

Forging the Future: County of Los Angeles Strategic Plan for Child Care and Development 2003-2013

**Year-1 Progress Report
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**County of Los Angeles
Child Care Planning Committee**
222 South Hill Street, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 974-4103
www.lacountychildcare.org

INTRODUCTION

The County of Los Angeles (County) Child Care Planning Committee (Planning Committee) has, as one of its mandates, the development of a comprehensive, Countywide plan for child care and development. The planning leading up to the completion of the *Forging the Future: a Strategic Plan for Child Care and Development for the County of Los Angeles* (Strategic Plan) began in summer 2000. For over two years, Planning Committee members and other stakeholders met to develop the Strategic Plan's overarching goals, and to determine the strategies and objectives that would help achieve those goals.

During 2003, the Strategic Plan was written (and rewritten) and refined. Dates were assigned to both short-term and long-term objectives. Principal partners were identified and included in the Plan. On September 19, 2004, the final Strategic Plan was presented for adoption by the County Board of Supervisors.

Following the Board of Supervisor's adoption of the Strategic Plan, it was submitted to the County Superintendent of Schools, who also endorsed the Plan. Since its adoption, the Plan has been distributed to hundreds of groups and individuals. The Strategic Plan is available on the Planning Committee Web Site, at: www.lacountychildcare.org.

The first year of Strategic Plan implementation has ended. Where are we? If not "THERE," we are definitely making progress in both the small concrete objectives and in the long-term changes envisioned by the Strategic Plan. This report details the efforts and successes related to the Plan's implementation. It also indicates where it has not moved forward.

The Planning Committee will continue its review of the Plan during this program year (2004-05). New or revised objectives and strategies will be brought to the Planning Committee for endorsement. Meanwhile, the Planning Committee and its current Partners will continue all efforts to achieve the Plan's vision.

The Planning Committee would like to thank the following Partners for their contributions to implementation:

- California Child Development Administrator's Association
- Child Care and Referral Programs in the County of Los Angeles
- Child Development Regional Resource Center
- City of Long Beach Child Care Task Force
- County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable for Child Care
- First 5 LA Commission
- Los Angeles Community College District - Child Development Discipline
- Northridge Hospital - Center for Healthier Communities
- Pathways and the Special Needs Advisory Project Collaborative
- Public Counsel
- Southern California Association for the Education of Young Children

GOAL I. ENSURE HIGH STANDARDS IN EARLY CARE AND SUPERVISED SCHOOL-AGE ENRICHMENT SETTINGS.

Strategy A. Facilitate the development of local quality standards.

Objective No. 1: Contribute to the definition of quality and related standards developed for the County of Los Angeles (County) Preschool Initiative (First 5 LA Commission).

Policy Roundtable for Child Care and First 5 LA Commission

As of September 2004, there are a set of standards for quality programs/providers that will be used in selecting and rating participating sites in the soon-to-be-launched Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LA UP). The standards development was begun by both a task team, as part of the LA UP planning process, and by the County Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable).

A committee of the Roundtable began work on a set of standards that could be used to evaluate the level of quality of all types of child care and development settings for children ages 0-13. The committee began by looking at researched-based indicators of quality, such as caregiver education levels and compensation, as well as some of the standardized tools currently used to evaluate both center and home-based care environments.

The framework begun by the Universal Preschool (UPK) Quality Task Team, which included staff education, parent involvement, and program elements. The UPK Quality Task Team determined that a five-step, or "star," rating system was appropriate for grading levels of quality. During Phase 2 of the planning, the Task Team adopted the "5 Star" standards that had been drafted by the Roundtable, and which had been refined through input by work groups of the County Child Care Planning Committee (Planning Committee). The Task Team for LA UP reviewed the draft standards, further refined them, and created a version appropriate to Family Child Care by working with the Family Child Care Task Team. From May through July 2004, the standards were reviewed and refined through a back-and-forth process between the UPK Quality Task Team, the Family Child Care Task Team, and the Roundtable.

This process has resulted in a core set of standards that can be seen in three versions:

- 1) For center-based programs serving children ages 0-5;
- 2) For Family Child Care homes serving children of all ages; and
- 3) For centers and Family Child Care homes providing UPK through LA UP.

