

## **Indicators of early care and education quality in the Rochester area**

### **Highlights of baseline assessment for First Steps**

#### **Key strengths**

**Low-income parents:** Report adequate emotional support; regular nurturance, bedtimes, and meal schedules for children; taking children places to learn special things sometimes or frequently.

**CCAP FFN:** Provide variety of activities for children's social, emotional and cognitive development; about two-thirds are very interested (50%) or somewhat interested (14%) in getting licensed as a child care provider.

**Licensed child care centers and family homes:** Nearly all have written policies regarding expectations and decisions about children's care. Three-quarters of the centers use a lesson or program plan or curriculum. Nearly two-thirds of licensed family providers have six or more years' experience providing licensed child care.

#### **Key gaps**

**Low-income parents:** English is not the primary language spoken at home for 27 percent. About a quarter of the parents at least sometimes feel so sad and hopeless that they are concerned about their ability to cope with personal or family concerns. Only about half of low-income parents and about a third of higher-income parents report they have adequate help in caring for, guiding, and disciplining their children.

Compared with higher-income families, less likely to read to children age 1 and younger most days or every day (57% vs. 85%) and less likely to read to children age 2 through 5 every day (53% vs. 79%).

Half have participated in parent education training, classes, or workshops; and 39 percent report taking their children to the library at least once a month, similar to higher-income parents.

Children age 3 to 5 in low-income families tend to have FFN as their primary arrangement more often than do children age 3 to 5 in higher-income families (27% vs. 11%). About half use center-based child care in both income groups.

According to parents, FFN caregivers, compared with providers in centers or licensed family homes, are less likely to always or usually read, tell stories, or sing to their child most days (76% vs. 93%).

**CCAP FFN:** About a quarter say their English speaking, reading, and writing skills are fair or poor. These are all caregivers who do not usually speak English in their homes.

About a quarter do not have or make use of opportunities to learn from, gain support from, and share resources with other caregivers.

**Licensed child care centers:** In just 8 of the 21 centers, half or more of current staff have four-year bachelor's degrees or higher, and half or more of current classroom staff have completed early literacy training other than SEEDS. One center uses SEEDS curriculum, and two centers have at least half of current classroom staff who have completed SEEDS early literacy training. Two centers offer translated materials in the parent's language.

**Licensed family child care homes:** Eleven percent of the 487 providers have a child-related four-year degree or higher; 25 percent have formal training in early childhood development; 8 percent have completed SEEDS early literacy training, and 6 percent have completed early literacy training. Forty percent use lesson plans or curriculum other than SEEDS, and 6 percent use SEEDS curriculum. Less than 10 percent speak a language other than English or use materials translated for parents in their language. About a quarter maintain small group size (6 or fewer children per provider).

## Recommendations

- Encourage families to use existing resources in the community such as parenting education and libraries.
- Increase the *frequency* of engaging children in learning activities at home, particularly reading and other literacy behavior.
- Support family literacy programs and other efforts to encourage parents to read or tell stories to their children every day or most.
- Help parents address mental health and emotional issues that may inhibit full and active participation in home learning activities for some low-income parents.
- Support specialized early literacy training and pursuit of college degrees in child development for child care providers.
- Empower parents to make informed decisions about choosing child care that will enhance school readiness.
- Recognize and respect the inherent strengths of FFN care in all its diversity, while at the same time improving the quality of care by ensuring that child care quality improvement activities are open, inclusive and accessible to all FFN caregivers.
- Provide support and incentives to enable CCAP FFN caregivers to become licensed and to participate in the Child Care Resource & Referral system training and grant programs and initiatives to support school readiness in child care settings.
- Support targeted outreach efforts to CCAP FFN caregivers and the families who use them. Devise outreach strategies specific to Somali families, paying attention to language, culture and literacy issues.
- Facilitate peer support, providing opportunities for caregivers to socialize and to connect with other caregivers if they so choose. Early Childhood Family Education, for example, could tailor classes for CCAP FFN participants.

### *Purposes*

- To document and examine participation in early learning opportunities and the quality of care in all the care-giving settings for children age 5 and younger in the Rochester area
- Emphasis on low-income families (200% of poverty and below)
- Repeatable information and a useful framework for holding First Steps accountable for results and for making informed decisions about how to best meet the needs of children and families

### *Sources of evaluation data*

- CCR&R data on 21 licensed centers and 487 licensed family child care homes
- Wilder Research phone survey with 97 out of 117 (83%) family, friend, and neighbor caregivers registered with the Child Care Assistance Program and currently caring for one or more child age 5 and younger (CCAP FFN)
- Wilder Research phone survey with 201 low-income families and 100 higher-income families (78% response rate) with children age 5 and younger, randomly selected from lists provided by Rochester Public Schools, Head Start, and CCR&R
- Surveys conducted in English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish from November 2005 through January 2006

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### **For more information**

This summary presents highlights of the *Indicators of early care and education in the Rochester area*. For more information about this report, contact Richard Chase at Wilder Research, 651-647-4617.

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