GSA

Center News

Volume 3, Issue 2 | *A Newsletter for Federal Child Care Centers* | *Spring 2000*

The GSA nationwide network of child care coordinators

New England Region
Sherri Edwards
617-565-7312

Northeast and Caribbean Region
Sidny Lincoln
212-264-1268
Cora Zoccoloungaro
212-264-0514

Mid-Atlantic Region
Robyn Major
215-656-5897
Teresea Williams
215-656-6151

Southeast Region
Janie Heisner
404-331-4729

Great Lakes Region
Liz Themelis
216-522-4963
Brenda Gonzalez
312-353-5597

The Heartland Region
Barbara Daniels
816-823-2215

Southwest Region
BJ Upton
817-978-8451

Rocky Mountain Region
Jacki Fling
303-236-8014 x 264

Pacific Rim Region
Jennifer Kagiwada
415-522-3481
Julie Weatherston
415-522-3480

Northwest / Arctic Region
Deanna Forler
253-931-7700

National Capital Region
Joy Guenther
202-205-7255

GSA's 11th Annual Child Care Conference

"GSA Child Care 2000: A Vision for the Future"

New York, New York

July 27- 29, 2000

Join us for the Eleventh Annual Child Care Conference sponsored by the US General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, on July 27-July 29 in New York City. Our vision for the new millennium is to provide high quality affordable early childhood education for all Federal families. Child development experts and government professionals will address key issues and provide training that is directly related to the work of center staff, administrators, child care center boards of directors, federal agency representatives and facility and security managers.

We look forward to seeing you in the"Big Apple" in July. To obtain a registration brochure call 202.501.3965 or check out our web site on www.gsa.gov/pbs/centers/child/child.htm. For hotel reservations call the Marriott Marquis on 800.843.4898 before the deadline of July 5, 2000.

Special Highlights from the Week of the Young Child

Breakfast with Mayor Hal Daub, Omaha, Nebraska

The Omaha Children's Center held two special events celebrating Week of the Young Child.

The first event was "Breakfast with the Mayor". The parents from the Center were invited to breakfast with Mayor Hal Daub. Mayor Daub told stories to the children, met with parents and took a tour of the center.

The second event was releasing biodegradable red balloons on the west side of the Federal Building. The children sang a song before they released the balloons.

Reading with Mayor Jennings, Albany, New York

Club Fed Child Care Center was host to and visited some well known people during April's Week of the Young Child. The children and families prepared pictures and letters of exactly 'What Quality Child Care Meant to Them'. Each classroom then adopted a local politician and made arrangements to meet.

Albany Mayor Jennings came and read "Me Too" to his class of Toddlers, while Assemblyman McEneny held a private meeting with the Preschoolers and Kindergartners.

The parents and children loved the opportunity to let politicians know that while they were fortunate to have quality child care, too many children do not. The politicians loved the opportunity to meet their future constituents and were delighted by some of the very candid comments by the children!

In Memoriam of Susan Kossin…...

GSA's Child Care Program lost a true friend and visionary when Susan Kossin passed away on February 18, 2000. Sue was Executive Director of the New York Federal Executive Board and was instrumental in the development of the first series of child care centers in GSA managed space. She often presented workshops at GSA's national child care conferences on successful fundraising. Susan fought long and hard in establishing Fedkids, the child care program at 26 Federal Plaza, and served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for many years. Her legacy includes not only her successful efforts to provide high quality, affordable child care to all federal workers, regardless of their ability to pay, but, a generous bequest to the Fedkids Child Care Center in New York City. Fed Kids is developing a memorial for Sue to honor her generosity.

MORE WEB SITES:

GSA Child Care Program
http://www.gsa.gov/pbs/centers/child/child.html

Department of Labor
Women's Bureau
http://www.dol.gov.dol/wb/

Kevin's Corner

Enhancing the Quality of Artificial Light

It's often said that the two cheapest ways to improve the "feel" of an environment are paint and lighting. In fact, the two are related since wall color affects the amount and quality of light reflected. On the other hand, lighting changes the way wall color itself is perceived.

Paint may be far easier to resolve than lighting. There is often not a lot that can be done about the amount of *natural* lighting available to a center located in an existing facility. But through proper selection, there *is* quite a bit that can be done to enhance the quality of *artificial* lighting.

