook (8 hours/day)	1,294
1 director (8+ hours/day)	2,596
Total	<u>\$12,864</u>

The difference between income and staff wages and benefits of \$1,136 must cover rent, insurance, food, vehicle maintenance, utilities, supplies and equipment. Receptionists, typists and accountants are luxuries few child care facilities can afford.

—Prepared by Commission member Patty Meritt.

Comparison of Public Schools and Private Child Care Programs

	<u>Public Schools</u>	<u>Private Child Care Facilities</u>
Program hours/day:	6.5	11 (average)
Children/teachers:	25+:1	5:1 (under 12 months) 6:1 (under 30 months) 10:1 (preschools) 15:1 (kindergarten) 20:1 (school age)
Student days/year:	180	252 (average)
Facilities:	Designed for children Paid for by government	Seldom designed for children Rented and renovated or donated by churches
Teacher qualifications:	Type A certificate/ 4 year degree	None (18 years old)
Teacher pay:	\$41,000/year, 9 month contract	\$6,890/year, 9 months \$9,186/year, 12 months
State support:	\$435/month/child plus capital appropriations	\$11 to \$25/month/child approximately
Local support:	Approximately 20% of operating budget of school district plus bond support	None, except in occasional rare grants for non-profits in general
Parent funding:	None required	85% to 100%

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

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February 4, 1991

POSITION PAPER

RE: House Bill 51

SPONSOR: Representatives Ulmer, Kopenen, B. Davis, Ellis, Brown

Program Effects of the Bill

The bill increases the base amount for the Child Care Grant Program to the \$50 maximum as is allowed under AS 44.47.305(3)(c).

Comments

The Department of Community & Regional Affairs agrees that this amount would be necessary to support the increase in base to the \$50 maximum. At present, there are approximately 15,648 licensed child care spaces statewide. We anticipate 95 percent participation at the higher base rate, which would equate to approximately \$8,919,000. We also anticipate the development of additional child care facilities statewide and these additional spaces will add to the impact on the program even if the percentage of providers using the program is not constant at 95 percent. The higher rate encourages providers who otherwise would not bother with the additional paperwork to participate in the program and take advantage of the funds.

The Department of Community & Regional Affairs supports the Governor's budget. However, if additional funds are received, we would be more than amiable to administering the program in as efficient and cost effective manner as possible.

Edgar Blatchford

Edgar Blatchford, Commissioner

FACT SHEET: CHILD CARE IN ALASKA

Who provides:

Child care for children in Alaska between the ages 0-5 years is provided by:

Private sector:

- Day care in provider's home
- Day care in child care center

Public sector:

- Headstart
- Preschool programs in public schools

Need for child care:

Statewide, there are 15,648 licensed placements for child care. Actual availability of child care (combining both licensed and unlicensed providers) may be twice that number. However, finding childcare is difficult in virtually every Alaska community. As women increasingly enter the job market during the next 10 years, finding quality, affordable childcare will become an impossibility for many low to moderate income families.

Future growth of need:

Nationally, the number of children under the age of 5 in daycare rose by 11% between 1984-1987. By 1995, 2/3 of all pre-schoolers will have mothers in the workforce.

In Alaska, the need appears to be growing more rapidly. The growth of the waiting list for the Day Care Assistance Program indicates that the need for childcare may grow by as much as 20% over the next few years.

Why there is a shortage of childcare:

Historically, childcare was the responsibility of the family. As more and more parents entered the workplace and multi-generational families declined to the nuclear family of today, parents were forced to look outside the family for childcare. Increasingly, the need for daycare was filled by the private sector; daycare became a business.

Unfortunately, childcare is almost never a profitable business. 70% of childcare operating expenses are staff salaries. For most parents, childcare of any kind is not affordable. In order to keep costs low and attract more clients, childcare providers cut corners wherever they can and frequently end up subsidizing the cost of childcare by working at poverty level wages without any benefits. Many providers are inevitably driven from the business because of the long hours and low pay.

