



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

—Child Care Education 2004

Putting Knowledge to Work for Georgia Families

The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

The Problem

- Child care that is affordable, accessible, convenient, and of high quality is not available to many Georgia parents needing it.
- Most child care in Georgia and nationwide is only of marginal or poor quality. High staff turnover, lack of training and experience, and low pay contribute to low quality care. According to the Center for the Child Care Workforce, the average hourly wage of a child care worker nationwide is \$8.37, compared to \$10.67 for a preschool teacher, \$10.22 for a taxi driver, and \$20.37 for a kindergarten teacher. Georgia's average hourly wage for child care providers is a dollar lower than the national average.
- Child care is the third highest household expense for most families of young children (after shelter and food).
- Many parents seek the least expensive source of care because they do not understand the benefits of high-quality early care and education.

Research-based Solutions

- Children in high-quality early care settings are more likely to be emotionally secure, self-confident, better able to regulate aggression, and more advanced intellectually.
- High-quality care is developmentally appropriate with caregivers who are sensitive and responsive to individual children's needs.
- Child care providers who receive ongoing continuing education and training in early childhood development are more likely to provide high-quality care.

Extension's Role

Extension helps ensure high-quality child care by:

- Organizing and presenting local and regional training workshops and conferences for child care professionals.
- Providing self-study courses for caregivers who cannot attend in-class training sessions.
- Providing print information on child development for child care professionals.
- Providing consumer information to help parents identify quality child care.
- Collaborating with employers and community leaders to ensure the availability of consistent, high quality child care as a vital part of community infrastructure.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem

- Extension is one of the largest single sources of the required community-based education for Georgia child care providers. Extension provided nearly 55,000 educational contact hours to 19,168 child care providers, parents, and others in 2004. Extension provides this training at approximately 1/4th the cost of utilizing consultants and other agencies.
- Two *Early Childhood Institutes* (ECI) were conducted in Georgia in 2004. The ECIs are full-day training conferences covering a wide range of topics.
- Three Child Care Self-Study courses were provided to 407 child care providers.
- Extension collaborates with numerous other organizations, including child care resource and referral agencies, technical colleges, and the Georgia Association on Young Children to ensure that high-quality community-based training is available for child care providers.
- Extension is a partner in grant projects to support professional development for child care providers.
- Media efforts have been undertaken to increase awareness and child care knowledge: A total of 25

exhibits have reached 5,510 clients; 1516 newsletter articles have reached more than 39,300 readers; 77 radio spots have been broadcast to a listening audience of nearly 2.1 million; 114 newspaper columns have gone to a circulation of almost 1.8 million; and 6 television shows has targeted 1 million viewers.

Impact on Georgians

- The comparison of pre and post-test results indicates that 88% of the child care providers who participated in the self-study courses improved their child development knowledge.
- Almost 98% of the child care providers who participated in child care training programs indicated that the programs they completed helped them improve their child care knowledge and skills. Comparison of pre and post-test results shows that 54% of the participants improved their child care knowledge.
- The child care providers who participated in the *Dare to be Messy* training workshop indicated that they intend to apply learned activities in their child care setting. For example, 49% of the participants planned to try some of the sensory materials they made in the training to encourage children's creativity.
- Of the child care providers who completed the *1-2-3-4: Counting and So Much More* training workshop, 77% intended to give parents ideas for encouraging young children's math skills.
- The majority of the participants in child care extension programs expressed their intent to adopt practices that will improve the quality of child care. For example, 97% planned to expose children to a variety of sensory materials; 96% planned to model positive ways to cooperate and share with others; 95% planned to expose children to a free art opportunities and materials and to display children's art at their eye level; and 92% planned to read aloud to children every day.
- 96% of the child care providers who completed the *Teaching Basic Health and Safety* training workshops said that the classes helped them learn how to teach basic health and safety concepts to young children. Most of the child care providers who completed this training planned to reinforce basic safety concepts in their child care center or home. For instance, 98% planned to teach how to dial 9-1-1 in an emergency situation; 96% planned to provide children with age-appropriate opportunities to recognize and respond to emergencies; and 98% planned to help children overcome their fear of emergencies by teaching them about community rescue workers and their equipment.

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