Next Steps

- ◆ The standards (versions 1 and 2) will be field tested between October and December 2004;
- ◆ Further refinements may follow based on the findings;
- ◆ The UPK version of standards will be used beginning in January 2005, to evaluate centers and homes for participation in LA UP; and
- ◆ Early in the process, a subgroup was formed which focused on quality standards for school-age programs. This subgroup will continue its efforts to develop consensus around standards appropriate to both licensed and license-exempt child care and enrichment programs.

Strategy B. Increase accreditation of centers and family child care homes.

Objective No. 1: Increase by 25 percent, the number of centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Year	Number of Accredited Centers in the County	Percentage of Total Licensed Child Care Centers in the County
2000	115	5.65%
2002	119	4.58%
2003	125	5.31%
2004	132	

As of October 2004, this objective has not been met, although there is a positive trend in the number of accredited centers. Comments from the field indicate that there are still barriers to achieving accreditation, including: ability of the center leadership to devote time to the self evaluation; costs; and a lack of validators. In addition, NAEYC, which manages the Accreditation Program, is in the process of revising their standards and processes for accreditation. There is a backlog of programs waiting for final validation visits, and others may be waiting for the new standards before beginning the process.

Objective No. 2: Increase by 25 percent, the number of Family Child Care homes accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC).

Year	Number of Accredited Family Child Care Homes in the County	Percentage of Total Licensed Homes in the County
2000	5	.1%
2004	58	.7%

This objective has been met. The efforts of many local organizations, including Family Child Care Associations, Resource and Referral programs, and SCAEYC have clearly made a difference. However, greater efforts are needed in order to have the number of accredited homes represent a sizeable proportion of the total Family Child Care population.

Objective No. 3: Increase the number of school-age care and enrichment programs that are accredited by the National After-School Association (NASA).

Year	Number of Accredited School-age Care and Enrichment Programs in the County	Percentage of Total School-age Care and Enrichment Programs in the County
2000	Not available	Not available
2004	2	.2% <i>(of estimated total; exact count is not available at this time)</i>

Strategy C. Develop an annual evaluation and certification process based on accepted quality standards.

Objective No. 1: Review models used in other states.

Objective No. 2: Design a pilot program to test a local evaluation and certification process.

Policy Roundtable for Child Care and the Office of Child Care

The Roundtable Quality Standards Committee began work on developing standards by carefully reviewing the standards and certification programs used in other states. This objective has been met.

The Office of Child Care has been awarded a grant from the First 5 LA Commission to field test the standards developed in conjunction with the planning for UPK. The field test will be conducted with the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Improving Child Care Quality (CICCCQ). The test will require the development of protocols and tools based on the newly developed standards. Trained reviewers will conduct quality evaluations for eight center-based programs and for eight Family Child Care Homes. The results will indicate whether the standards are internally consistent; i.e., does teacher education correlate with higher Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS) scores? The review results will be compared with other data to determine if the standards are a reliable measure of quality. Finally, the field test will enable us to describe the system and process that should be used in applying these standards to a broader population of programs and providers.

Strategy D. Develop recommendations for linking government subsidies to evaluation and certification results.

Objective No. 1: Review models from other States.

Objective No. 2: Develop a policy recommendation for linking funding to quality.

While there has been no specific work directed toward meeting these objectives, the issue of standards based-payments has been raised and discussed in the legislative arena, beginning with budget proposals that would differentiate payment to providers based on licensing and some other “quality” factors. This is an objective that should be targeted for this year in order to affect any legislation proposed.

LA UP will be using a tiered reimbursement system in its contracts with providers for UPK services. This will actually test the concept and provide important information on impact at the local level.

Next Steps

- ◆ Meet with representatives from California Child Development Administrators Association to share the quality standards and develop a policy that can be implemented through legislative action; and
- ◆ Track the effects of LA UP's payment system.

GOAL II: ENSURE THAT STAFF IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION AND SUPERVISED SCHOOL-AGE ENRICHMENT SETTINGS ARE WELL-QUALIFIED AND WELL-COMPENSATED.

Strategy A. Develop policies and initiatives that enable early care and education and school-age enrichment personnel to earn wages comparable to workers in other fields with similar qualifications.