Problems of childcare providers:

- nationally, 41% of all childcare workers quit each year
- in Anchorage, 48% of childcare workers quit each year
- the average daycare center enrollment has nearly doubled while the average salaries for child-care workers decreased 20%;
- the majority of childcare workers make \$4.74-\$7.62 per hour for an average wage of \$9,859 - \$15,850;
- few daycare centers offer any benefits

How the state participates:

In addition to licensing activities, the state assists in two ways:

Day Care Assistance Program: financial assistance is provided to low-income parents for day care expenses; average payment is \$265 per child to low-income parents;

Child Care Grant Program: Direct grant to eligible child care providers to assist with operational expenses; currently, the grant is approximately \$22 per month per child in care. State law provides for a maximum grant of \$50 per child per month.

Total state contribution: \$12.3 million

Day Care Assistance: \$10 million for FY 91

Child Care Grants: \$2.3 million for FY 91

Per child contribution (per licensed slot): \$786 per year

Compare to per child contribution for education in Alaska: \$6373 per year

HB 51: Doubles the child care grant paid to providers to \$50 per child

The Child Care Grant Program offers a per child subsidy to any childcare provider who agrees to accept clients from the Day Care Assistance Program. Child Care Grants may be used for operational and other businesses expenses.

FY 91 appropriation for childcare grants: \$2.3 million

Estimated increase of providers entering
childcare grant program: 98%

Estimated appropriation needed to pay
statutory maximum of \$50 per child: \$8.9 million

Recommendations of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth:

1) Increase Child Care Grant funds to the statutory maximum of \$50 per full-time child per month.

2) Provide grant funds to enable early childhood programs to become accredited through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs.

3) Provide specialized training at local, regional and state levels for early childhood educators and family home care providers in cross-cultural communication; language development; recognition of the symptoms of abuse and neglect; meeting the needs of chronically ill children, disabled children and their families; caring for infants and toddlers.

4) The State Board of Education should adopt a policy urging a maximum of 20 children per teacher in kindergarten through grade 3. The state should help fund local district efforts to meet that ratio.

5) The professional status of childcare workers should be recognized through appropriate compensation and benefits, positive working conditions, recognition of educational standards, creation of professional career ladders, and societal appreciation of their work's value.

6) Increase Education and Training Grant funds from the Department of Community and Regional Affairs so eligible programs, organizations and communities can offer developmentally appropriate early childhood education/training and scholarships for courses and other professional development.

7) The University of Alaska and the Department of Education should develop an early childhood career ladder.

8) More early childhood educators and family childcare providers from Alaska's diverse cultures must be recruited, trained and hired in local communities.

9) Childcare providers, educators and administrators should be trained to heighten their awareness of cultural differences and improve their ability to resolve issues in a culturally appropriate manner.

10) Curriculum and materials culturally appropriate for Alaska should be available to all early childhood programs through the state library and other services.

Anchorage Daily News

VOL XLIV, NO 55 92 PAGES

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1989

PRICE 25 CENTS

Child-care survey finds low wages and high turnover

By **DONNA FREEDMAN**
Daily News reporter

Anchorage child-care centers are something like the Land of Oz: People come and go so quickly there.

A recent survey showed a 48 percent annual turnover rate in area child care centers. The survey also found that wages for most child-care workers average between \$9,859 and \$15,850 a year, and that benefits are almost nonexistent.

None of this surprised Mia Oxley, director of Child Care Connection, which conducted the mail survey.

"It confirmed our suspicions. It's the same conditions that exist elsewhere in the country: low pay and high turnover," Oxley said.

Child Care Connection is

a non-profit corporation that provides referrals to parents and training to caregivers. The group conducted the survey partly for its own use, and partly because Anchorage child-care centers requested it.

