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July 15, 2014

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR 2014-2016 (ALL DISTRICTS AFFECTED) (3 VOTES)

SUBJECT

The Child Care and Development Policy Framework (Framework) for 2014-2016 provides a road map for County departments and community stakeholders to work collaboratively to expand the supply of and access to high quality child care and development services for children and families in Los Angeles County. Developed by the Policy Roundtable for Child Care the Framework recognizes that many families receiving County services are among the most vulnerable. Access to high quality child care and development service could result in long term benefits to their children and communities.

The five goals of the Framework are: 1) Restore and Expand Funding, 2) Strengthen Policies on Eligibility and Access, 3) Maximize Access to Available Services, 4) Prioritize Quality Services, and 5) Expand Family and Community Engagement.

A JOINT RECOMMENDATION WITH THE POLICY ROUNDTABLE FOR CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT THAT THE BOARD:

- Endorse the Child Care Policy Framework for 2014-2016

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

California is emerging from a severe economic crisis which took a toll on child care and development services. Between fiscal years 2007-08 and 2012-2013, funding for subsidized child care in California was reduced over $1 billion or 40 percent. Those reductions impacted thousands of children and families in Los Angeles County. Fortunately, economic conditions are improving locally, within the State, and across the nation. In addition, the federal government has launched new and significant investments in early care and education services. While restoring funds to California's subsidized child care and development sector is critically important, there is also an opportunity to weigh-in on how to improve the administration of those

funds. Los Angeles County is home to over 26 percent of California's children, birth through five years old, and 31 percent of that age group, live in poverty. The Framework offers a strategy whereby Los Angeles County, working collaboratively with families and community stakeholders, could exert a significant impact on the supply, access, and quality of child care and development services in California, including but not limited to, subsidized services.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The child care and development sector is a unique arena to implement the principles of the Countywide Strategic Plan, Goal 3: Integrated Services Delivery: Maximize opportunities to measurably improve client and community outcomes and leverage resources through the continuous integration of health, community, and public safety services.

Families with young children, who are accessing County services, frequently have a need for affordable child care. Similarly, young families using child care frequently need one or more County administered services. Navigating across service sectors is challenging. The Framework promotes integrated services delivery by engaging County departments, community stakeholders and others in expanding access to high quality services for vulnerable populations, and facilitating family and community connections.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable) will oversee the implementation of the Framework. With the exception of the proposal to be submitted to the Productivity Investment Fund, the Framework can be implemented without additional funding.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS

There is a growing body of evidence that high quality child development programs can mitigate the negative and long lasting impacts of poverty, trauma, and abuse. In addition to minimizing these harmful impacts to individuals, high quality child development programs can generate significant benefits to society that exceed program costs. Economic analysis of various early care and education programs have documented returns ranging from $4 to $17 per dollar invested. These returns were based on reduced crime, welfare, and educational remediation costs, and on increased tax revenue, resulting from the higher incomes of these program participants upon reaching adulthood.

James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics, goes even further, stating:

> "The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way. Efforts should focus on the first three years for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness. The best investment is in quality early childhood development from birth to five for disadvantaged children and their families.

(*Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, Strengthen the Economy*, 12/7/2012, www.heckmanequation.org)

However, to fully realize these benefits, investments must be made in effective programs that are evaluated regularly and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to improvement.

Low cost services that have little impact are a waste of money. Responsible investments focus on effective programs that are well implemented and improved continuously. *(A Science- Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy, www.developingchild.harvard.edu.)*

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES

The Framework has identified both challenges and opportunities confronting the child care and development sector. Los Angeles County and its departments could substantially impact the supply, quality, and access to child care and development services. In the process of developing the Framework, the Roundtable identified community stakeholders to work with County departments to restore funding, integrate services, and improve the quality of child care and development services. This section presents the five goals of the Framework, including the challenges to be addressed and corresponding proposed actions.