Objective No. 1: Develop a model compensation scale for the County.

Child Care Planning Committee

The Planning Committee’s Qualification and Compensation Work Group, Office of Child Care, and Research and Evaluation Services of the Service Integration Branch, within the Chief Administrative Office, developed a draft compensation scale that defined appropriate qualifications for “Assistant” to “Site Supervisor” positions. These qualifications were then paired with suggested hourly wages, beginning at the lowest level, with the self-sufficiency wage for the County, and rising to levels comparable to salaries of public school teachers. The draft model scale is now being vetted in the field with managers of actual child care and development programs to ascertain the usability and effectiveness of the scale in creating appropriate expectations for compensation in the field. The draft model scale was used as a guide in calculating appropriate compensation levels for LA UP.

Next Steps

- ◆ Complete the field testing and adjust the scale accordingly;
- ◆ Develop phase-in scales, if necessary;
- ◆ Promote the use of the model compensation scale as a guide for programs wishing to evaluate their current compensation and qualification standards, or for new programs being developed; and
- ◆ Use the estimated costs implied in the scale in calculations involving reimbursement or contract levels from the California Department of Education (CDE) for child care and development services (See Objective No. 3).

Objective No. 2: Develop a statement on the true cost of quality care. This objective has not yet been met, but will be addressed more easily now that a compensation scale is available. A task force in the city of Long Beach has begun a local effort at determining costs. This task force will continue, but other sources will also be considered, such as the cost figures for quality preschool that have been developed for UPK.

Next Steps

- ◆ Continue to work with various groups in developing center cost of quality budgets; and
- ◆ Organize a Family Child Care work group to update a “true cost” of quality budget for Family Child Care homes.

Strategy B. Facilitate standards and practices that enable early care and education and school-age enrichment personnel to meet professional standards and demonstrate core competencies in their work with children.

Objective No. 1: Begin work with community colleges to identify system improvements to achieve greater academic and practical competency in child development students.

Planning Committee, Los Angeles Community Colleges, California State University at Los Angeles (CSULA)

In October 2003, Office of Child Care staff began meeting with Los Angeles Community College-Child Development instructors and other community college District personnel to inform them of the wide range of proficiencies (or lack thereof) within the child development workforce. Specifically, the education of few child development teachers goes beyond an Associate of Arts Degree. Many in the field stop their formal education at the point of earning a child development permit. In addition, it has been found that even college-educated personnel have difficulty in competently reading and writing. Finally, there are too many staff who, because English is not their first language, have achieved bare minimums to work in the field of child development, but are effectively prohibited from advancing because they are unable to succeed in college classes offered in English.

Discussions with the Community Colleges and with the Workforce Development Task Team of UPK have identified the following as critical changes for the system of education and training for the field of child development:

- Lack of appropriate and available academic counseling;
- Lack of emphasis in obtaining general education units, particularly those related to English composition, reading, and Math;
- Need for additional supports for students related to their coursework, such as tutoring and mentoring;
- Lack of articulation between community colleges and four-year institutions;
- Need to re-establish an early childhood teaching credential;
- Need to update coursework to address the increasingly diverse child population; and
- Need for higher education faculty to retool to address the needs of the emerging workforce.

A number of community colleges have been able, or are attempting to link English reading and composition courses to the Child Development courses so that the student's capacity to do well is enhanced. A few colleges are requesting that English composition and reading courses become pre-requisites to the Child Development courses to ensure that the students will get as much from the instruction and literature, as possible. Other strategies are under discussion, such as cohort classes, increased support activities targeted to Child Development students, and better academic advisement to ensure students take exactly what they need to succeed and to matriculate to four-year institutions.

Objective No. 2: Develop initiatives that will increase the transfer rates to four-year colleges.

The Planning Committee's Strategic Planning Implementation Work Group has begun collecting data on the number of students transferring from community colleges to four-year colleges, as a way to measure progress. The Planning Committee has found that, in general, specific data on Child Development majors is not collected, or is aggregated with all majors. The Strategic Planning Implementation Work Group will work to facilitate better data collection.

