



City of Santa Monica Child Care Policy



June 1991

The city of Santa Monica has had a long-standing commitment to nurture the optimal growth and development of children and to support families. The City joined with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and Santa Monica College to undertake preparation of a Child Care Master Plan to create a long term vision for child care in Santa Monica. This policy statement acknowledges the importance of quality, affordable, accessible child care. It is intended to commit City resources as an employer, regulator, and catalyst to protect the existing child care resources of the community and expand the child care supply. It is a restatement of our vision to create a family supportive urban environment with child care and human services targeted to meet the needs of families and children from infancy to early adulthood. It recognizes that our children represent our future.

Child Care: An Urgent Need

The American workplace and family have changed dramatically by the increasing number of women who have joined the permanent work force. Nationally, at least 56% of women with children under 6 work outside of the home and 73% of women with children 5 and over participate in the labor force. The labor force participation rate of Santa Monica mothers with children under 6 is higher than the national average.

The benefits of providing quality affordable and accessible child care for our children are well documented in terms of school success, emotional and social development. The workplace benefits are also established in terms of enhancing worker productivity, reducing absenteeism, improving morale and worker satisfaction, retaining workers longer and recruiting competitively.

The City recognizes that existing child care services are not adequate to meet the current demand. The demand by residents for licensed child care is triple the available supply. Santa Monica serves as a regional child care supplier with over half of the licensed

spaces in Santa Monica held by non-resident parents and would serve additional non-residents if they had access to their preferred arrangements. Increasingly, parents prefer licensed child care and school based care in order to avoid the patchwork of arrangements and "latch key" problems of caring for our children. A clear demand for infant and toddler care exists and care for school age children 10 to 14 is increasingly in demand. Expanded hours of sick child care, drop-in care, before and after school care, as well as vacation and holiday care are needed. Child care is needed at a variety of costs. Education and advocacy are needed concerning the value of child care.

Although the need to expand the supply of care is clearly evident, much also needs to be done to preserve the existing child care resources of the community. Provider assistance is needed by over half of the centers. Inadequate financial resources, staff turnover, finding substitutes, physical space and insurance are pressing issues for providers. Only 19% of centers can survive on parent fees alone. Financially assisting providers would directly effect the quality of care.

Child Care: A Joint Responsibility

Accessible, affordable, quality child care is a responsibility that must be shared collectively among parents, employers, child care professionals, schools, businesses, community leaders and city government. The City acknowledges it can best address the child care needs of Santa Monica by using its resources as a model *employer*, as a *facilitator* in its planning and regulatory functions, as an *advocate*, in its resource allocation decisions and as a *catalyst* in the community.

Model Employer

The city of Santa Monica will work as a model employer in the delivery of child care

services to its employees. Child care services to employee families can include parental leave, resource and referral programs, flexible benefit policies, direct care services in centers, and parenting support services. This city has demonstrated its commitment to children by creating the Marine Park Child Care Center. The City will seek to demonstrate that employer-sponsored child care support systems are a positive, beneficial and cost-effective influence on the workforce.

Facilitator In City Land Use Planning Functions

The City of Santa Monica shall integrate the child care needs of those who live or work in the community into the City's land use planning process. This shall be accomplished, in part, through the inclusion of child care objectives and goals, where appropriate, in the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

Facilitator In Its Regulatory Functions

The city will promote and facilitate strategies to remove barriers in zoning, permits and licensing procedures, application fees, transportation and other administrative regulations affecting child care. An interdisciplinary "permit processing team" will be established to streamline and expedite approvals for new, relocated or renovated facilities for both licensed centers and family day care providers.

Advocate

The City will act as an advocate for children through resource allocation. The City will integrate planning for child care resources into the annual goals and workplans of appropriate City departments to assure that available properties, resources, and programs contribute to the development of quality, affordable, accessible child care for the community. Specifically, the City will seek to enhance resources to non-profits through the Community Development Program grant. All opportunities available through

Federal, State, and County resources will also be utilized to enhance the availability of child care services to the community. The City will also act in an advocacy role to support State and/or Federal legislation which seeks to: reduce the present regulatory complexities relating to child care providers; provides for, or increases grants and other funds for child care programs and for the construction, renovation and maintenance of child care facilities; and provides reasonable tax incentives for employers who offer child care services.

Community Catalyst

The City will promote and support opportunities for cooperative relationships among businesses, child care providers, public and private organizations, educational institutions and other groups who seek to preserve and expand community child care resources. The purpose of these partnerships is to develop a coordinated response that results in creative, cost effective and affordable solutions to the child care shortage in the community. Cooperative relationships among parents, employers, child care professionals, businesses, educators, community and government leaders can result in defining and promoting new methods that are truly supportive of the role of parents, children and institutions in the community.

CONCLUSION

This policy statement expresses the will of the City to promote the optimum development and maintenance of families through City' resources, through public and private partnerships and through the concerted and coordinated efforts of the City, School District and Santa Monica College in implementing the goals of the Santa Monica Child Care Master Plan.