

# Press Release

## Do Research to Find Quality Child Care

### For Immediate Release

**Charleston, WV; September 20, 2011:** Over the last several years, there has been considerable talk about quality child care. On both the national and state level, funding for education is always a hot topic, especially during elections and in these hard economic times. No matter what your political views, if you have small children, finding quality child care can be a challenge. The Kids Count Organization and the Kids First Campaign are working hard to improve the level of childcare quality in West Virginia. Their goal is to continue to build support for the new quality rating and improvement system. And this is good! At no other time is the brain as active as it is in the first three to five years of life. But what is quality child care?

Many think that just because a child care center is licensed by the WV Department of Health and Human Resources that it must be an acceptable center. That is not always accurate. When DHHR licenses a center, they are ensuring that the site meets the minimum safety standards as set forth by DHHR. They do not ensure quality.

Research confirms that a quality child care center has a staff that is caring, interacts and reads with children, responds to their needs and has specialized training in child development. Children are free to interact with their environment and others, and the environment is safe and organized into centers. If you discover a center that is accredited by the National Association for Early Childhood Education, you can be assured of quality because the accreditation process is all about quality. If you want to know whether the center you are interested in is accredited by the NAEYC, just ask them.

If you are concerned about the quality of your child's center, here are some suggestions. First and foremost, consider the staff. Is there high turnover or stability? Lead teachers should have specific training in their area. If they do not have an associate or bachelor degree in early childhood, ask if they have received a certificate from the Department of Labor - Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS). This indicates that the person has completed four semesters of child development and a minimum of 3,200 hours of supervised on-the-job training. Staff should also be attending regular

training just as any other profession requires continuing education credits to keep current on information.

Infant rooms should be warm and inviting. Each child should have their own crib with plenty of opportunities to explore their world. There should not be a set schedule in the infant room – each baby should decide when it is time to eat, sleep, rest and play. The staff should be responsive to the needs of the children.

Once children progress to the toddler stage, they should be in rooms that are arranged in centers. This should include music, art, blocks, sand and water table or science area, dramatic play and books. There should be scheduled activities for each day but children should also be free to move from center to center. This type of room arrangement should continue up through kindergarten.

A set curriculum should be employed. Although there is no consensus as to which curriculum is best, the WV Department of Education has adopted Creative Curriculum for all its Pre-K locations. If staff respond, “Oh yes, we have a theme each week and we do activities based on the theme” that may or may not be a set curriculum. The curriculum should include goals for fine and gross motor, math, reading, art, etc. all accomplished through play. There should also be a way to monitor and document progress made by each child, as well as a way to measure the success of the environment. There should be **no** worksheets introduced to children in a quality child care center and limited, if any, television.

I urge every parent to select the highest quality of care you possibly can. It is an investment in your child’s future that you will not regret. For help locating a child care center or evaluating a center’s quality, Connect Child Care Resource and Referral can be of great assistance. You may reach them at [www.wvdhhr.org/connect](http://www.wvdhhr.org/connect) or call toll free 1.888.595.8290.

Finally, many centers are struggling during these hard economic times and are trying not to raise their rates – they know the struggles their families are facing. However, books and toys must constantly be replaced. To help them, the WVU Extension Service of Kanawha County is hosting a book and toy drive. Please drop off gently used books and toys to our office at 4700 MacCorkle Avenue, SE in Kanawha City between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm. We will coordinate the distribution of these books, games and toys to the centers that desperately need them. The centers serve children from six weeks to sixth grade in their after school and summer programs.

I hope you will sort through your own toys and books and donate those that your family does not use any more. Your donation will have an impact on the quality of care provided to our youngest citizens. If you would like more information or you have questions, you may call Kerri Wade at the Kanawha County Extension Service at 304.720.9573.