CSULA, in conjunction with East Los Angeles College and Los Angeles City College, are working on the design of a pilot initiative that would address many of the issues related to transferring to a four-year college, so that more Child Development students obtain a foundation in the community colleges and then proceed to earn their Bachelor of Arts Degrees. Funding for this pilot will be sought. In addition, there is discussion about working with the State Chancellor's Offices to better align the child development courses that are offered at community colleges and at four-year institutions.

As part of the planning for UPK, the Workforce Task Team is recommending the development of a Higher Education and Training Consortium for Los Angeles. The purpose of this consortium is to produce a plan that will demonstrate how institutions of higher education and other organizations will engage in new initiatives to increase capacity and reduce barriers to meet the professional development needs of the current workforce, and attract new individuals to the Early Child Education field. The consortium will focus its efforts on improving professional development through establishment or improvement of the following: 1) Career and academic counseling; 2) Articulation between two- and four-year institutions; 3) Financial aid and other monetary supports; 4) Appropriate scheduling and accessibility of classes for the non-traditional student; and 5) Support for English language learners.

Many of the changes sought will involve Statewide decision-making, which also are long-term objectives. Others, such as a "pipeline pilot" and "increasing appropriate academic counseling" will require funding that is not immediately available.

Legislation proposed this year (AB 56 and AB 712) included the establishment of a Commission on the Child Development Workforce, which would look at many of the issues we have raised here in the County. Such a commission could influence policy and legislation at the State level, which could result in more effective programs and articulation between community colleges and four-year institutions.

Finally, the Qualifications and Compensation Work Group of the Planning Committee has approved and implemented changes in the criteria for receiving the teacher's stipend through the AB 212 program. Child Development teachers and assistants can earn a stipend by taking up to six units in coursework designed to further progress toward a degree. This means that pre-requisite English and Math courses, general education courses, and any child development course that is transferable to a 4-year college meet the requirements to earn a stipend. In addition, staff who need to improve their English language skills before taking college courses can earn a stipend by completing "English as a Second Language" (ESL) classes. In this way, the AB 212 stipend program is creating incentives for child development teaching staff to continue their education leading to a degree. There are 4,332 eligible applicants who are attending school to advance their formal education. The evaluation plan for the teacher stipend program includes data on the number of "Associate of Arts" and "Bachelor of Arts" degrees earned by applicants over the 3-year period.

Next Steps

◆ Objective partially met; efforts will continue.

Objective No. 3: Increase access to information about the Child Development permit matrix and promote increased education to upgrade permits.

Child Care Planning Committee

The AB 212 stipend program has done much to emphasize the importance of having a permit and created incentives to upgrade permit levels. The Office of Child Care, as part of the AB 212 program, has contracted to have a packet of information, "Career Options in Child Development" updated and produced so that every stipend applicant will have his/her own guide on the permit requirements and career opportunities in Child Development. In addition, every CDE contractor and every community college child development department will receive copies to share with students and staff.

Finally, as part of the AB 212 stipend program, the Planning Committee sponsored multiple training sessions for new Professional Growth Advisors who can assist colleagues in qualifying for permits or permit upgrades. These trainees are eligible for a \$250 stipend as an incentive for assisting other Child Development professionals in their professional growth activities. One hundred and seventy-seven child development program supervisors and lead teachers participated in Professional Growth Advisor training between December 2003 and June 2004.

Other organizations are sponsoring additional Professional Growth Advisor training for their staff and/or community, including Los Angeles Unified School District-Early Education Division and Santa Monica College.

The following chart indicates the number of approved applications by permit types in the County. Data for 2003-04 will be available at the end of 2004. The stipend program began in November 2001. These numbers will be tracked as the implementation of the Strategic Plan continues.

Permit Types

Year	Assistant	Associate Teacher	Teacher	Master Teacher	Site Supervisor	Program Director
2001-02	85	438	384	9	15	2
2002-03	104	565	346	79	189	53

GOAL III: ENSURE THAT ALL FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION AND SUPERVISED SCHOOL-AGE ENRICHMENT OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 13.

Strategy A. Increase the supply of care in the County of Los Angeles with special consideration for children with disabilities and other special needs; and for the cultural and linguistic diversity of families.