Beth Aaberg, assistant director of the Sunshine School, said the concerns raised by the survey are not easy to solve. Higher wages would mean lower turnover and better-qualified personnel, but profit margins in child-care are low.

"Parents can't pay any more than they pay now. It's already such a big chunk of their budget," Aaberg said. "We need to have something that helps through the gov-

Please see Back Page, **SURVEY**

SURVEY: Child-care numbers

Continued from Page A-1

ernment, I think."

The state already offers subsidies to child-care centers, and day-care assistance to low-income families. Copies of the survey will be sent to Alaska legislators, Oxley said.

Work on the survey began last October. An 11-page questionnaire was mailed to all licensed child-care centers in Anchorage. Topics included wages, benefits, working conditions, hours of operation, employee turnover and training practices. Of the 65 copies mailed out, 41 were returned.

They showed that annual turnover rates in Anchorage are 48 percent, compared to 40 percent nationally. Usually, the reason for high turnover is low pay — the majority of workers make between \$4.74 and \$7.62 an hour.

Most child-care centers offer few benefits. According to the survey, 67 percent do not offer health insurance, 54 percent do not provide

sick or personal leave, and 34 percent do not offer paid vacations.

One encouraging trend, Oxley said, was that non-profit centers tend to offer slightly higher wages and more benefits. Another good sign was that a few centers offered a higher pay scale to more skilled employees.

"It implies there's some sort of career ladder available. That's a positive trend. It has to happen if people are going to stay in the field," Oxley said.

Oxley said the study shows there is a "hidden subsidy" for child care. "It's not the government who subsidizes child care — it's the caregivers who work for annual wages of \$8,000 to \$14,000 who are really footing the bill," she said.

"We can talk all we want about increasing the supply so there isn't a shortage anymore, or improving the quality. But as long as the whole system is built on the backs of those people, nothing will change."

Los Angeles Times

Friday, November 23, 1990



Child care: bottom line

By Sylvia Porter

For millions of women, "having it all" means being able to find quality, affordable child care that will enable them to stay in the labor force. This isn't easy to achieve.

Their need is being addressed by entrepreneurs who see an opportunity to profit. Commercial child care centers are a small part of the system today, but their continued rapid growth seems assured by the pent-up demand.

At the same time, employers who in the past have been slow to pick up on the issue are moving more rapidly to accommodate their employees. **There's a good reason. Women with infants make up the fastest growing group in the labor force,** points out Barbara Reisman, executive director of Child Care Action Campaign (CCAC).

U.S. companies lose as much as \$3 billion annually because of family-related absences, says Reisman. This has inspired 3,000 to 4,000 companies to underwrite child care assistance for employees -- and the number is increasing.

How do organizations intercede? Reisman cites these examples from the files of CCAC:

--At the University of California Medical Center, the union bargained for an on-site day care center to accommodate the schedules of nurses and other workers.

--At Leadville, Colo., when the mining industry collapsed, both par-

ents had to work. A coalition of private and public sector forces joined to form and finance a center. It is in operation every day of the year and charges fees as low as 25 cents per hour.

--In Atlanta, five companies, unable to go it alone, formed a consortium to open a child development center on the plaza floor of Rich's downtown department store. Now there is to be a second center in the city's hospital district.

--Companies that are hesitant to establish their own are retaining others to operate centers for them. A small company's reluctance is understandable. It takes little to create a significant legal liability. Better to acquire a trained, qualified staff.

--Other employers are contributing toward the cost of day care at non-company locations or making payments to employees as part of an overall benefits plan.

--Hotels, industrial parks and housing developments are including child care centers to attract both tenants and employers.

The current child care system is both costly and chaotic, according to CCAC. For most parents, child care of any kind is not affordable. This results in women quitting the work force, or using unlicensed "mom and pop" operations, or simply leaving their children home alone. Congress included \$2.5 billion in the Budget Reconciliation Act

to be used over three years for child care grants. Yet, government -- federal, state or local -- still hasn't fully recognized the critical need in terms of the state's own interest. Available government help reaches only a small portion of low-income families.

