

March 2009: Child Care Works: Helping the Economy, Helping Children Achieve



Pennsylvania's Child Care Works Subsidy supports parents who are working hard to provide for their families while giving their children the opportunity to participate in early learning programs. This support reaches beyond the benefit to families—it impacts employers and the overall economy as well.

“When a parent is involved in the Child Care Works program it allows them to become more employable due to the dependability of good, quality child care.” CCIS Caseworker

Helping the economy

Child Care Works subsidy is helping working parents continue to work and build job skills while providing a stimulus to local economies. Child Care Works can be the difference between self-sufficiency and improving a family's quality of life, or depending on public assistance and supports just to get by.

- **Keeps working parents working.** Parents with access to child care assistance like Child Care Works are up to 15% more likely to be employed. Subsidy participants are also more likely to work standard hours compared to families who do not have access to child care assistance. [Tekin 2004]
- **Stimulating local economies.** Public investment in child care assistance generates more total sales and employment than any other sector in Pennsylvania. For every \$1 spent in Child Care Works, \$2.17 is circulated in the state's economy through employment and purchases of goods and services. [Liu, Ribeiro, Warner 2004]

Helping children achieve

Because Child Care Works subsidizes a portion of the cost of child care for low-income families (with families paying a co-pay to the child care program), it provides access to quality child care that families could not otherwise afford. Parents receive one-on-one parent counseling on the benefits of quality early education and how to make the best child care choices for their family. Research shows that children who live in low-income families are at risk of failing at school, but can offset these risks when they participate in quality early education programs.

- **More families choosing regulated child care.** Thirty percent more of the most vulnerable children (in families receiving TANF) participating in Child Care Works are now enrolling in regulated child care than last year.
- **Families are shooting for the STARS!** Approximately 40% of children receiving Child Care Works are enrolled in Keystone STARS programs.

Not enough working families have access to Child Care Works

Research shows that low-income families that do not have access to child care assistance are more likely to have reduced work hours or lose their jobs. The cost of child care is significant for many working families at any time, but the struggling economy has made the need for child care assistance even greater. More than 15,000 eligible children, the highest number since the creation of the program, are on waiting lists throughout the commonwealth. These families must demonstrate eligibility to be placed on the waiting list and are ready to receive assistance immediately.

“Child Care Works helps me access child care for my son so I can provide a better future for both of us.” Parent

The Governor's proposed investment for FY 2009-2010 will make it possible to provide child care assistance to more children who are currently on waiting lists. Pennsylvania proposes expanding to reach 141,000 children (monthly average) by adding 3,700 children (640 TANF slots, 1,066 former TANF slots and 2,000 Low income slots); freezing provider rates for traditional care; freezing evening and weekend rates for providers with a STAR 2-4 rating, reduction in evening/weekend rate for all other providers.

For more information, contact the Office of Child Development and Early Learning at (717) 346-9320.