The following chart provides baseline data on licensed capacity by Service Planning Area. This data will be reviewed annually as a way to measure progress on the overall goal of increasing capacity.

Licensed Capacity by Service Planning Area (SPA)

Area	Center Licensed Capacity 2/12/02	Center Licensed Capacity 1/29/04	Percentage Change	*FCC Licensed Capacity 2/12/02	*FCC Licensed Capacity 1/29/04	Percentage Change
SPA 1	4,920	5,063	+2.9%	4,288	7,103	+66%
SPA 2	40,440	40,680	+.6%	12,168	18,656	+53%
SPA 3	38,481	38,709	+.6%	11,790	15,988	+36%
SPA 4	18,042	17,977	-.36%	5,519	7,042	+28%
SPA 5	14,399	13,880	-.36%	2,692	3,238	+20%
SPA 6	18,522	19,486	+5%	12,993	21,259	+64%
SPA 7	18,028	19,032	+5.5%	8,568	13,588	+50%
SPA 8	31,842	32,983	+3.6%	14,752	21,403	+45%
Totals	185,239	194,400	+5%	77,881	109,315	+40%

* Family Child Care

Overall, there has been an increase in the number of licensed spaces in both center-based and family child care facilities. Countywide, the increase is 11,161 spaces in centers (all ages), and 31,434 spaces in family child care homes. The increases have not been equally distributed as is indicated in the decrease in center spaces in SPAs 4 and 5. The Office of Child Care will continue to track these numbers to determine if Goal 3, related to capacity development, is being met.

Objective No. 1: Reduce the barriers due to zoning regulations and permit costs in cities throughout the County of Los Angeles.

Public Counsel Zoning Project

Although the State of California increased the capacity limits of both small and large family child care homes, many local governments were slow to make the changes, or were unaware of the Statewide capacity increase. This resulted in a great deal of misinformation and confusion among existing and prospective family child care providers. In 2003, Public Counsel's Child Care Law Project (CCLP) researched local municipal codes and found that numerous cities retained illegal capacity restrictions. Several cities had accurate capacity limits, but regulated family child care businesses beyond the scope allowed by the California Child Day Care Facilities Act. The Act only allows cities to adopt reasonable standards concerning: 1) spacing and concentration; 2) traffic control; 3) parking; and 4) noise control. Typically, and perhaps not coincidentally, these particular cities also have some of the most acute shortages of available, affordable child care in the County. CCLP and several *pro bono* law firms began a coordinated effort to reach out to several cities, urging local planning commissions and city councils to comply with State law and reform onerous zoning ordinances.

To change the ordinances of even one city has taken an enormous amount of time and effort. The first significant task is to get city staff to respond to and focus on requests regarding zoning and State statutes. At the point when a city acknowledged the requests, multiple letters, and meetings with planning department staffers and/or city attorneys were required. These were followed by planning commission hearings, and, finally, city council hearings.

The following cities have responded to requests to revise their ordinances:

Agoura Hills – Planning Commission has recommended to City Council to increase family day care capacity limits.

Bell – Mayor George Cole is very involved in capacity building, having participated in a panel discussion for the LA UP Facilities Symposium. Discussions are underway to make their child care-related ordinances more provider-friendly.

El Monte – Public Counsel has met with the City Planner. Discussions are underway to make their child care-related ordinances more provider-friendly.

Lawndale – Two Planning Commission hearings resulted in a draft, revised ordinance presented to the City Council in September 2004. The City Attorney used a model ordinance provided by Public Counsel.

Manhattan Beach – This city currently provides multiple notice and hearing opportunities to family child care applicant's neighbors. Public Counsel is working with the Planning Department to require only one notice and a hearing.

Paramount – Through assisting a licensed large family child care provider with her permit process, it was discovered that Paramount forbids any home-business owner from hiring employees, in direct conflict with licensing's requirement that large family child care providers have an assistant. A hearing is set for September 2004 to resolve this conflict.

South El Monte – A *pro bono* attorney from O’Melveny & Myers is currently drafting revised Conditional Use Permit provisions at the City Planner’s request.

The Zoning Project will continue to address illegal capacity limits in other cities in the County.

