

**State Pre-Kindergarten Funding:
A Potential Opportunity for Family Child Care Alliances**
(prepared for Casey Consultative Session on Home-Based Alliances)

Although state and local governments have wrestled with fiscal constraints and difficult budget battles, spending on preschool education has grown dramatically. Twenty years ago, only a handful of states funded pre-kindergarten services (pre-k). In the 2004-05 academic year 38 states were collectively spending almost \$3 billion to serve over 800,000 children. State pre-k enrollment now surpasses the federal Head Start program in number of children served. And this growth continues. In 2005-06, the new Florida pre-k program is expected to add over 100,000 children. (NIEER, 2005)

Growing state interest in pre-k offers an opportunity for additional support and funding for family child care providers. In the early years pre-kindergarten services were provided almost exclusively in part-day programs, operated by public schools, aimed at "educationally at risk, disadvantaged" four-year-olds. However, since the mid-1980's more and more states have either created programs, or revised an existing ones, to respond to family needs--offering longer hours for more than the school year and making services available in a range of settings (schools, child care or Head Start, and in some cases family homes.) All but one state (KS) now either allow direct funding of community-based providers or permit school districts to contract with them. (NEER, 2005)

Thirteen states (AK, DE, IL, MA, MI, NV, NY, OH, OR, VA, WA, WV and WI) currently allow pre-k to be delivered in a family child care home, which provides the legal framework for enabling pre-k dollars to support family child care providers. (Schumaker, 2005). Unfortunately, while these states technically allow family child care providers to receive pre-k funds, in most cases very few providers actually participate. Key reasons for low participation include: standards requiring providers to have academic and other credentials in order to qualify as pre-k teachers, limited enrollment capacity/mixed-age groups in family child care, and traditional views about what setting is appropriate for pre-k. Standards that require pre-k providers to have an education degree, certification, licensure or endorsement can be a significant barrier, especially if the state does not offer financial supports and/or alternative approaches to attaining these credentials.

Several states have worked to overcome these barriers. Indeed, some have reached out to family child care, creating initiatives aimed at facilitating the delivery of pre-k services in a home-based setting. These states have used multiple models, which include the following:

Systems/Networks/Hubs This model uses a community-based organization or school to oversee a group of family child care homes that meet pre-k program requirements¹.

¹ Pre-K program, staffing and administrative requirements vary widely from state to state. For a brief summary of what is required in each state, see the 2005 State Preschool Yearbook published by the National Institute for Early Education Research, which is available at <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>

Generally, the agency takes responsibility for outreach/enrollment of children, provider support, monitoring program quality and fiscal management. Pre-k services are delivered in home-based settings. This approach has taken several different forms, including the following:²

- *Central agency* - the family child care providers bring the children in their care to a central site, where a certified teacher offers structured learning (based on the state pre-k curriculum) for the children. The family child care providers also receive professional development to support the curriculum and child care is provided for younger or older children. Example: Chicago, Illinois.
- *Subcontracting* - the family child care providers meet all required standards and offer pre-k services in their homes. The oversight agency offers training, oversight and monitoring, outreach/intake of children and fiscal management. Example: Arkansas, Los Angeles Universal Preschool.

Wraparound Care This model provides no linkage to the pre-k learning environment but enables children in family child care to attend a part-day pre-k program. Many states have made this possible by adjusting the child care subsidy reimbursement rate rules so that families who use both part-day pre-k and subsidized child care can receive a rate that is high enough to secure a quality wraparound care and cover the additional cost of transportation services. Quite a few states have made child care funds available to help cover the cost of wraparound care for eligible children who are receiving part-day pre-k and need full-day care. There are, in general, two ways that states support wraparound care: through a formal state reimbursement rate for wraparound care (example: New Jersey) or through policies that enable ECE providers to bill for a full-day child care reimbursement rate in addition to receiving prek funds (example: CT, DE, WV, and other states.)

Home Visiting/Family Support In this model, pre-k funds are used to support staff from a school- or community-based pre-k program who visit family child care homes that enroll pre-k eligible children. Home visitors or Mentors offer training/ technical assistance/curriculum resources, observe children (to recommend activities that might support development and promote early learning), and may also offer other supports such as organized field trips or provider support groups. Providers do not receive any funding directly, however the cost of home visiting/family support is paid with pre-k dollars. Examples: Arkansas. Additionally, quite a few local programs have, on their own, created pre-k home visiting/family support initiatives that include family child care (but are not official initiatives sanctioned by the state). These local programs are located in Honolulu, HI (Good Beginnings Never End); Long Beach, CA; and some Chicago area pre-k programs.

Individual Home-Based Provider Participation In this model, an individual family child care home (or group family child care home) can apply for pre-k funding

²Some Head Start grantees have also created home-based child care systems or hubs.

directly. The home-based provider must be able to meet all required fiscal and programmatic requirements (i.e. licensing, professional qualifications, audits, accreditation, standards, curriculum, etc.) In some cases the family child care provider may hire a certified teacher if she does not have the required teaching certification. This model is most appropriate for group (or large) family child care homes that typically serve 10 or more children and hire an assistant. Example: Green County School District, New York.

Implications for Family Child Care Alliances

Expanding pre-k services is a priority for many states, and represents one of the fastest growing sources of early care and education fundings. To that end, it is important that family child care homes find a way to participate in this effort. As noted above, many states have created the *legal* authority for home-based providers to participate in pre-k, but few have created the *structure and supports* needed to enable family child care to participate in a significant way. The proposed Alliance model could provide the necessary framework. In addition to offering training, education scholarships, opportunities for group activities, shared staffing, administration and data collection, the Alliance could provide leadership in negotiating contracts with state education departments or local school districts so that family child care has a meaningful “place at the table.”

Resources

National Institute for Early Education Research. (2005) *The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook*. Pew Charitable Trusts.

Shumaker, R., Ewen, D., Hart, K., and Lombardi, (2005) *J. All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-Kindergarten* Center for Law and Social Policy.

Ewen, Danielle. (September, 2006) Center for Law and Social Policy. Personal Communication.