Artificial lighting in the GSA setting typically equates to fluorescent fixtures for reasons of longevity, economy and energy efficiency. But we shouldn't have to sacrifice lighting quality, something vitally important to a developing child's environment.

To create a natural feel, we need to choose the best fluorescent lamp, realizing that light can be measured several ways. We are all familiar with the concept of wattage as an indication of light output. But light is also measurable in terms of its quality – its "color temperature" (CCT) or apparent color, as well as light's ability to render "true" color - its color rendering index (CRI). These are the important qualitative factors which will influence lamp selection for your center.

Different lamps will produce different apparent color, depending on their temperature or "degree kelvin". For instance, light which is rich in red rays has a low reading in kelvins. Daylight may have readings from 5,000 to more than 20,000 K. Selecting lamps in this range of color temperature is the first step in selecting our ideal "overall" lighting. The second is to obtain the maximum CRI so that colors are true – not washed out or distorted. Taking both CCT and CRI into account will allow us to create interior space which appears both naturally "sunny" and where colors are seen as very close to "true".

Lamps suitable for child care have become available. For instance, Philips Lighting markets a "Colortone 75 -Daylight Plus" with a color temperature of 7500 K and a color rendering index of 95, which is remarkable. At slightly less CRI, 92, they have a "Colortone 50" with a temperature of 5000 K. This will be slightly more red in appearance, and will render more output while remaining in the color temperature of natural light.

Because these bulbs are in less demand, they may be somewhat more expensive. It's worth it, especially when we take life span into account - the life of a fluorescent is a long one – 20,000 hours.

I checked with General Electric, Sylvania and Phillips. All manufactured this "full spectrum" lighting in four foot long bulbs - the most typical fluorescent dimension, but General Electric and Sylvania also carried two foot. The all carried T-8 and T-12 types. (These designations refer to the thickness of the bulb.)

Bear in mind that lower temperature accent lighting may be appropriate in limited selected areas. A quality of natural light is that it is not uniform. So light temperatures as low as 4100 K may be acceptable as long as the CRI does not go below 80.

I particularly want to thank Darryl Gordon, an always-helpful electrical engineer in NCR. He is sensitive to the importance of lighting and was extremely helpful in the preparation of this article.

GSA Child Care Subsidy Pilot Program

GSA has launched an exciting pilot program to help lower income GSA families pay for child care!

The pilot program applies to children, newborn through 6 years old, attending licensed child care programs. The GSA child care subsidy plan bases eligibility on families' adjusted gross income (AGI) and the amount families pay for child care. Under the plan, employees are responsible for a family portion of the total child care costs, and GSA will pay the difference, up to the level equal to the highest GSA-sponsored child care center in the region.

For GSA families with an AGI of $35,000 or less, the family portion will be 10 percent for one child, 12 percent for two children, and 15 percent for three children or more. GSA will pay the difference between actual child care costs and the family portion. For example, for those who earn $35,000 and have one child in care at an annual cost of $7,000, the family portion would be $3,500 (10 percent of the AGI), and GSA would pay $3,500.

For families with an AGI greater than $35,000, a sliding scale will increase the family portion. For each additional $100 in AGI, the family portion would go up by one percent. If a family's AGI is $38,000 and they have one child in care, the family portion would now be $4,946. Again, GSA would pay the difference between the actual costs and the family portion, as long as the actual costs do not exceed the maximum amounts for GSA-sponsored child care centers in the region.

We have posted a calculator on GSA's web page, InSite, which allows employees to enter the AGI, the actual child care costs, and the number of children in the family under six receiving licensed child care. Because the sliding scale increases the family portion obligation as the AGI increases, those families earning over $45,000 are not likely to be eligible for support, unless the child care expenses are greater than 50 percent of the AGI.

Income Tax Implications – There are tax consequences to receiving a subsidy greater than $2,500 (if single) or $5,000 (if married). InSite will have general information about what portion may be taxable once IRS has advised GSA of the tax implications.

Funds – Payments must go directly to providers and not the employees. GSA will make electronic payments directly to child care providers. Employees are responsible for the family portion of the child care costs.

Provider eligibility – The providers must be licensed in the state or location in which they operate. They will be required to show GSA proof of that license e.g., photocopy with the provider form in the application materials.

Application – Employees can request applications by email to child@gsa.gov or they may go to the web, URL www.fillform.gsa.gov and look up forms 3674 and 3674A. GSA will continue to accept applications until August 1, 2000. This is a special fiscal year 2000 pilot program and might not be extended beyond September 30, 2000.

