



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20447

April 2011

### INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Lead Agencies administering child care programs under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 1990, as amended; State and local child welfare directors; and other interested parties.

**FROM:** Joint memorandum from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families and the Office of Child Care.

**SUBJECT:** Child Welfare and Child Care Partnerships: Partnering with Families Involved in Child Care Subsidy Programs.

#### Summary

This Information Memorandum (IM) is jointly issued by the Director of the Office of Child Care, Shannon Rudisill, and the Commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Bryan Samuels. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information to Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies and State and local child welfare agencies to encourage partnerships across these agencies to better serve vulnerable child populations and families.

#### Background Information

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) supports the development of coordinated systems of services to promote the healthy growth and development of young children. Children involved in the public child welfare system, a system which includes preventive, protective, and foster care, as well as adoption services for children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing maltreatment, are especially in need of such services and supports to alleviate the effects of early trauma or chronic stress.<sup>1</sup>

This information memorandum follows on a number of recent issuances by ACF to help emphasize the importance of coordinating child-serving programs at the State and local level. On July 28, 2010, an information memorandum (ACF-IM-HS-10-04) was issued to Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies, reinforcing their commitment to serving abused and neglected children by strengthening coordination with child welfare agencies. On February 15, 2011, a parallel information memorandum (ACF-CB-IM-11-01) was issued to State child welfare directors. Additionally, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (PL 110-351) emphasizes the importance of educational stability and continuity for school-age children in foster care, based on the

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<sup>1</sup> Shonkoff, J. and Phillips, D. 2000. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine.

understanding that education is a critical component of well-being. Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Child Welfare Agencies are likewise encouraged to coordinate the delivery of services across agencies and with other governmental and nongovernmental entities.

Coordination across child care and child welfare agencies is sanctioned at the federal level through regulations. Currently, children who are in need of protective services, as defined by the State or Territory, are categorically eligible for CCDF subsidy receipt at the discretion of the State or Territory (45 CFR 98.20(a)(3)(ii)). CCDF Lead Agencies may prioritize child care subsidies for children in protective services, and indeed have initiated innovative partnerships to meet the needs of this population. At least 40 States and Territories provide CCDF child care subsidies to children receiving or in need of protective services. Additionally, at least 35 States and Territories elect to waive, on a case-by-case basis, the fee and income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services. For children in foster care, 13 States and Territories have elected to provide child care subsidies regardless of the foster parents' work status or participation in education or training activities.

To help protect children, child abuse registry background checks are required for child care providers in 34 States. All States have passed some form of a mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting law in order to qualify for funding under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)(1996 version), 42 U.S.C. 5101.<sup>2</sup> For most States, child care providers are considered to be mandatory reporters.

Title IV-E agencies may claim reimbursement for daily supervision and allowable licensed child care costs for children in foster care, provided either to the foster parent or the child care provider (CWPM, §8.3B, QA #3). Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments may also be used to cover costs of foster parent activities that extend beyond the scope of ordinary parental duties, such as transportation costs for child care to maintain continuity with a particular provider (CWPM, §8.3B.1, QA #3).

Child care and child welfare agencies are ideal partners because both strive to improve the well-being of children. Child care, with its mission of promoting positive early development, is in a unique position to strengthen families involved in the child welfare system by offering information, resources, and positive relationships in a supportive environment. Young children whose families are served by the child welfare system are often developmentally vulnerable as a result of trauma stemming from early abuse and neglect, and from risk factors that commonly co-occur, such as prenatal drug exposure, prematurity, low birth weight, poverty, homelessness, parental depression and other mental health problems. Partnerships between child care and child welfare agencies can ensure that the developmental needs of the most vulnerable populations are being identified and met. These agencies can educate each other regarding their respective responsibilities as well as the services, benefits and opportunities each has to offer to meet these goals.

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<sup>2</sup> The Act was originally passed in 1974, has been amended several times and was most recently amended and reauthorized on June 25, 2003, by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 (P.L.108-36).