In the private sector, commercial child care operations are flowering but at tuition costs prohibitive for most families. The shares of a handful of chain operators are publicly traded. The largest of these is Kinder-Care Learning Centers, Inc. of Montgomery, Ala., with 1,260 centers.

The child care market is estimated today to be between \$10 and \$35 billion, according to Kinder-Care. All the national and regional chains serve only 3 percent of the nation's families, and Kinder-Care claims a third of the market. Its revenues in 1989 were \$344 million.

Yet the industry is not without problems. Observers comment that regulation is still too lax. Acceptable centers of any kind are hard to find, even though there are more than 65,000 of them.

Another problem: Child care workers are among the lowest paid in the nation. Few receive employee benefits. This and high turnover often result in low quality of care. For the commercial providers, it could mean escalating labor costs if the workers become unionized, eating up profits or forcing higher tuition.

More Care, More Costs

Americans spent \$15.5 billion for child care in 1987 (the latest year for which figures are available). That came to an average of \$49 per week for each U.S. family.

That's up more than 17 percent from the 1984 figure. And it comes to about 7 percent of average family income, but more than 20 percent of the family



incomes of those near the poverty line.

The increase isn't all inflation, says the Census Bureau, which provided the stats. Children may be getting care more hours every week.

And more children are getting care. Between 1984 and 1987 the number of children under 15 in day care increased by about 9 percent, to 28.8 million. The number of children under the age of 5 in day care rose by about 11 percent, to 9.1 million.

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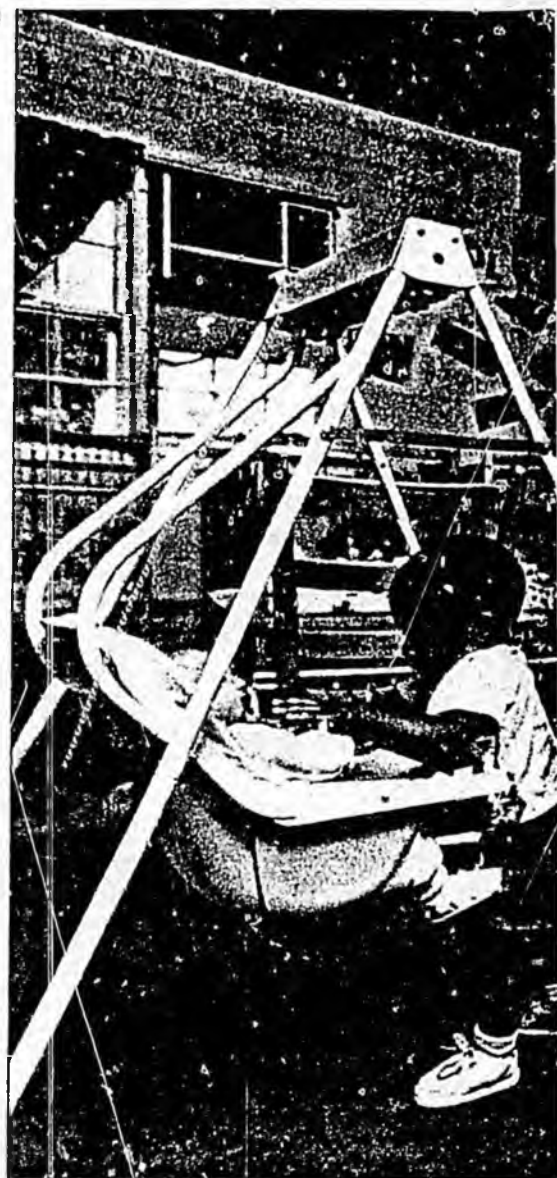
The Day Care Generation

Child care has immediate problems. But what about the long-term effect it will have on kids?