Goal 1. Restore and Expand Funding

Current Challenge: Funding for subsidized child care and development services was reduced by over $1 billion between 2008 and 2012.

Action: The Framework offers a strategy and has identified partners to work with Los Angeles County as it engages in the State legislative process to pursue the restoration of funding to subsidized child care and development services in Los Angeles County and across the state.

Goal 2. Strengthen Policies on Eligibility and Access

Current Challenge: A combination of State and Federal dollars fund subsidize child care services in California and Los Angeles County. Each funding source is governed by its particular eligibility criteria and regulations which results in a fragmented and difficult to navigate "system" of services. Both the families in need of these services and the County departments that assist the families have difficulty navigating the "system".

It is critical that subsidized child development program operators are guided by accurate and consistent interpretations of regulations. Further, that the community stakeholders also understand the regulations and their interpretations thereby assuring that appropriate referrals can be made and that vulnerable families are able to access needed services.

Action: The Framework calls for clarifying the eligibility criteria for various child development programs, particularly for children who are at risk of or involved with the child welfare system, or in families experiencing homelessness. Once the interpretation of various regulations are clarified, Roundtable members and community partners are prepared to share this information

at the local level with subsidized program contractors and with County departments to ensure that high risk families are able to access needed child development services.

Goal 3. Maximizing Access to Available Services

Current Challenge: 134 organizations in Los Angeles County hold contracts with the California Department of Education to operate one or more subsidized child care programs. Many of these organizations also administer federally funded Head Start and/or Early Head Start contracts. While there continues to be a serious unmet demand for subsidized child care, many programs operate with a limited number of openings. The challenge is matching an eligible child to a specific vacancy.

Action: The Framework calls for the development of a multi-department proposal which will be submitted to the Productivity Investment Fund. The proposal will be developed by the Roundtable and will request support to develop and pilot an electronic application **to track vacancies in subsidized child development programs**, connect eligible families to those vacancies, and inform the referring department if the child was enrolled.

Goal 4. Prioritize Quality Services

Current Challenge: In a *Child Care Aware* survey of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense, California's child care licensing system was ranked 50th. California's practice of conducting on-site monitoring of child care centers and family child care homes only once every five years contributed to this very poor rating.

This inadequate schedule of on-site monitoring of child care and development programs also undermines local efforts to operate child care quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS). QRIS are designed to build upon – not replace – the health and safety assurances which are to be provided by Community Care Licensing, and to provide parents with objective and reliable information on how well programs support the social, emotional and cognitive development of young children.

Action Consistent with adopted County policies, the Framework recommends supporting legislation which would increase the on-site monitoring of child care and development programs by the California Department of Social Services once per year. Annual inspections increase the likelihood that programs will be in compliance with health and safety standards and provide an appropriate foundation for child care QRIS.

Action: Recognizing that accurate and objective information on child care program quality is not readily available, the Framework calls for promoting parent awareness of the local child QRIS. The QRIS goes beyond the health and safety standards of licensing, and provides objective and reliable information on the quality individual programs. This information can help parents compare rated programs, while also making parents aware of the programmatic components which contribute to quality.

Goal 5. Expand Family and Community Engagement

Current Challenge: While clients across many County departments would benefit from high quality and affordable child development services, these services are frequently deemed ancillary. As a result, clients are left to navigate a complex system without support.

Action: The Framework recommends that members of the Roundtable outreach to County commissions and stakeholder groups focused on children, youth and families to share information on the benefits of high quality child care and development services, to explore opportunities to coordinate services and engage in cross-sector professional development opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The Policy Framework establishes a set of goals which, with the support of the Board of Supervisors, will position this County to maximize the growing interest and potential investments in child care and development services. Working in conjunction with the CEO, the Roundtable ensured that the strategies of the Framework support the County's efforts to integrate critical services for children and families. The goals of the Policy Framework hold promise for our youngest citizens, their families and for our County.