Fire Clearance Issues

Public Counsel is meeting with representatives of the City of Los Angeles Fire Department to discuss Department policies in granting a clearance for the care of non-ambulatory individuals. The City Attorney has been open to receiving input from Public Counsel and other stakeholders who are redrafting a proposed ordinance that meets the needs for health and safety, and yet allows for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and other special needs in child care programs. Representatives from Pathways/Special Needs Advisory Project, the Child Care Law Center in San Francisco, Protection & Advocacy, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education have also participated in these discussions. The clients and organizations impacted include child care programs, Head Start centers, and family child care providers.

Public Counsel will continue to work with the City Fire Department and other stakeholders to expedite the passage of an ordinance that will allow child care providers to accept non-ambulatory children into their programs.

Policy Roundtable for Child Care

The Roundtable has been working with the County’s Planning Department to alter its ordinances related to both family child care homes and centers. The ordinances were overly restrictive in their requirements and in terms of the process required for approvals. A Committee of the Roundtable provided specific input for the changed ordinances, which were adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in June 2004.

Next Steps

◆ Efforts will continue in order to fully meet Objective 1.

Objective No. 2: Create an intermediary that improves access to funding for facility development.

Affordable Buildings for Children's Development (ABCD) Constructing Connections Project

Newly funded through the Packard Foundation and California First 5, ABCD has awarded a contract for the Constructing Connections Project (Construction Connections LA), which will be administered by Crystal Stairs in the County of Los Angeles. The vision is that within five years, Constructing Connections LA will have created a highly active, accessible, and seamless facility development system. Constructing Connections LA will coordinate the essential services for parties that are interested in developing licensed, center-based, child care facilities in the County. Barriers that exist for developing child care facilities will be identified, prioritized, and removed. This system will link selected providers with the necessary financial resources, training, and comprehensive technical assistance needed to establish a new facility or expand an existing one. This "model" system of collaborative partnering has five primary goals:

- 4) Increase the amount of funds available for child care facility development in the County;
- 5) Provide comprehensive informational and technical service to providers interested in developing new facilities;
- 6) Create strong collaboration in support of child care facilities development;
- 7) Advocate for child care facilities support and legislation; and
- 8) Work with expert partners, guide and support providers through the child care facility development process.

Objective No. 3: Facilitate a coordinated system of technical assistance for developing and expanding child care programs.

Between Summer 2003 and Winter 2004, the ten Resource and Referral programs (R&Rs) in the County, met with representatives from the Planning Committee's Capacity Development Work Group regarding the types of information and technical assistance offered by each agency to those seeking to start child programs. Members of the Work Group met several times with R&R program representatives to discuss the results of a survey of the R&Rs conducted by the Office of Child Care, and to build consensus for a standard core of technical assistance services related to capacity development. The ten R&R agency representatives have continued to work on standards for service, and by Spring 2005, there should be consensus on which types of assistance will be provided at all R&Rs serving the County.

The following list indicates the core services being discussed by the ten R&Rs:

- 1) Information on the number of providers providing a similar service in a specific area;
- 2) Information on the fees charged by centers or family child care providers within a specific area;
- 3) Information on the demand for care within a specific area;
- 4) A brief overview of FCC licensing requirements;
- 5) Information on R&R Services;
- 6) Referrals to the Child Development Regional Resource Center;
- 7) Information on when and where center licensing orientations are held;
- 8) Assistance with completing FCC licensing applications; and
- 9) Providing business plan formats or outlines.

Next steps:

- ◆ Work to better link R&Rs with other entities related to the development of child care services and facilities.
- ◆ Support the efforts of Constructing Connections LA to link all sources of technical assistance and support needed in the development of new facilities.

Strategy B. Increase the availability of options for children with disabilities and other special needs.

Objective No. 1: Ensure that each R&R program has an “Inclusion Specialist” to assist parents and providers.

