

# **PENNSYLVANIA'S PRE-KINDERGARTEN CRISIS: A CRIME PREVENTION TRAGEDY**

A Report From  
**FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS**

AND

**Lynne M. Abraham, District Attorney, Philadelphia  
County**

**Stephen J. Bagnato, Ed.D., Professor of Pediatrics and  
Psychology, Children's Hospital/University of Pittsburgh**

**T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., Professor Emeritus, Harvard  
Medical School**

**William M. Hose, Sheriff, York County**

**Charles G. Kellar, Chief of Police, Harrisburg**

**Lawrence W. Sherman, Ph.D., Director of the Jerry Lee  
Center of Criminology, University of Pennsylvania**

**Joshua Sparrow, M.D., Assistant Professor, Harvard  
Medical School**

**William Christeson, M.H.S., Research Director,  
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids**

**Bruce R. Clash, State Director,  
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania**

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *PENNSYLVANIA* is a statewide, bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization led by over 100 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and victims of violence.

Our goal is to help the public and policy-makers understand and act on the knowledge that among our most powerful weapons in the fight against crime and violence are public investments in programs proven to keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place.

Launched in January of 2001, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *PENNSYLVANIA* is a project of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, a national, nonprofit organization of over 2,000 individuals on the front lines of the battle against crime and violence: law enforcement leaders and those from whom murder has taken a loved one.



# PENNSYLVANIA'S PRE-KINDERGARTEN CRISIS: *A Crime Prevention Tragedy*

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20 North Market Square, Suite 400  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 233-1520

NATIONAL OFFICE  
2000 P Street NW, Suite 240  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 776-0027  
[www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org)

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# FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS PENNSYLVANIA

A Non-Profit Organization of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, Prosecutors, and Crime Survivors Fighting to Prevent Crime by Investing in Children

Dear Pennsylvania Readers:

The police chiefs, district attorneys, sheriffs and victims of crime who are part of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS PENNSYLVANIA are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. We also know, however, that no amount of punishment can undo the agony crime leaves in its wake. When children don't get the right start in life, we are all endangered.

Today, whether we like it or not, two-thirds of Pennsylvania children under six—some 556,000 kids—are in some form of non-parental child care during the day. The question is whether that care will include quality education and development programs that help them learn to get along with others and start school ready to succeed, or whether it will be care that damages their development.

*The bad news:* Only about one in four of these 566,000 Pennsylvania children are in good care.

*The good news:* Quality pre-kindergarten programs, especially for disadvantaged children, are now proven to be among our most powerful weapons against crime.

This report concludes that the time for “reasonable doubt” on this issue is past. Recent long-term studies show that at-risk children who attend quality early childhood care and pre-kindergarten programs are far less likely to become criminals than those denied access to such programs.

Poor quality early childhood care multiplies the risk that children will grow up to become criminals and threatens the safety of all Pennsylvanians. Children from lower income families are most at risk of becoming involved in crime without quality programs. Unfortunately, lower income families have the most difficult time obtaining quality early childhood programs, and are the families whose children would benefit most from them.

Research in Pennsylvania and elsewhere shows that it is possible to dramatically close the gap between at-risk children and other Pennsylvania children. The evidence is clear: failure to invest wisely in pre-kindergarten programs now will cost taxpayers far more later. It will also inflict enormous suffering and cost lives.

That is why the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association, the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, and law enforcement leaders and crime victims across Pennsylvania are united in calling on elected officials to guarantee all families access to quality pre-kindergarten programs.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Carroll  
Chief of Police, West Goshen Twp.  
President, Pennsylvania Chiefs  
of Police Association

Bruce L. Castor, Jr.  
Montgomery County  
District Attorney

Edward M. Marsico, Jr.  
Dauphin County  
District Attorney

20 North Market Square • Suite 400 • Harrisburg, PA 17101 • (717) 233-1520 • Fax (717) 236-7745 [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org)  
A project of the Action Against Crime and Violence Education Fund

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## KEEPING KIDS FROM BECOMING CRIMINALS

Recent research now proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that quality pre-kindergarten and child care programs can make a dramatic difference in preventing delinquent and criminal behavior.