Meryl Frank is an expert on child care. For five years she ran a Yale University program that studied parental leave. But after she became a new mother two years ago, Frank discovered that even though she knew about such esoteric topics as staff-child ratios and turnover rates, she was a novice when it came to finding someone to watch her own child. Frank went back to work part time when her son, Isaac, was 5 months old, and in the two years since then she has changed child-care arrangements *nine* times.

Her travails began with a well-regarded day-care center near her suburban New Jersey home. On the surface, it was great. One staff member for every three babies, a sensitive administrator, clean facilities. "But when I went in," Frank recalls, "I saw this line of cribs and all these babies with their arms out crying, wanting to be picked up. I felt like crying myself." She walked out without signing Isaac up and went through a succession of other unsatisfactory situations—a babysitter who couldn't speak English, a woman who cared for 10 children in her home at once—before settling on a neighborhood woman who took Isaac into her home. "She was fabulous," Frank recalls wistfully. Three weeks after that babysitter started, she got sick and had to quit. Frank advertised for help in the newspaper and got 30 inquiries but no qualified babysitter. (When Frank asked one prospective nanny about her philosophy of discipline, the woman replied: "If he touched the stove, I'd punch him.") A few weeks later she finally hired her 10th babysitter. "She's a very nice young woman," Frank says. "Unfortunately, she has to leave in

BY PAT WINGERT
AND BARBARA KANTROWITZ



Good day care may be good for kids, bad care is definitely

May. And I just found out I'm pregnant again and due in June."

That's what happens when a *pro* tries to get help. For other parents, the situation can be even worse. Child-care tales of woe are a common bond for the current generation of parents. Given the haphazard state of day care in this country, finding the right situation is often just a matter of luck. There's no guarantee that a good thing will last. And always, there's the disturbing question that lurks in the back of every working parent's mind: *what is this doing to my kids?*

The simple and unsettling answer is, nobody really knows for sure. Experts say they're just beginning to understand the ramifications of raising a generation of youngsters outside the home while their parents work. Mothers in this country have always had jobs, but it is only in the past few years that a majority have gone back to the office while their children are still in diapers. In the past, most mothers worked out of necessity. That's still true for the majority today, but they have also been joined by mothers of all



GERD LUDWIG

The big concerns are staff turnover, health risks and the number of hours infants spend in day care.

economic classes. Some researchers think we won't know all the answers until the 21st century, when the children of today's working mothers are parents themselves. In the meantime, results gathered so far are troubling.

Some of the first studies of day care in the 1970s indicated that there were no ill effects from high-quality child care. There was even evidence that children who were out of the home at an early age were more independent and made friends more easily. Those results received wide attention and reassured many parents. Unfortunately, they don't tell the whole story. "The problem is that much of the day care available in this country is not high quality," says Deborah Lowe Vandell, professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin. The first research was often done in university-sponsored centers where the child-care workers were frequently students preparing for careers as teachers. Most children in day care don't get such dedicated attention.

Since the days of these early studies, child

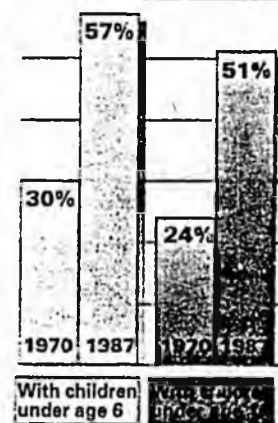
care has burgeoned into a \$15 billion-a-year industry in this country. Day-care centers get most of the attention because they are the fastest-growing segment, but they account for only a small percentage of child-care arrangements. According to 1986 Census Bureau figures, more than half of the kids under 5 with working mothers were cared for by nonrelatives: 14.7 percent in day-care centers and 23.8 percent in family day care, usually a neighborhood home where one caretaker watches several youngsters. Most of the rest were in nursery school or preschool.