Special Needs Advisory Project (SNAP)

SNAP is a Los Angeles, Countywide initiative, funded by CDE to increase the child care capacity to serve children with disabilities and other special needs. By providing information, education, and resources for families and child care providers, SNAP hopes to increase opportunities for children with special needs to be served in quality early care and education settings. SNAP has been able to place an Inclusion Specialist at each of the ten R&R agencies. Each Inclusion Specialist has received extensive training and information about resources and systems serving children with disabilities. The role of the Inclusion Specialist is to provide enhanced referrals, full-inclusion technical assistance, and assistance for parents in coordinating services with child care providers and school districts/regional centers. The Specialists are able to provide telephone technical assistance and technical assistance visits. Many of the Inclusion Specialists have connected families to Parent Mentor programs; accompanied families at individual Education Plan meetings or individual Family Service Plan meetings; and in some cases, have initiated parent support groups.

SNAP is implementing a comprehensive training program for providers that addresses the immediate needs of child care providers who have special needs children in their homes/centers, but also promotes ongoing access to a wide variety of other resources. As part of the ongoing training, SNAP coordinated a Provider Conference in June 2004, attended by 321 licensed providers.

To date, SNAP offers 17 different workshop topics related to caring and supporting children that have special needs in the child care setting. These workshops are developed and conducted by the SNAP Resource Team, which is composed of the following disciplines: a) Child Development; b) Special Education; c) Child Psychology; d) Mental Health; e) Behavior and Speech Therapy; f) Physical Therapy; g) Occupational Therapy; h) Pediatric Nursing; i) Early Intervention; and j) Resource and Referral. Between April and August 2004, the R&Rs hosted 61 trainings, which were attended by 1,628 licensed child care providers and child care staff. Inclusion Specialists provided 204 enhanced referrals connecting families to providers trained to care for their child's needs. There have been 72 referrals made directly to resource team members for provider technical assistance.

The SNAP Web Site address is: www.SNAPLA.org. SNAP can also be contacted toll free, at (866) 355-SNAP.

The SNAP initiative was implemented in April 2004. SNAP collaborates with among others: the Planning Committee, which is charged with conducting an evaluation of the initiative by June 2005; Public Counsel Child Care Law Project; several regional centers; Los Angeles Unified School District; Los Angeles County Office of Education; County Department of Mental Health; Blind Children's Center; California Deaf Blind Services; and several School Readiness initiative projects.

Objective No. 2: Establish connections between child care providers and support service providers in early intervention, mental health, and other specialists.

SNAP

As described above, the SNAP project is helping to connect providers to appropriate resources to enable them to care effectively for children with disabilities and other special needs.

Inclusive Child Care Work Group of the Planning Committee

The systems of child care and development, and systems of care for children with special needs usually operate separately from one another, even though they have common clients (children and their families). The Inclusive Child Care Work Group coordinated a Forum on April 20, 2004, for over 125 representatives from child care and development organizations, and representatives from school districts, regional centers, County departments, and community service providers. The focus of the Forum was building connections between child care and support services, which result in better inclusive care options for children. The Forum launched an effort to build local, regional working relationships that will help support an increase in quality care settings for children with special needs.

Next Steps

- ◆ SNAP specialists connecting with local networks.
- ◆ Inclusive Child Care Work Group (and individual members) identifying already-established groups of support service providers to connect to child care.

Strategy C. Increase the retention rate of licensed family child care providers.

Objective No. 1: Recommend policies for pre-licensure technical assistance to promote greater viability for new providers.

Los Angeles County Resource and Referral Programs

In conjunction with the State of California's Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing's orientations, R&Rs have begun conducting the "Myth vs. Reality" workshops. These workshops were developed by R&R professionals, and are given after the basic licensing orientation and before the prospective provider submits a licensing application. The workshops deal with the following realities of offering child care in a home: a) How family members are affected; b) Impacts on privacy; and c) The reality of parent expectations and the marketplace. Currently, at least six of the R&R programs have staff that regularly conduct these workshops in conjunction with licensing orientations. Not all R&R programs are linked with licensing orientation sites at this time.

Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)

CCRC has been offering numerous workshops, in conjunction with Public Counsel, focused on business planning and other skills needed to operate a viable business. Continued funding for this project may not be available after 2004.

Office of Child Care

Office of Child Care staff have begun conducting a vacancy survey (2004-05), which will collect data from 2,000 family child care providers and center managers throughout the County of Los Angeles for approximately one year. Knowing the geographic patterns of vacancy will help in advising potential providers about market factors.