> Research on the developing brain shows us that early childhood experiences build the foundation for a skilled workforce, a responsible community and a thriving economy. (*Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning*, www.developingchild.Harvard.edu)

Respectfully submitted,

WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

DORA JACILDO, CHAIR
Policy Roundtable for Child Care

WTF:AJ:CT
KMS:km

Attachments (1)

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel

Child Care and Development Policy Framework for 2014-2016
Restore – Integrate – Improve

The first Child Care Policy Framework was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 6, 2009, just as California was sliding into a severe fiscal crisis and the country recognized it was in a recession. Over the next four years, funding for subsidized child care and development services in California was reduced by $1.2 billion. This translated to a loss of nearly $200,000,000 of subsidy dollars to low-income families in Los Angeles County. Also during this period, the number of licensed family child care homes in Los Angeles County declined by 14 percent, dropping from over 9,000 to 7,623, furthering limiting an inadequate supply of child care and development programs available to infants and toddlers.

Given this context, we are thankful for the strategic focus that the two previous Child Care Policy Frameworks have provided County departments and our community partners. Despite this period of serious budget reductions, Los Angeles County has made incremental progress to closing the gap between "what we know" and "what we do" that contributes to the overall well-being of young children, families and communities. There is, however, still much to do.

Momentum for Change Is Building

For the first time in many years, there is a sense of optimism and urgency that now is the time to improve and expand access to child care and development services. Consider the following facts:

- Economic conditions are improving in Los Angeles County, California and the country.
- Economist and Nobel Laureate James Heckman, Ph.D. has weighed in on early care and education, "We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults, nor can we wait until they reach school age - a time when it may be too late to intervene. Learning is a dynamic process and is more effective when it begins at a young age and continues through adulthood."
- A report released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in January 2014 identifies three goals to improve the health of the nation. The first goal calls for prioritizing investments in America's youngest children and urges the creation of stronger quality standards for early childhood development programs, linking funding to program quality and guaranteeing access for all low-income children under five years old by 2025.
- The Los Angeles Area Chamber Commerce has identified early education as a priority issue, recognizing "that an investment in quality early education programs will increase achievement, reduce drop-out rates and create pathways for success throughout K-12 education. This type of investment will enhance educational outcomes and result in a knowledgeable workforce that will lead our nation's economy."
- On January 7, 2014, California Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg introduced SB 837, *The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2014*, which would make transitional kindergarten available to every four–year old child in California. Senator Carol Liu will be introducing a companion bill to expand and improve early care and education services available to children from birth through three years of age.

- The FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriation Bill arrived on the President's desk with bipartisan support and was signed by President Obama on January 17, 2014. This bill not only restored the reductions imposed by sequestration on Head Start, Early Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant, but actually increased funding for these programs. In addition, it will support states and local communities in expanding high quality early learning for infants and toddlers through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and fund Preschool Development Grants available to states on a competitive basis.

- Federal legislation, the *Strong Start for America's Children Act* (H.R. 3461 and S. 1697) has been introduced in Congress. This legislation would significantly expand access to high quality early care and education services.

Goals for 2014-2016

Given this momentum, the time to improve and expand child care and development services is now. We are aware that even with this momentum, the legislation cited above could dramatically change the child care and development sector in our county; that family, business, and operator interests in child care and development do not always align seamlessly; and that to achieve the changes needed in the child care and development sector will require vision, commitment, and hard work. The Child Care and Development Policy Framework for 2014 – 2016 is intended to focus County departments and community stakeholders on areas where a unified voice from Los Angeles County can best support the optimum development of our children, families, and communities. As such, the Child Care Policy Framework for 2014-2016 will focus on the following goals:

1. Restore and Expand Funding

2. Strengthen Policies on Eligibility and Access

3. Maximize Access to Available Services

4. Prioritize Quality Services

5. Expand Family and Community Engagement

GOAL 1 – RESTORE AND EXPAND FUNDING

Objective: Pursue the restoration and expansion of funding for subsidized child care and development and related services

A. How are we going to do it:

1. Working within the adopted Legislative Platform and with the Chief Executive Office - Intergovernmental Relations and External Affairs (CEO-IGEA), promote the restoration and expansion of federal and State funding for:

    a. The full range of child care and development services for children from pre-natal through five years of age, with an emphasis on services for children birth to three, and

    b. Increased on-site inspections of child care and development programs by the California Department of Social Services/Community Care Licensing Division (CDSS/CCLD).