Despite years of lobbying by children's advocates, there are still no federal regulations covering the care of young children. The government offers consumers more guidance choosing breakfast cereal than child care. Each state makes its own rules, and they vary from virtually no governmental supervision to strict enforcement of complicated licensing procedures for day-care centers. Many child-development experts recommend that each caregiver be responsible

Who's Minding the Children?

Even with the sharp rise in working mothers, most children are still cared for at home—their own or someone else's.

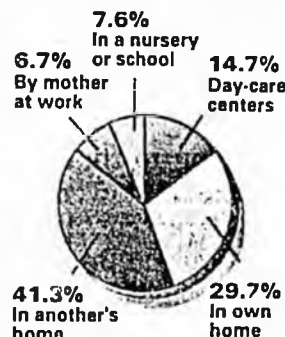
Percent of Mothers Working



SOURCE: CHILD CARE INC.

Day Care

WHO LOOKS AFTER CHILDREN UNDER AGE 6 WHILE THEIR MOTHERS WORK



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

for no more than three infants under the age of 1. Yet only three states—Kansas, Maryland and Massachusetts—require that ratio. Other states are far more lax. Idaho, for example, allows one caregiver to look after as many as 12 children of any age (including babies). And in 14 states there are absolutely no training requirements before starting a job as a child-care worker.

Day-care centers are the easiest to supervise and inspect because they usually operate openly. Family day care, on the other hand, poses big problems for regulatory agencies. Many times, these are informal arrangements that are hard to track down. Some child-care providers even say that regulation would make matters worse by imposing confusing rules that would keep some potential caregivers out of business and intensify the shortage of good day care.

No wonder working parents sometimes feel like pioneers wandering in the wilderness. The signposts point every which way. One set of researchers argues that babies who spend more than 20 hours a week in child care may grow up maladjusted. Other experts say the high turnover rate among poorly paid and undertrained child-care workers has created an unstable environment for youngsters who need dependability and consistency. And still others are worried about health issues—the wisdom of putting a lot of small children with limited immunities in such close quarters. Here's a synopsis of the current debate in three major areas of concern.

There's no question that the care of the very youngest children is by far the most controversial area of research. The topic so divides the child-development community that a scholarly journal, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, recently devoted two entire issues to the subject. Nobody is saying that mothers ought to stay home until their kids are ready for college. Besides that, it would be economically impossible; two thirds of all working women are the sole support of their families or are married to men who earn less than \$15,000 a year. But as the demographics have changed, psychologists are taking a second look at what happens to babies. In 1987, 52 percent of mothers of children under the age of 1 were working, compared with 32 percent 10 years earlier. Many experts believe that day-care arrangements that might be fine for 3- and 4-year-olds may be damaging to infants.

Much of the dispute centers on the work of Pennsylvania State University psychologist Jay Belsky. He says mounting research indicates that babies less than 1 year old who receive nonmaternal care for more than 20 hours a week are at a greater risk of developing insecure relationships with their mothers; they're also at increased risk of emotional and behavioral problems in later childhood. Youngsters who have weak emotional ties to their mothers are more likely to be aggressive and disobedient as they grow older, Belsky says. Of course, kids whose mothers are home all day can have these problems, too. But Belsky says that mothers who aren't with their kids all day long don't get to



GERD LUDWIG

Diaper changers run the risk of passing a bug from one child to the next

know their babies as well as mothers who work part time or not at all. Therefore, working mothers may not be as sensitive to a baby's first attempts at communication. In general, he says, mothers are more attentive to these crucial signals than babysitters. Placing a baby in outside care increases the chance that an infant's needs won't be met, Belsky says. He also argues that working parents have so much stress in their lives that they have little energy left over for their children. It's hard to find the strength for "quality time" with the kids after a 10- or 12-hour day at the office. (It is interesting to note that not many people are promoting the concept of quality time these days.)