Point of Contact: Phone (202) 208-5119/Fax (202) 208-5430/ bonnie.storm@gsa.gov.

Reminder About Car Safety

Every 13 minutes someone in America dies in an automobile crash. Each of these occurrences is a tragedy. When a child dies in a car crash, our feeling of tragedy is heightened knowing that a young, healthy child has lost an opportunity for a long and productive life.

Children are at tremendous risk of being killed or injured in an automobile-related crash– as occupants, pedestrians or bicyclists. The news is not all bad. Proven lifesaving safety devices such as seat belts and bicycle helmets are readily available. Awareness and education efforts can help people understand the need to use these devices.

As child care providers you have enormous influence over children and their parents. You are an important source of essential health and safety information, in addition to the other important things you teach young children. Small efforts on your part can make a big difference.

The US Department of Transportation/National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has resources to help you address this serious problem. They offer materials addressing a variety of child traffic safety topics, recalls, training, information about community child safety seat checkpoints, and more. Please check their website at www.nhtsa.dot.gov or contact Barbara Sauers at (202) 366-0144 or bsauers@nhtsa.dot.gov for more information.

Of the GSA centers eligible for NAEYC accreditation, 85% are accredited

Congratulations to the following centers on their recent accreditation: Advantage Learning Center, Lakewood, CO; Sound Start Child Care Center, IRS Service Center, Philadelphia, PA; Bureautots Child Development Center, Washington, DC.
Congratulations to the following centers on their recent re-accreditation: CCC Learning Center 219, Chicago, IL;Corporate Kids, Kansas City, MO; State Street Child Care Center, Rochester, NY;
Congratulations to Kinderplatz Child Care Center, Fort Snelling, MN for their 4 Year Merit Extension on their Accreditation!

Legislative Update

Final regulations for implementing the Child Care Tuition Assistance Legislation (Public Law 106-58, section 643) which allows agencies to use appropriated funds for child care costs for lower income federal employees, were issued on March 17, 2000. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was responsible for drafting the regulations and has also developed a guide book to assist agencies in putting together a tuition assistance plan. The regulations and guide are available on the OPM web site at: www.opm.gov.

The pressure is on for agencies to implement programs as quickly as possible as the authority expires September 30, 2000. OPM has sponsored legislation to extend this authority and reports that they have had positive feedback from the Hill and are quite hopeful Congress will extend the authority.

Agencies must determine which of their employees are eligible for assistance and also determine how much that assistance will be. All tuition assistance payments are made directly to the child care provider and not to the employee. Licensed center based care as well as licensed in home care are covered by this legislation.

To date, few agencies have announced plans to subsidize employees this year. GSA and OPM are exceptions and have announced they will institute a tuition assistance program nationwide for all their employees who qualify. (please see page 3 for details on GSA's pilot subsidy program). The Department of Energy is concentrating their program on their two DC centers for their summer programs. HHS is in the planning stages and each of their 12 operating divisions will get to decide their own participation. The IRS is in the planning stages as well. Two of the federal employees' unions (NTEU and AFGE) have been working with agencies to institute programs.

Any Federal employees interested in more information on Public Law 106-58 should contact their own agency's personnel/human resources department.

More highlights from Week of the Young Child….

The YMCA Concorde School in Houston, Texas kicked off Week of the Young Child April 10th with a parade at the "Mickey" Leland Federal Building. On hand to participate in the fun and frolic was "Macy",the YMCA mascot. Children in the Concorde School enjoyed a week of activities such as "hat day", "hero day" (dress as your favorite hero), and the children's favorite, "face painting day". The week ended with a huge celebration on the playground when parents and children walked around to different booths to make goop and flubber; handmade spring bunnies; art & crafts activities, and of course, parents and children sampled plenty of cake, ice cream and cotton candy.

GSA Child Care Operations Center of expertise

National Director
Eileen Stern
212-264-8321

Deputy Director
Frank Kirchoff
212-264-1268

Kevin Kelly
202-208-7656

Sue Dixon
202-501-0287

Jill Rhea
215-656-5994

Nancy Norris
404-331-1851

Newsletter

Julie Weatherston
415-522-3480

Liz Themelis
216-522-4963

Special Thanks to: Cecilia Tracz for her assistance with the graphics and the formatting of this newsletter.

Contributions and Comments on Center News are welcome and encouraged.