

Campus Child Care: The Responsibility to Provide the Highest Quality Programs A Position Statement from the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers

The National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (NCCCC) is a nonprofit educational membership organization. NCCCC supports research and activities affecting college and university early childhood education and service settings, family and work issues, and the field of early childhood education in general.

In regard to child care on campus, NCCCC states:

- Campus child care should be provided as an integral part of higher education systems.
- Campus child care programs provide a variety of models designed to meet the educational research and service needs of the institution and the community at large.
- Child care and developmentally appropriate practices are inseparable in all quality programs for young children.
- Resources must be made available in every community to guarantee a safe, healthy and developmentally sound program for all children.
- Campus child care programs and early childhood education serve as models and set standards for the larger community regarding quality care for children.

Quality Indicators

Institutions of higher learning have an obligation to provide model child care programs for the community that reflect the known indicators for quality. The research is clear on defining quality in an early childhood education program. First and foremost the quality of a program rests on the level of education of its staff. High quality programs employ teachers trained specifically in child development and early childhood education. In order to recruit and retain such high quality staff, campus child care centers should:

- pay salaries that reflect the professional expertise needed to maintain excellence.
- offer the same benefits that other university/college employees receive.
- provide regular opportunities for staff to pursue professional development.

A high quality program provides a developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children. Campus child care centers should:

- provide a learning environment that encourages children to explore and discover.
- provide an environment that provides children with a variety of social experiences with both children and adults.
- plan and implement activities that are consistent with children's strengths and interests.
- involve parents and children in the planning process.
- reflect the diversity of the families they serve and are inclusive of all children and adults who care for and educate them.

A high quality program meets or exceeds state regulatory standards. Campus child care centers should:

- be state licensed (or meet licensing standards).
- be nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- meet or exceed required teacher to child ratios and group sizes.
- provide primary care giving and continuity of care whenever possible.

A high quality program constantly evaluates itself and its staff. Campus child care programs should:

- provide parents an opportunity to regularly evaluate the program and the staff.
- provide a procedure for the regular evaluation of the staff by the director that produces professional goals and potential training resources.
- provide the staff an opportunity for reflection and self evaluation.
- provide a procedure for the evaluation of the program by an objective, outside observer.

High quality campus child care requires an investment from the institution of higher learning. In order to achieve and maintain high quality, a college or university should provide:

- rent free space, utilities and maintenance
- the same campus services that other units receive
- financial subsidies to the center budget so that families do not have to bear the entire cost of care.
- support from campus departments that use the center for research and training.

High quality early childhood programs are an investment that provides many benefits to the college/university. These benefits include:

- providing convenient, affordable, quality care that allows student parents to acquire an education
- providing convenient, quality care that allows employees to do their work
- providing sites for the training of future teachers through field observations as well as student teaching, internship, and practicum experiences.
- providing sites for research by faculty and graduate students.
- providing an education to the young children who are the future students of the college/university.