Work by other researchers has added weight to Belsky's theories. Wisconsin's Vandell studied the day-care histories of 236 Texas third graders and found that youngsters who had more than 30 hours a week of child care during infancy had poorer peer relationships, were harder to discipline and had poorer work habits than children who had been in part-time child care or exclusive maternal care. The children most at risk were from the lowest and highest socioeconomic classes, Vandell says, probably because poor youngsters usually get the worst child care and rich parents tend to have high-stress jobs that require long hours away from home. Vandell emphasizes that her results in the Texas study may be more negative than those for the country as a whole because Texas has minimal child-care regulation. Nonetheless, she thinks there's a "serious problem" in infant care.

Other experts say there isn't enough information yet to form any definitive conclusions about the long-term effects of infant

**Day care
that might
be fine for
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infants**

Child-Care Checklist

Questions to ask at day-care centers:

- ❑ What are the educational and training backgrounds of staff members?
- ❑ What is the child-staff ratio for each age? Most experts say it should be no more than 4:1 for infants, 5:1 for 18 months to 2 years, 8:1 for 2 to 3 years, 10:1 for 3 to 4 years and 15:1 for 5 to 6 years.
- ❑ What are the disciplinary policies?
- ❑ Are parents free to visit at any time?
- ❑ Are the center's facilities clean and well maintained?
- ❑ Are child-safety precautions observed? Such as heat covers on radiators, childproof safety seals on all electrical outlets?
- ❑ Are staff members careful about hygiene? It's important to wash hands between diaper changes in order to avoid spreading diseases.
- ❑ Are there facilities and staff for taking care of sick children?
- ❑ Is there adequate space, indoors and out, for children to play?
- ❑ Most important of all, do the children look happy and cared for? Trust your instincts.

care. "There is no clear evidence that day care places infants at risk," says Alison Clarke-Stewart, a professor of social ecology at the University of California, Irvine. Clarke-Stewart says that the difference between the emotional attachments of children of working and of nonworking mothers is not as large as Belsky's research indicates. She says parents should be concerned but shouldn't overreact. Instead of pulling kids out of any form of day care, parents might consider choosing part-time work when their children are very young, she says.

For all the controversy over infant care, there's little dispute over the damaging effects of the high turnover rate among caregivers. In all forms of child care, consistency is essential to a child's healthy development. But only the lucky few get it. "Turnover among child-care workers is second only to parking-lot and gas-station attendants," says Marcy Whitebook, director of the National Child Care Staffing Study. "To give you an idea of how bad it is, during our study, we had tiny children coming up to our researchers and asking them, 'Are you my teacher?'"

The just-released study, funded by a consortium of not-for-profit groups, included classroom observations, child assessments and interviews with staff at 227 child-care centers in five cities. The researchers concluded that 41 percent of all child-care workers quit each year, many to seek better-paying jobs. In the past decade, the average day-care-center enrollment has nearly doubled, while the average salaries for child-care workers have decreased 20 percent. Typical annual wages are very low: \$9,931 for full-time, year-round employment (\$600 less than the 1988 poverty threshold for a family of three). Few child-care workers receive any benefits.

Parents who use other forms of day care should be concerned as well, warns UCLA psychologist Carollee Howes. Paying top dollar for au pairs, nannies and other in-home caregivers doesn't guarantee that they'll stay. Howes conducted two studies of 18- to 24-month-old children who had been cared for in their own homes or in family day-care homes and found that most had already experienced two or three changes in caregivers and some had had as many as six. In her research, Howes found that the more changes children had, the more trouble they had adjusting to first grade.

The solution, most experts agree, is a drastic change in the status, pay and training of child-care workers. Major professional organizations, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, have recommended standard accreditation procedures to make child care more of an established profession, for everyone from workers in large for-profit centers to women who only look after youngsters in their neighborhood. But so far, only a small fraction of the country's child-care providers are accredited. Until wide-scale changes take place, Whitebook predicts that "qualified teachers will continue to leave for jobs that offer a living wage." The victims are the millions of children left behind.

