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Quality of Childcare Linked Directly to Teacher Education and Location

United Way Capital Area's Efforts Improve Early Childcare Quality

Austin, Texas – June 21, 2010 – Finding quality childcare may be more elusive than many parents think. Teacher education levels vary widely in childcare centers depending upon area of town and type of childcare center – part-time, full-time, for-profit and non-profit. More than half of the full-time childcare teachers in East, North and South Austin do not have a college degree, according to a recent study conducted by United Way Capital Area's (UWCA) Success By 6 program (see chart below).

“Teacher education levels are one of the most important indicators of a quality childcare program,” said Sue Carpenter, UWCA Senior Director of Education. “For low-income children, a higher quality program helps children make significant gains in learning.” Children in classrooms taught by teachers who have a bachelor's degree score higher on language tests and also play more creatively and imaginatively, according to research from the National Institute of Early Education Research¹.

In the last four years, UWCA's Success By 6 program has been instrumental in driving nearly 30% more early childcare centers serving low-income children to become quality rated. In 2006, only 14% were rated as quality programs. Reaching their goal of having 75% of early childcare centers rated as quality by 2016 looks well within reach, said Carpenter. To become quality rated, childcare centers must apply and meet specific requirements outlined by either the Texas Rising Star program or the National Association for the Education of Children (NAEYC).

To further improve childcare quality, this fall UWCA's Success By 6 program will partner with AmeriCorps to place eight college students in childcare centers that serve low-income children. These students will assist with instruction while gaining experience in the child development field where they eventually would like to work. In addition to this program, UWCA also helps to improve childcare quality through partnerships that:

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- Provide mentors to work directly with childcare center directors in developing a program improvement plan.
- Fund teacher salaries at nonprofit childcare centers that serve low-income children and are quality rated. Current state reimbursement rate for low-income children is far below the actual cost of care, so nonprofits must rely on community support to sustain these programs.

Currently, the Department of Family and Protective Services is in the process of reviewing the rules for the state’s 9,300 child care centers. Today, the state only requires eight hours of training for those working at daycare centers while hairdressers complete 1,500 hours of training and must pass a test. A ruling on whether the agency has the authority to make rules changes is expected to come in August from Attorney General Greg Abbott. Rep. Mark Strama, chairman of the House Committee on Technology, Economic Development & Workforce, said he supports increasing training requirements for childcare center workers.

To access the full results of the Success By 6 childcare survey, visit www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/our_work/education/sb6 .

About United Way Capital Area

United Way Capital Area is working hard to advance the common good by focusing on three key areas: education, financial stability and health – the building blocks for a good life. UWCA works to create measurable change that prevent problems from happening in the first place and that empowers people to improve the quality of life for themselves and others. Our vision for Central Texas is a community where all individuals and families achieve their human potential through education, income and healthy lives. For more information, please visit www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org.

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¹ “Can a College Degree Help Preschoolers Learn?,” National Institute for Early Education Research, Dec. 2003.

Full-time Lead Teacher Education Levels by Geographic Area