### **Strategies for Child Care – Child Welfare Partnerships**

Child care and child welfare agencies are encouraged to enter into formal agreements, such as MOUs, to improve coordination and collaboration on behalf of the children and families they serve. See the attached Appendix for examples from State grantees. The following are specific actions and strategies that agencies could incorporate into their agreements:

#### **Referral and Service Coordination**

- Jointly establish a referral process to the child care subsidy program by the child welfare office.
- Similarly, jointly establish a referral process to child welfare services by child care offices and providers. This may include training to increase capacity among child care providers to recognize signs of child abuse and neglect, to talk with children about suspected abuse or neglect, and caring for children who have suffered from abuse or neglect.
- Ensure early care and education services are included in the child welfare case plan and ensure that, for families already enrolled in early care and education programs, the child care provider is included in the family service team.
- Partner to share information with foster family agencies, social workers, parent associations, parents, and relative caregivers of age-eligible children on the importance of high quality child care and the subsidies available through CCDF.

#### **Capacity Building**

- Arrange cross-training opportunities to educate staff from each agency about child welfare and child care services, as well as trainings on topics of mutual interest, such as working with high-need families, appropriate child care for children needing protective services, and the responsibilities of reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- Establish information sharing agreements across child welfare and child care agencies, such that child care providers are aware when families they serve have interacted with child protective services and may be in need of increased support.
- Coordinate activities across child welfare and child care agencies to address background screening requirements for child care and foster care providers.
- Consider co-locating staff or supporting staff rotations to facilitate partnership across agencies.

#### **Policy Coordination**

- Jointly establish continuity of care policies for children receiving child welfare services to help ensure stability and maintain child care provider relationships where possible. This could include providing transportation or incentives to allow a child to continue attending child care with the same provider if the child is removed from their home or changes foster care locations.

- Jointly review policies and strategies to identify and target vulnerable children for placement in high quality child care. This population of children often is in the greatest need and can benefit the most from placement in high quality care.
- Establish strategies for incorporating protective factors<sup>3</sup> into child care programs to help prevent or mitigate the effects of abuse and neglect.
- Embed these strategies and others, as appropriate, in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for child care programs.

These examples are just a selection of activities that child welfare and child care agencies can engage in to deliver coordinated supportive services to the children and families that need them most. We encourage agencies to work together to create strategies that address the specific needs of their own communities.

### Questions

Direct all inquiries to the Child Care or Child Welfare Program Manager in the appropriate ACF Regional Office.

/s/

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/s/

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Administration on Children, Youth and  
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<sup>3</sup> Protective factors include: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.

## **Appendix: State Examples of Child Care – Child Welfare Collaboration**

Many States have employed the Strengthening Families framework, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, to address workforce development, quality improvement, and family engagement related to child care and child welfare services. The approach helps States to develop training in science-based parenting skills, children's life skills, and family life skills specifically designed to build protective factors that prevent abuse and neglect and promote family strength. Strengthening Families was developed to give early care and education programs common-sense strategies to support vulnerable families; it has since been widely used to anchor efforts to build comprehensive early childhood systems at State and local levels.

Many States have also incorporated the core concepts of Strengthening Families into child care and child welfare staff training and related programming, as well as Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). QRIS refers to a systematic framework for evaluating, improving and communicating the level of quality in early childhood programs and contains five key elements: program standards, supports to programs to improve quality, financial incentives and supports, quality assurance and monitoring, and outreach and consumer education. Incorporation of protective factors into State QRIS can help to ensure that children in need of protective services have their needs met and are targeted for high quality child care. The Office of Child Care is piloting QRIS quality indicators that include protective factors as part of the quality indicator for promoting family engagement.

The following examples show how child care – child welfare collaborations are happening in States to provide higher quality service to vulnerable children and families. Many efforts cut across all areas of collaboration and may provide a starting point for Lead Agencies interested in initiating collaborations of their own.

The CCDF Lead Agency in **Missouri**, the Early Childhood and Prevention Services Section of the Department of Social Services, coordinates program activities with child welfare that address appropriate child care for children needing protective services, background screening requirements for child care and foster care providers, payment processes for child care providers of children needing protective services, and child abuse and neglect prevention services. Missouri has also embedded the values of Strengthening Families in various programs, grants and other early childhood initiatives, including child welfare staff training. As a part of Missouri's Strengthening Families initiative, both early childhood and child welfare workers are trained on protective factors for vulnerable children and strategies for building protective factors with families. Child welfare caseworkers learn, as part of this cross-training effort, the role that child care providers can play in supporting the well-being of young children in foster care or receiving in-home services.

