



## The Child Care Partnership Project



# The Child Care Executive Partnership

---

## Description

In the mid-1990s, 25,000 families in Florida were on a waiting list for state-subsidized child care. To deal with the problem, the state and the private sector developed the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP), an innovative strategy to increase the availability of child care subsidies. Through this partnership, the state of Florida matches employer child care contributions for employees who are eligible for child care subsidies. Families qualify for subsidies if the parents are working or in school and the household income is below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The CCEP is a win-win situation for all parties involved: more low-income families can maintain stable employment without the worry of affording child care; employers benefit from less employee absenteeism and turnover; and the state of Florida is able to provide more eligible families with child care subsidies.

## Partners

The current Governor appoints members to the Child Care Executive Partnership board to manage the partnership. The board includes nine executives from the private sector, members of the child care community, and the governor's Chief of Staff. The board oversees all aspects of the program, including fundraising and management. Thirty-five businesses are currently participating in the program, including financial institutions, restaurants, and health care providers.

While the board oversees the program on the state level, CCEP contracts with the local child care agencies that administer child care subsidies to carry out the program. The majority of these local resource and referral agencies are private, non-profit organizations.

The Florida Children's Forum, the hub of Florida's child care resource and referral network, has played an active role in convening the stakeholders to create the CCEP and sustaining its momentum. While not a formal member of the board, the Forum serves as staff to the CCEP.

## **History and Development**

A research grant from the federal government in 1995 allowed the Florida Children's Forum to analyze who employed the parents of children receiving subsidized child care in the state. The study showed that employees receiving subsidized child care in Florida cluster in industries such as banking, fast food, retail, temporary services, and the child care industry itself.

The Florida Children's Forum, with the help of the Child Care Action Campaign, presented these findings at a child care financing symposium for key legislators, governor's staff, and employers. The conference generated an opportunity for state leaders to discuss financing mechanisms and strategies to address the long waiting lists for child care subsidies in Florida. Out of these discussions the idea for the Child Care Executive Partnership was born and in 1996, the Florida Legislature passed the Child Care Executive Partnership Act.

## **Current Activities**

In 1998, thirty-five businesses participated in the Child Care Executive Partnership in one of two ways. An employer may subsidize its own employees, which automatically moves the employee off the waiting list to receive a state subsidy for child care. Or, the employer may make a charitable donation to a purchasing pool that funds child care subsidies for families in the community. Local purchasing pools exist in 44 of Florida's 67 counties, in geographic areas ranging from large urban areas like Miami to small rural areas in the Panhandle. In either case, the state guarantees the employer match so that the family receives the full subsidy.

Besides providing funding, the Child Care Executive Partnership Board has become a "new messenger" in the campaign to raise awareness of child care issues. The board is active in reviewing existing policies and making recommendations on how to improve child care licensing, coordinate child care and pre-kindergarten programs, and encourage family-friendly workplaces. The board is currently considering proposals to raise the ceiling on state-subsidized child care to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

At the local level, the agencies that coordinate child care subsidies are working to educate employers about the partnership and encourage them to

join. All but two of these local agencies are non-profit organizations, so the partnership benefits from their networking and fundraising capacities in local communities.

## **Resources**

The state matches each dollar an employer contributes to child care, thus doubling the available funds for families who are income-eligible for subsidized child care. In the first eighteen months of the program, the partnership leveraged more than \$6 million from the private sector. The \$6 million in state matching funds comes from the federal Child Care and Development Fund.

## **Results**

The \$6 million in new funds generated from the private sector has provided child care subsidies to 3,000 children who would not have otherwise received assistance. There is no formal evaluation of the partnership, but the state child care administrator submits an annual report on the partnership to the Oversight and Appropriations Committee in the Florida Legislature.

## **Sustaining and Replicating**

The partnership has grown each year, but the demand for affordable child care still exceeds the supply. The board faces the challenge of communicating this reality to the public at the same time that the number of families on the waiting list for child care is dropping. However, there are many families with incomes just above the eligibility level that still struggle to afford quality child care. The Florida Children's Forum has funds to deliver a marketing campaign that will encourage more employers to participate in the partnership.

To sustain enthusiasm for the partnership, The Children's Forum sponsors an annual awards dinner. The dinner celebrates and acknowledges the businesses that contribute to the partnership, and is also an opportunity to recruit potential partners. The support of key business leaders and the governor's office raises the profile of the partnership and helps the recruitment effort.

## **Lessons Learned**

***Find committed leaders.*** For the partnership to truly flourish, it needs the guidance and participation of key leaders who commit their time and energy to strengthening the partnership. Governor Lawton Chiles and the Board of the Executive Partnership have provided this commitment in Florida.

***Cultivate prestige.*** Requiring the governor to appoint partners to the board elevates the prestige of the positions and draws attention to their work.

***Make it easy to participate.*** Employers are more likely to participate in the partnership if it is easy. Streamline the application process both for the employers and the employees who benefit from the subsidy.

***Let the private sector lead.*** Florida's local child care agencies are primarily private, non-profit organizations. The face of the partnership at the local level, therefore, is not big government. Employers may be more receptive to partnering with a non-profit organization than with the government.

***Allow the partnership to evolve.*** Originally, the Child Care Executive Partnership was established to address the long waiting list for child care subsidies. While the goal of increasing the availability of affordable child care remains, the strategies of the CCEP have evolved. With the waiting list for child care subsidies shrinking, the CCEP is working to raise the eligibility level for subsidized child care. Flexibility has allowed the CCEP to remain a viable partner in the child care community.

### **Contact Information**

Larry Pintacuda  
Chief of Child Care  
Department of Children and Families  
2811-A Industrial Plaza Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
Phone: (850) 488-4900  
Fax: (850) 488-9584

Susan Muenchow  
President  
Florida Children's Forum  
2307 Remington Green Circle  
Tallahassee, FL 32303  
Phone: (850) 681-7002  
Fax: (850) 681-7048  
[www.fcforum.org](http://www.fcforum.org)

This information was developed as part of the Child Care Partnership Project, a multi-year technical assistance effort funded by the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Partnership Project is providing a series of technical assistance resources and materials

to support the development and strengthening of public-private partnerships to improve the quality and supply of child care. All of the materials produced under the Child Care Partnership Project will be available through the National Child Care Information Center at <http://nccic.org/ccpartnerships> or by phone at 1-(800) 616-2242. For more information on the project, please contact The Finance Project at (202) 628-4200.