Next steps

- ◆ Use the new information from the Child Care Needs Assessment (2004) to target more effective development of family child care homes.
- ◆ Ensure that all potential Family Child Care providers have access to a pre-licensing "Myths vs. Reality" workshop.

GOAL IV: ENSURE THAT ALL FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION AND SUPERVISED SCHOOL-AGE ENRICHMENT SETTINGS REGARDLESS OF FAMILY INCOME.

Strategy A. Increase the availability of publicly-funded subsidies for child care.

Objective No. 1: Calculate the costs and benefits of fully funding subsidized services for all eligible families in the County.

Policy Roundtable for Child Care

The Roundtable formed a committee to undertake efforts that would meet this objective. The Roundtable was not interested in “doing more, and doing it poorly.” Rather, the Roundtable chose to calculate costs for a system of subsidy that fairly compensated child care providers, and made it possible to retain teachers through adequate compensation. The committee, staffed by Kathleen Malaske-Samu, considered a system that included families eligible under current CDE guidelines, and families at higher incomes levels (up to 150% of State Median Income). This decision recognized that there is an affordability gap for families earning too much to qualify for CDE subsidies, and too little to pay full market rates. Market rates were used to determine the average cost of care, and a formula for determining parent fees was developed that took into consideration higher levels of family income.

The chart below indicates the numbers of children that could potentially be served, and the amount of subsidy funds and parent fees required to cover the full cost of child care (A full report will be available after October 30, 2004):

	Currently Served (includes State Preschool, Head Start and Early Head Start	Currently Eligible But Unserved (Income <75% of State Median Income)	Potentially Eligible If Income Level Raised to 150% of State Median Income
Number of Children	*211,000	416,000	107,000
Subsidy Amount	*\$1.16 billion	**\$ 2.7 billion	**\$ 80 million
Parent Fees	Not available	***\$183 million	***\$ 695 million

* *These are approximates, since the number of children enrolled in any program, at any one time, varies.*

** *Assumes all care is paid for/reimbursed at slightly higher rates than the CDE ceiling of the 2002 Regional Market Rate.*

*** *Assumes parent fees at 4-12% of gross annual income.*

Next Steps

- ◆ Develop recommendations for financial support for fully-funded, subsidized child care for eligible families.
- ◆ Review these cost estimates in light of a tiered reimbursement system linked to quality criteria.

GOAL V: ENSURE THAT CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES WILL BE CUSTOMER-FOCUSED, PROVIDING CONSISTENTLY HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES AND INFORMATION LEADING TO APPROPRIATE CARE ARRANGEMENTS BASED ON THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES.

Strategy A. Implement a Countywide Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) for families seeking subsidized child care.

Objective No. 1: Asses the use of the CEL and make improvements where needed.

Objective No. 2: Increase the number of participating contractors to 24.

Since its inception in April 2003, the CEL has experienced two upgrades, making it easier for agencies to use the system in finding and organizing family records for enrollment purposes.

The Office of Child Care, as the CEL Administrator, has undertaken to update the records, at least annually. Office of Child Care staff are being assisted by agencies, such as CCRC, who have undertaken to clean a section of the database and eliminate outdated records. Starting in May 2004, over 20,000 records have been updated or eliminated.

On average, approximately 1,350 new records are added each month. As of this report (September 2004), there are 49,903 active child records and 33,655 family records. Over 2,500 children have been enrolled from the CEL into subsidized child care programs. There are 17 CDE-funded agencies registered to use the CEL, including six of the ten Alternative Payment agencies:

- 1) Child Care Resource Center
- 2) Child Development Consortium of Los Angeles
- 3) Children's Collective
- 4) City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks
- 5) Claremont Unified School District, Child Development
- 6) Connections for Children
- 7) Crystal Stairs
- 8) Kedren Head Start/State Preschool
- 9) Los Angeles Unified School District
- 10) Little Tokyo Service Center
- 11) Long Beach Day Nursery
- 12) Los Angeles Child Development Council
- 13) Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
- 14) National Pediatric Support Services
- 15) Options
- 16) Pathways
- 17) Westside Children's Center

Next Steps

- ◆ Continue to register new agencies to use the CEL; and provide training for users.
- ◆ Link CEL information to other County information systems available to the public.