**Illinois** has also used the Strengthening Families approach to create Strengthening Families Illinois (SFI), a statewide collaboration of more than 40 partners focused on building protective factors for vulnerable children. SFI works with early childhood centers and families through learning networks, partnerships, and workgroups. SFI works to improve relationships among early childhood professionals, child welfare agencies, and child abuse prevention programs and

provides professional development training to increase the capacity of early childhood program staff to build protective factors.

**Idaho, Pennsylvania** and **Tennessee** have all used the Strengthening Families Through QRIS program, an initiative of the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, to link their early childhood programs with child welfare.

**Idaho's** QRIS was built through strong informal and formal relationships among agencies. Strengthening Families is a Quality Standard in the State's QRIS and accounts for 20 percent of the possible points on the QRIS scale. Quality indicators include: documented parent involvement activities, staff completion of Strengthening Families training modules, a Parent Partnership Survey, formation of a Parent Work Group, completion of a Strengthening Families self-assessment, and submission of an action plan. **Idaho** has developed a 17-hour Strengthening Families curriculum, which has been delivered to 22 centers or home-based facilities during the first design phase pilot and is being delivered to another 30 facilities during the second design phase.

In 2007, the **Pennsylvania** Department of Public Welfare created the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) with the purpose of bringing together all aspects of early learning and development for children in the departments of Education and Public Welfare. OCDEL's programs include Child Care Subsidized Services, Certification (licensing) Services, and Early Intervention (birth – 5) Services, as well as Early Learning Services, such as Keystone STARS, PA Pre-Kindergarten Counts, Head Start State Supplemental, the Children's Trust Fund, and the Nurse-Family Partnership Program. This unified structure allows the work of embedding the Strengthening Families protective factors framework in early childhood systems to move forward in a comprehensive manner, involving a cross-sector approach.

**Tennessee's** Children's Trust Fund (CTF) has linked with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to present the Strengthening Families concept to a large number of partners in children's services. Together CTF and DHS formed a Strengthening Families Steering Committee consisting of agencies and individuals providing direct or indirect services to children, families and early child care providers. The CTF is working to link child welfare case managers with Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) staff. Other linkages with CCR&R staff are planned through participation in local Community Advisory Boards, local Department of Children's Services and CCR&R staff/partner meetings, presentations at child welfare conferences, and other Child Abuse and Neglect prevention partners and efforts. The CCR&R network has also been trained by Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee as part of Strengthening Families. As a result, CCR&R staff are providing training across the State to child care providers, community advocates, and parents. Child care providers are also receiving training and technical assistance to build capacity around family engagement and setting up community cafes and support networks.

In **Connecticut**, the Department of Social Services (the CCDF Lead Agency) partners with the Department of Children and Families (the State's child welfare agency) to obtain background abuse and neglect checks for informal child care providers that are enrolled in the State's child care certificate program.

## Resources

- *Allied for Better Outcomes: Child Welfare and Early Childhood.* Center for the Study of Social Policy.  
Stepleton, K., McIntosh, J., and Corrington, B. 2010. Center for the Study of Social Policy, Strengthening Families. Information about how the child welfare system and the early care and education sectors can work together using the Strengthening Families approach to ensure the best outcomes for children.  
[http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/images/uploads/pdf\\_uploads/allied\\_for\\_better\\_outcomes.pdf](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/images/uploads/pdf_uploads/allied_for_better_outcomes.pdf).
- *The Role of Professional Child Care Providers in Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect.*  
Karageorge, K. and Kendall, R. 2008. The Children's Bureau.  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/childcare/>.
- *A Guidebook For Early Childhood Programs Revised Second Edition.*  
Center for the Study of Social Policy, Strengthening Families. 2007. Offers various strategies early care and education programs use to support and strengthen families, particularly those families at risk of abuse and neglect.  
[http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/images/uploads/program\\_tools/SF\\_Guidebook\\_2nd\\_Ed.pdf](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/images/uploads/program_tools/SF_Guidebook_2nd_Ed.pdf).
- *Protecting the Youngest: The Role of Early Care and Education in preventing and Responding to Child Maltreatment.*  
Christian, S. and Poppe, J. 2007. National Conference of State Legislatures. Discusses policy options for States to consider to support early care and education programs that would protect young children and prevent abuse and neglect.  
<http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/protectingyoung.pdf>.