



For Immediate Release

Child Care Council Issues "Grades" on State of Child Care in Westchester

Parent Survey Reveals Cost an Ongoing Issue

Scarsdale, NY (November 12, 2013) – The Child Care Council of Westchester (CCCW) released the results of its second annual Report Card Challenge on October 18th, to an audience of educators and community leaders, presenting its grades on the availability, quality and affordability of child care in Westchester, an update on the status of the regulated child care sector, as well as the results of the 2013 parent survey and its own 2014 Public Policy Agenda.

Presented by Council Executive Director Kathy Halas, overall findings included:

- Number of regulated programs stable at 761 and “slots” have increased slightly to just over 32,100
- Overall, program size is getting bigger, both in licensed centers and home-based settings
- The number of school age programs is at the lowest in a decade, at 109
- Costs are up in the past 6 years, but decreased slightly from 2012 to 2013
- Average costs remain high; center-based for an infant averages over \$16,300 annually
- Child Care providers are committed to improving quality

The Child Care Council initiated the grading of Westchester’s child care sector in 2012 to ensure every stakeholder in the county knows what parents are looking for, our ability to meet the needs of working families and their children, how what is happening in Westchester compares with the rest of the state and country, and what to be aware of on the state and federal levels that might impact early learning policies and funding.

CCCW 2013 Report Card Grades:

Supply or availability of care = B

- Most parents who use the Council's referral services find care and there are vacancies all over the county, no evidence of long waiting lists. (Same grade as 2012.)

Quality of care = B

- 9 out of 10 families surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with their child care, significant increase in child care programs working with the Council to improve quality and prepare for QUALITYstarsNY, a rating and improvement system. (Up from a B- in 2012.)

Affordability of care = D-

- Costs are still high; parents, even at higher incomes, are struggling to pay without going into debt; and financial assistance from the county has declined further this year. (Down from a D in 2012.)

More than 700 parents responded to the Council's child care survey, the results of which were presented by Nicole Masucci, Director of Family and Employer Services at the Council. Overall, Westchester parents are largely satisfied with their child care arrangements but struggling to pay the cost at every level of household income. Respondents hailed from all over Westchester; almost all were working with children in care, and household income was skewed with most participants either low income or very high income.

The Parent Survey indicated:

- Most families use regulated care but many use a combination of both regulated and informal care, making up a full-time day
- 57% of respondents had trouble paying for care in last 6 months; 60% had cut back on household expenses; 54% had borrowed money or used credit cards to pay for care and 12% reduced their work hours
- Largest single group was paying between \$100 and \$200 a week for child care
- Moderate income group was having the most trouble paying for child care
- Of the child care subsidy recipients, 48% were having trouble paying for child care and 26% were behind on their payments; only 24% were able to regularly pay for their child care on their own
- Leading choice factor across incomes and regardless of ages of children was proximity to work or home, followed by hours, cost and if children appeared happy. Overall program quality came into play for parents of preschoolers and K-6th grade
- Specific quality indicators such as caregiver education/training received very low ratings in terms of importance

The Child Care Council's Public Policy Agenda, drafted by the Public Policy Committee of its Board of Directors, calls for affordable, quality early care and education options that promote

children's success in school and life, enable parents to work and advance in their careers, and provide a ready workforce for business growth. CCCW Board members Andrew Karlen, Jeff Samuelson and Steve Wismuller voiced the Board's support for quality child care and intention to circulate the Public Policy Agenda for endorsements by community stakeholders and individuals.

Specifically, the Agenda calls for:

- Emphasizing the economic benefits and impact of quality early care and education so public spending for child care is seen not as "entitlements" but smart investments
- Attacking the affordability barrier by reducing the parent contribution and opening up Title XX child care subsidy
- Monitoring and studying the County Child Care Subsidy Program to maximize its benefits for working parents and children
- Ensuring that parents know their child care options and the long-term benefits of safe, regulated, quality child care
- Funding and fully implementing QUALITYstarsNY to strengthen quality statewide

"Funding for child care and early education is good business, not an entitlement or a mere generosity to financially challenged families," said Andrew Karlen of Karlen & Stolzar, Chair of the Child Care Council Board of Director's Public Policy Committee. "The return on investment is evident. Education-based early child care produces a more ready workforce, and nothing is more fundamental to our ability to retain and attract businesses. It also helps us cut spending on entitlements and unfunded mandates by permanently reducing the need for them, and eases the burden on our criminal justice system by ensuring more children have a better chance for a life filled with positive opportunities."

For more information about the Child Care Council of Westchester, call (914) 761-3456 or visit www.childcarewestchester.org.

About the Child Care Council of Westchester

The Child Care Council of Westchester is a private, nonprofit resource organization that champions the healthy development of children, families and communities by promoting quality early care and education. A unique, "one stop" agency for child care, the Council offers parent referrals, training, information, technical assistance, reports on the industry, and public education for parents, child care programs, governmental organizations and the business community. Since its inception in 1968, the Council has grown to become the premier authority on child care services throughout Westchester County. The Council recently attained Quality Assurance, establishing it as one of the nation's leading Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs). The national recognition was awarded by Child Care Aware® of America.

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