

**Kronkosky Charitable Foundation
Roundtable Discussion**

Topic: Smart Start
Date: April 2, 1998
Attended by: Andrea Hodgeboon
Prepared by: Liz Ostendorf

Participants

Invited Representatives

Nancy L Hard	Associate Director	Family Service Association
Natalie Peterson	Executive Director	Family Service Association
Peggy Walker	President	Smart Start
Tracy Wolff	Co-founder	Smart Start

Foundation Representatives

Palmer Moe	Executive Director
Megan Kromer	Director of Program and Evaluation
Andrea Hodgeboon	Student Intern

Child Development

- The Carnegie Foundation found that an individual's capacity to learn, acquire language skills, and develop emotionally and socially form before age five. Without stimulation, these characteristics will not develop fully and the children will suffer long lasting effects. These findings are the basis for the Smart Start program.

Childcare Issues

- There are long waiting lists for children to enter appropriate, affordable childcare. Grandparents, older siblings, and neighbors are now caring for children on the waiting list. In some cases, the wait is as long as five years.
- There are service gaps for childcare; many people work at night when traditional childcare is not available.

- Government programs only provide care for a few hours a day during the summer and school holidays. In most cases, this is not adequate for families in need of full time care.
- Childcare is an important component in the success of the welfare-to-work program. Currently, there is a cycle in the working poor population. Without subsidies, they cannot afford childcare and without childcare they cannot work, hence they return to welfare.
- School systems are not involved in childcare for a variety of reasons.
 1. traditional school structure still exists from pre-World War II when mothers were at home with the children
 2. School districts do not have funding for childcare
 3. Schools lack direct contact with parents on a day to day basis.
- Schools could help with childcare and children in general because:
 1. Organization and accreditation possible through school system
 2. Could aid with resources and referral of parents and children to additional services, alert parents to health and safety issues, or report abuse and/or neglect.
- The childcare industry is not well organized; it is a cottage industry with an uneven income stream. Many providers lack the management and leadership skills to effectively run the business side.
- Childcare workers are paid minimally, it is a high stress job, and requires long hours.
- Currently, there is a significant amount of abuse in childcare centers because of the high stress, lack of proper training and increased needs of the children. Some suspect that if welfare recipients work in childcare centers this rate would increase for the same reasons.
- Training will reduce the stress level for childcare workers because they will be equipped with better skills to deal with situations and crises. Further, with training, the pay will increase. Smart Start will often help subsidize a raise for trained childcare workers.

Smart Start

- Smart Start focuses on children age 0 to 3 years because of the critical brain development, which takes place during this period.
- Ways to reach parents to encourage the Smart Start program and quality childcare:
 1. TV, videos in hospital rooms
 2. mobile units

3. caregivers
 4. churches
- The majority of callers to Smart Start seek advice on parenting. They want to know about child development, potential abuse, and specific problems with their children.
 - Smart Start is funded by corporations with the idea that providing appropriate care for children will lead to a more productive, effective work force later.

San Antonio s Efforts and Issues

- CCMS serves 5% of the eligible children in Bexar County, 80% of the working poor are eligible but are on a five-year waiting list. With recent and upcoming welfare reform, the working poor may no longer be eligible.
- In San Antonio, the San Antonio Association of Licensed Day Cares of Young Children manages the accreditation program. Currently, only 28 day care centers, and 17 home care sites are accredited.
- SAC has a credentialing program, which costs \$375.00 for certification. Many in San Antonio cannot afford this, though.
- San Antonio has unique problems because of the pervasive poverty levels and the dependence of the city on tourism. Service jobs often have untraditional hours and require shifting schedules. Consequently, childcare is unavailable or unreliable for a large portion of the population in need.

Other Communities Efforts

- In North Carolina, Smart Start focuses on the infrastructure of the childcare industry including training of providers and higher compensation. A portion of the state lottery, as well as public and private funding is used.
- In Seattle, a half-cent sales tax benefits childcare. Politically this is hard to sell, because many legislators are of the generations whose children stayed home.

Attachments

Smart Start Corporate Child Care Collaborative

Smart Start Time Line of Accomplishments.

Fact Sheet on Child Care in San Antonio.

How a Child s Brain Develops. Time. February 3, 1997.