If care is of poor quality, it can damage children's potential to become contributing adults and increases the danger they will grow up to engage in crime.

However, quality pre-kindergarten and child care are proven to prevent delinquent and criminal behavior, as research shows:

- A 22-year study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan, showed that leaving three- and four-year old at-risk children out of the program multiplied by five times the risk that they would become chronic lawbreakers as adults.
- Researchers tracked for 14 years 989 children who had been enrolled in the government-funded Chicago Child-Parent Centers' pre-kindergarten program while three and four year olds, and 550 similar children who did not attend. By age 18, those who did not attend were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime.
- At the outset, 18 percent of children participating in Pittsburgh's Early Childhood Initiative (ECI), had behavioral problems so

severe that they warranted a mental health diagnosis. Three years later, behavior problems were within the normal range. Children who demonstrate elevated levels of disruptive, aggressive behaviors in early childhood often manifest high levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior later on in life.

## PRE-K OUT OF REACH FOR PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

While parents are the most important influence in the lives of children, 64 percent of the 884,030 Pennsylvania children under age six are in some form of non-parental care while parents are working.

In 2000, the average annual fee for child care in Pennsylvania was \$5,668 for an infant and \$5,044 for a three to five-year-old (which frequently provided low quality care). In contrast, the average tuition and required fees for an in-state undergraduate at a Pennsylvania state university was \$4,695.

Paying for two children in child care costs as much or more than the \$10,300 a single parent can make working full-time, year-round at a minimum-wage job.

Government programs aren't much help:

- Because of lack of funds, less than half of Pennsylvania's three-and-four-year-olds from poor families who are eligi-

ble for Head Start are served. Pennsylvania is one of only nine states that does not invest any of its own money in a separate state preschool program or supplement the Federal Head Start program.

- Only 14 percent of eligible kids from lower income working families receive assistance in paying for child care from the state/federal Child Care Development Fund.
- Only about a thousand children (less than two percent of those eligible) are served by Early Head Start, the federal program providing comprehensive child development and family support services to children from zero to three from low-income families.

### PREVENTING CRIME/SAVING MONEY

Quality child care and pre-kindergarten programs not only help children succeed in school and prevent crime, they also save taxpayers money. For instance:

- Rutgers University economist Steven Barnett has estimated that the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program produced nearly \$150,000 per participant in savings from reduced crime alone. In short, every dollar invested in the High/Scope Perry program returned \$7.16 to the public.
- University of Wisconsin Professor Arthur Reynolds found that the Chicago Child-Parent Centers produced over seven dollars in benefits for every dollar spent. By serving 100,000 children, it has thus far produced savings of \$2.6 billion.

- Pittsburgh's Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) reduced the percentage of children who needed to repeat a grade from 23 percent to 2 percent. ECI also reduced from 21 percent to one percent the portion of children requiring special education. The average yearly per-child cost of special education supports is \$8,300; that is in addition to the cost of regular classroom education. Over 12 years, that's \$99,600 per child saved by preventing the need for special education or repeating a grade.

### CONCLUSION

Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect the public safety. Government cannot fully meet this responsibility without making sure that all families have access to quality pre-kindergarten programs.

That is why the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association, the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, and the more than 100 Pennsylvania law enforcement members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *PENNSYLVANIA* solidly back efforts to increase Pennsylvania pre-kindergarten funding. ■

# PRE-KINDERGARTEN KEEPS KIDS FROM BECOMING CRIMINALS

Parents are the most important influence in the lives of children. The reality, however, is that 64 percent of the 884,030 Pennsylvania children under age 6 are in some form of non-parental care while parents are working.<sup>1</sup> For many, this is because they live in a one-parent household. For others, it is because both parents are working.

