

Kids on Campus

by Roger Neugebauer

- *Over 170,000 young children are now served in programs based on America's college campuses.*
- *Two out of every three colleges and universities in the United States now provide some form of preschool program.*

These numbers attest to the fact that child care on campus is big news. In the past ten years, the number of campus programs has skyrocketed. And the demand for these services continues to outpace the existing supply. This article will provide an overview of this booming segment of the early childhood world.

How are campus programs structured?

There is no typical campus child care program. The term covers a variety of program types ranging from part-time child development laboratories to Head Start programs to full-day child care centers; from centers operated directly by the college to centers operated by a student association to centers oper-

ated under contract by an outside vendor.

In terms of hours of operation, the trend is definitely shifting from part-day to full-day programming. Four out of five programs now offer full-day services, and two in five offer part-day services. Less than 10% of the programs are open in the evening. And, not surprisingly, one in four of these programs offers

flexible programming, enabling parents to use the center for irregular, changing schedules. [Note: Unless otherwise noted, all data and estimates in this article have been provided by Michael Kalinowski, the past president of the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (NCCCC), based on the best current data available.]

Campus programs are operated by a variety of entities. Nearly 50% of all programs are administered by a student association, nearly 20% by an academic unit, and 10% by a personnel office. In addition, nearly 20% are operated independently, and just over 5% are contracted to outside vendors.

Who do campus programs serve?

Campus child care programs are a unique variation of employer child care operations. Not only do most of these programs provide care for employees of the colleges and universities, they also provide services and learning opportunities for their customers (students).

According to Deborah Carlson, president-elect of NCCCC, this broad mission of campus child care programs distinguishes them from most other forms of care. Campus programs enable older and non-traditional students to attend colleges (an increasingly important student recruitment edge), they provide care for children of faculty members (a valuable faculty recruitment tool), they provide student teaching and research opportunities for academic departments (a real curriculum enhancement); and they serve as models and resources to the community (a plus for child care providers).

Providing care for children of students is the prime mission of most campus programs. Nine out of ten campus programs offer services for students. The value of campus programs to students was dramatically demonstrated in a 1988 study of campus-based programs provided by State University of New York community colleges. The study found that 80% of the student users of campus child care services were influenced significantly in deciding to enroll by the availability of child care. Furthermore, the research demonstrated that parents using child care services were achieving academic success at a 20% greater rate than the overall student population.

Campus programs also serve other audiences. Eight out of ten programs provide services for faculty and staff. And half of the programs open their doors to community members.

How are campus programs funded?

As with child care programs in the community, campus programs derive their funding from a variety of sources. The amount of outside subsidies campus programs receive varies greatly, with some programs being well supported and others needing to be entirely self-sufficient. Overall, as with community programs, the greatest source of funding for campus programs is parent fees.

The vast majority of campus programs receive support from their colleges, although the nature and amount of this support varies greatly. The most common form of institutional support is free or reduced-cost space, utilities, and/or maintenance. Some colleges provide support for staff salaries and benefits, and others provide tuition assistance.

Many campus programs also participate in state and federal subsidy programs. This participation rate may dramatically expand if certain provisions of the Higher Education Act are approved. Todd Boressoff, NCCCC public policy chairperson, reports that amendments to this act will provide significant funding for the start-up, expansion, and operation of child care programs on campuses. This legislation provides that a college will be eligible to apply for up to 1% of its prior year's Pell Grant expenditure to support child care initiatives. As this issue goes to press, the outcome of the legislation is still in doubt with major differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

How are campus programs organized?

In 1970, Rae Burrell, a student-parent at the University of California at Riverside, convinced the Robert F. Kennedy Foundation to provide a grant to found the Robert F. Kennedy Council for Campus Child Care.

Over the course of the next decade, the movement evolved to the point where in 1981 Harriet Alger, then at Cleveland State University, was elected president of a reorganized National Coalition for Campus Child Care.

Today, NCCCC, now entitled the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers, is going strong with nearly 400 members. It recently opened an administrative office in Washington, DC, hosts a web site, and sponsors an increasingly popular annual conference. In addition, NCCCC participates as one of the Strategic Partners of *Child Care Information Exchange*.

NCCCC has an ambitious agenda. Top on the priority list, of course, is working for the passage of a fully funded Campus Child Care Bill.

Current NCCCC president Jo Cope-land and president-elect Deborah Carlson have identified other initiatives to support the development of campus child care. Two agenda items involve research — updating research on the demographics of campus child care and conducting new research on the impact of campus programs. In addition, NCCCC is focusing its efforts on promoting collaborations. According to Carlson, "We are committed to promoting collaborations on campus and in the community. We are looking at collaborating with Head Start agencies and with local employers."

Stay tuned to *Child Care Information Exchange* for future news in the campus child care arena.

For More Information

■ For details on joining NCCCC or attending the 1999 annual conference, contact:

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■ To visit the NCCCC web site, contact:

<http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/n4c/n4chome.html>

■ For a status report on the Campus Child Care Bill, visit the NCCCC web site or contact:

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