When their toddlers come home from day care with a bad case of the sniffles, parents often

joke that it's "schoolitis"—the virus that seems to invade classrooms from September until June. But there's more and more evidence that child care may be hazardous to a youngster's health.

A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control found that children who are cared for outside their homes are at increased risk for both minor and major ailments because they are exposed to so many other kids at such a young age. Youngsters who spend their days in group settings are more likely to get colds and flu as well as strep throat, infectious hepatitis and spinal meningitis, among other diseases.

Here again, the state and federal governments aren't doing much to help. A survey released this fall by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Public Health Association found that even such basic health standards as immunization and hand washing were not required in child-care facilities in half the states. Inspection was another problem. Without adequate staff, states with health regulations often have difficulty enforcing them, especially in family day-care centers.

Some experts think that even with strict regulation, there would still be health problems in child-care centers, especially among infants.

"The problem is that caretakers are changing the diapers of several kids, and it's difficult for them to wash their hands frequently enough [after each diaper]," says Earline Kendall, associate dean of graduate studies in education at Belmont College in Nashville, Tenn. Kendall, who has operated four day-care centers herself, says that very young babies have the most limited immunities and are the most vulnerable to the diseases that can be spread through such contact. The best solution, she thinks, would be more generous leave time so that parents can stay home until their kids are a little older.

Despite the compelling evidence about the dark side of day care, many experts say there's a great reluctance to discuss these problems publicly. "People think if you say anything against day care, you're saying young parents shouldn't work, or if they do work, they're bad parents," says Meryl Frank, who is now a consultant on family and work issues. "For a lot of parents, that's just too scary to think about. But we have to be realistic. We have to acknowledge that good day care may be good for kids, but bad day care is bad for kids."

There is a political battle as well. Belsky, who has become a lightning rod for controversy among child-development professionals, says "people don't want working mothers to feel guilty" because "they're afraid the right wing will use this to say that only mothers can care for babies, so women should stay home." But, he says, parents should use these problems as evidence to press for such changes as paid parental leave, more part-time jobs and higher-quality child care. The guilt and anxiety that seem to be part of every working parent's psyche aren't necessarily bad, Belsky says. Parents who worry are also probably alert to potential problems—and likely to look for solutions. ■

KIDPAC

A Voice for Children

POSITION PAPER HB 51 CHILD CARE GRANT PROGRAM

Forty five percent of Alaskan jobs are held by women.

Compared to women nationally, Alaskan women are younger when they have babies, have more babies and return to work sooner.

Alaska has one of the highest percentages of working mothers and nearly 13% of Alaska's population is five years or younger.

The changing profile of Alaska's workforce has increased the need for reliable, affordable, quality child care.

In recent weeks the problem of availability and access to quality child care has been brought to light with the death of an infant in an unlicensed child care placement in Anchorage.

Quality child care is at a crisis in Alaska and is directly related to staff training, retention and wages. There is a scarcity of child care workers because the low pay, status and lack of benefits is not attracting nor keeping people to work with young children. This scarcity has reached crisis proportions in some urban areas.

The goals of the Child Care Grant program are to increase available, affordable and quality child care through financial assistance to child care practitioners.

The grant funds, paid directly to the day care centers and homes can be used to:

Enhance wages and benefits for caregivers.

Increase the number of staff employed.

Meet the health and nutritional requirements of children.

Purchase developmentally and culturally appropriate toys and equipment for the children.

Provide training opportunities for staff and for parents.

Children in licensed child care benefit directly by food and equipment or indirectly through increased staff wages, training and parent education.

HB 51 would allow this program to be fully funded for the first time allowing for the statutory maximum payments equal to \$50 per month per full time equivalent child to be paid to licensed child care centers and homes allowing increased quality to the care our children receive outside their home.

KIDPAC strongly encourages the passage of this legislation and urges your continued support for improved child care programs in Alaska.