If care is of poor quality, it can damage children's potential to become contributing adults and increases the danger they will grow up to engage in crime. Fortunately, we now know that quality pre-kindergarten and child care programs can make a dramatic difference in preventing delinquent and criminal behavior. This has been proven not only in well-designed studies from around the nation, but also in very exciting new research taking place in Pennsylvania.

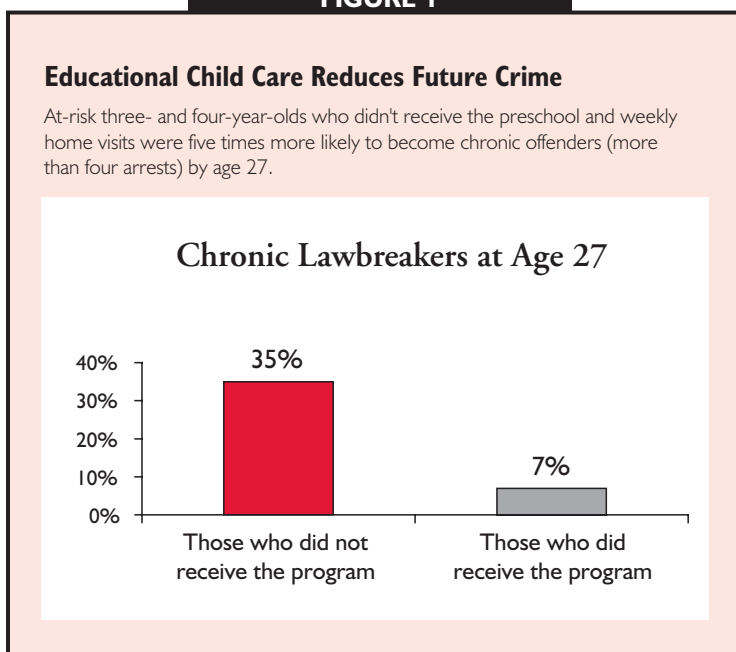
**High/Scope Perry Preschool Program:** The first major study to observe children from a pre-school program into their adulthood was conducted in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation randomly divided low-income three- and four-year-old children into two groups. Half of the children were enrolled in a quality pre-kindergarten program, including a weekly home visit, until they started kindergarten. The other children received no special services.

When the children reached age 27, arrest records showed that those who had received quality pre-kindergarten programming were one-fifth as likely to be "chronic offenders" (those who had more than four arrests).<sup>2</sup> In other words, those pre-kindergarten age children who did not receive the quality preschool and the home visits were five times more likely to become chronic lawbreakers in adulthood. [SEE FIGURE 1]

**Syracuse University Family Development Program:** In another model program, researchers found that subsequent delinquency was cut dramatically when families were provided educational child care, parenting education home visits, and other services beginning prenatally and continuing until the children began elementary school. By the time the children were 13-16 years old:

- Among those children who had not received the early childhood services, nearly one in five had already been charged with an offense, and nearly one in ten were already "chronic offenders" (with more than four arrests or charges of

FIGURE 1



HIGH/SCOPE PERRY PRESCHOOL

being ungovernable). As the inset shows, many of these offenses were serious.

[SEE FIGURE 2]

- Among those children who had received the services, only 20 percent had been charged with being ungovernable, and only 1.5 percent had actually been charged with being delinquent.

In other words, failing to provide these children with early care and education multiplied by ten times the risk that they would become delinquent as teens.<sup>3</sup>

FIGURE 2

### Kids Denied Quality Preschool Compiled Serious Criminal Records

Crimes committed\* ten years after the program ended (ages 13-16):

Total number and types of crimes committed by:

<b>Those who received the program</b>	<b>Those who did not receive the program</b>
Juvenile Delinquency	Juvenile Delinquency
	Juvenile Delinquency
	Juvenile Delinquency
	Juvenile Delinquency
	Criminal Mischief
	Violation of Probation
	Petit Larceny
	Petit Larceny
	Burglary
	Attempted Assault
	Robbery
	Robbery
	Assault
	Sexual Assault

\* Excludes non-crime "Ungovernable" cases where the juvenile court has ruled the child is out of the control of adults.