2. Promote efficiencies that optimize the administration of subsidized child care and development services and afford families access to stable arrangements, including but not limited to the annual determination of eligibility and the elimination of parent fees for State Preschool.

3. Work with First 5 LA, First 5 California and other philanthropic sources to increase, coordinate, and integrate investments in child care and development. In this process, the critical need for additional services for infants and toddlers will be emphasized.

B. Benchmarks for success

1. CEO-IGEA, working in conjunction with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development (Roundtable) and the Office of Child Care, will provide the Board of Supervisors with information on State and Federal proposals and their impact on local families and programs.

2. The Roundtable will work with local stakeholders to develop collaborative approaches to integrate and maximize available funding.

3. The Roundtable, in conjunction with the Child Care Planning Committee (Planning Committee), will promote the effective utilization of existing data to inform policy, practice and decision-making relating to the restoration, expansion, and geographic allocation of funding for subsidized child care and development services.

C. Our partners

- Board of Supervisors, County departments, business, philanthropy, education, families, child care and development, and community stakeholders.

GOAL 2 – STRENGTHEN POLICIES ON ELIGIBILITY AND ACCESS

Objective: Engage State and local partners to change eligibility policies and administrative guidelines that deter vulnerable families from accessing subsidized child care and development services.

A. How we are going to do it:

1. Working in conjunction with CEO-IGEA, engage the California Department of Education (CDE), CDSS/CCLD, First 5 California and First 5 LA in a dialogue regarding:

    a. The impact of trauma on young children and the current definition of "at risk" as it applies to eligibility for subsidized child care and development services, and

    b. The vulnerability of teen parents involved with the child protective services and juvenile justice systems as it impacts their ability to access subsidized child care and development services for their young children.

B. Benchmarks for success

1. By September 2014
    a. Communication channels will be established with State agencies regarding the unique needs of children and families who have experienced trauma and the role of high quality child care and development services in promoting the optimal development of children strengthening families.

2. By January 2015
    a. Policies and guidelines, or the interpretation of policies and guidelines, will be changed or clarified to facilitate access of vulnerable families to subsidized child care and development services.

    b. The County Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Public Social Services (DPSS), Probation and Mental Health (DMH) will work collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), local school districts and community-based organizations to ensure that eligible children and their families have access to needed health and social services.

C. Our partners

- CDSS, CDE, First 5 California, First Five Los Angeles, the Child Care Planning Committee, DCFS, DMH, Probation Department, DPSS, LACOE, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and other local school districts, the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles and community-based child development programs.

GOAL 3 – MAXIMIZE ACCESS TO AVAILABLE SERVICES

Objective: Facilitate access to subsidized child care and development and supportive family services by providing County departments working directly with families, access to information on vacancies in Early Head Start, Head Start, and CDE-contracted subsidized child care and development programs by developing an electronic vacancy tracking system.

A. How we are going to do it:

1. Coordinate a joint proposal to the Productivity Investment Fund (PIF) in partnership with DCFS, the Family Solution Centers and targeted child care and development programs. The purpose of this proposal will be to develop and pilot an electronic application to track vacancies in subsidized child care and development programs in order to increase the utilization of available funds.

2. Build on the experiences of the DCFS Foster Care Search Engine and the two-click system as well as the former Centralized Eligibility List. The intention is to develop an application where child care and development programs can easily report vacancies, Children's Social Workers can access that information quickly, and a feedback loop provides information on children who are actually enrolled in and receive child care and development services.

3. Convene DMH, DCFS, the Department of Public Health (DPH), and other County partners to develop strategies for coordinating early childhood mental health consultation, family support and other services to support families and to build the capacity of child care and development program staff to promote young children's healthy social-emotional development and address challenging behaviors.

4. Pursue additional funding to build and sustain the vacancy tracking system.

B. Benchmarks for success:

1. By July 2015
   a. A collaborative application will be successful in securing funding.

   b. A pilot project will be in place and initial evaluation data will be available.

2. By July 2016
   a. The system will be used by the intended audiences including Children's Social Workers and child care and development programs.

   b. Data will be available to inform refinements and expansion beyond the pilot phase. The system will provide feedback information showing that children are actually enrolled in programs.

C. Our partners:

- Proposal development and pilot testing: DCFS, LACOE-Head Start, LAUSD, the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles and Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP).

- DMH, DPH and other County departments will provide consultation to program staff to ensure the successful participation of children and families in

GOAL 4 – PRIORITIZE QUALITY SERVICES

Objective: Support efforts to establish and sustain a single, validated child care quality rating and improvement system serving all of Los Angeles County.

A. How we are going to do it:

1. Promote parent awareness and use of current quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS). This includes promotion among County employees, clients and residents.

2. Monitor and support the Office of Child Care's expedited merging of the Steps to Excellence Program (STEP) into the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) QRIS.

3. Analyze progress in aligning QRIS systems with the following functions:
   - Home visitation programs
   - Early identification and screening of all enrolled children
   - Reducing obesity in young children
   - Encouraging innovative approaches to aligning services, including support for continued pilot testing of LAUSD Saturday Clinics

4. Support efforts to increase on-site inspections of all child care and development programs by the CDSS/CCLD.

B. Benchmarks for success

1. By April 2015
   a. STEP will be merged into the Office of Child Care administered RTT-ELC QRIS.

   b. Child development centers and family child care homes will be participating in the Office of Child Care administered QRIS.

2. By April 2016
   a. Los Angeles County will have a single, unified QRIS.

   b. Parents will use the QRIS to make decisions when choosing child care and development services.

   c. Participating programs will have demonstrated quality improvements.

   d. Participating programs will be connecting families to ancillary service systems including behavioral health, public benefit programs and other services provided by County departments and community-based organizations.

C. Our Partners

1. Merging STEP and RTT-ELC: LAUP, First 5 LA, CDE, the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, UCLA- Center for Improving Child Care Quality

2. Alignment of QRIS to other service sectors: County departments and community-based agencies

3. Promotion of QRIS to families: County departments and community-based agencies.

GOAL 5 – EXPAND FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Objective: Engage a wide range of County departments, Commissions and community stakeholders as advocates for integrating child care and development services into efforts aimed at fostering the optimal development of children, strengthening families and promoting community well-being.

A. How we are going to do it:

1. Roundtable members will outreach to other affiliated Commissions and stakeholder groups focused on children, youth and families to share information on the benefits of high quality child care and development services and provide information on the local child care and development landscape.

2. Roundtable members will engage representatives of the commissions and stakeholder groups in discussions on:

    a. Joint opportunities for cross-sector professional development and data linkages to facilitate the effective integration of services, and

    b. Opportunities to create a technology infrastructure to provide families with information on child care and development options, parent support and education and other resources.

B. Benchmarks for success

1. By January 2015
    - Communication channels will be established among partners, using traditional and technology-based vehicles to share information.

2. By April 2016
    - Cross-departmental training and professional development opportunities will be available and participants will report increased competency in ensuring access to high-quality child care and development programs for vulnerable children and families.

3. By December 2016
    - The Roundtable, in collaboration with 211 LA County and community stakeholders, will report on how technology is connecting families with resources and supports throughout Los Angeles County.

C. Our Partners
- Roundtable members will engage the Child Care Planning Committee, First 5 LA, the Commission for Children and Families, the Probation Commission, and the Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and the regional Child Abuse and Neglect Councils.