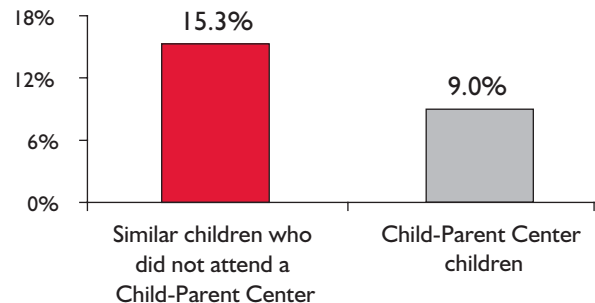
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY FAMILY DEV. PROGRAM

FIGURE 3

### Children Not in the Child-Parent Centers Were 70% More Likely to be Arrested for a Violent Crime

Compared to the three- and four-year-olds enrolled in this quality pre-K program, those left out were 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

#### Any Violent Crime Arrest by Age 18



CHICAGO CHILD-PARENT CENTER

### GETTING RESULTS ON A BIG SCALE:

Until recently, some researchers questioned whether results like these could be replicated on a larger scale in public programs. That question has now been decisively answered.

**The Chicago Child-Parent Centers:** Any doubt that a large-scale government-funded initiative could produce results similar to High/Scope's Perry Preschool has been erased by the results from a long-term study of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers (CPC). Since 1967, the CPC program has served 100,000 three- and four-year-olds in Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. Compared to children served in 20 CPCs in 1984, similar youngsters left out of the program were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18.<sup>4</sup>

[SEE FIGURE 3]

**Pittsburgh's Early Childhood Initiative:** The Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) program in Pittsburgh focused its efforts on helping local child care centers improve their quality by encouraging parent participation, assessing children to determine what the child's appropriate curriculum and care should be, and

encouraging community-based leadership and partnerships. It also coaches caregivers in working with children who have problem behaviors and with their parents.

Efforts to reach troubled kids are important because an analysis of available studies indicates that, without intervention, “Sixty percent of children who demonstrate elevated levels of disruptive, aggressive behaviors in early childhood will manifest high levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior later on.”<sup>5</sup>

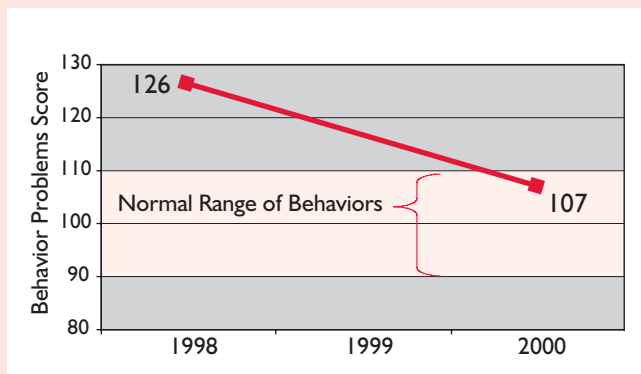
The Initiative’s success is clear. At the outset, 18 percent of ECI children demonstrated delays in social skills and had behavioral problems so severe that they warranted a mental health diagnosis. As Dr. Stephen J. Bagnato, University of Pittsburgh researcher and evaluator of the ECI program, explained, this troubled group of kids scored in the worst one percent nationally on a problem behaviors test, exhibiting behaviors such as frequent hitting, kicking, biting, and throwing chairs.<sup>6</sup> Nearly three years later, though, their behavior was within the normal range for children their age.<sup>7</sup> [SEE FIGURE 4]

In addition, kids attending the ECI centers were dramatically less likely to be held back a grade or be diverted into special education placements. Instead, these kids were off to a promising start. [SEE FIGURE 5]

FIGURE 4

**Problem Behaviors Reduced**

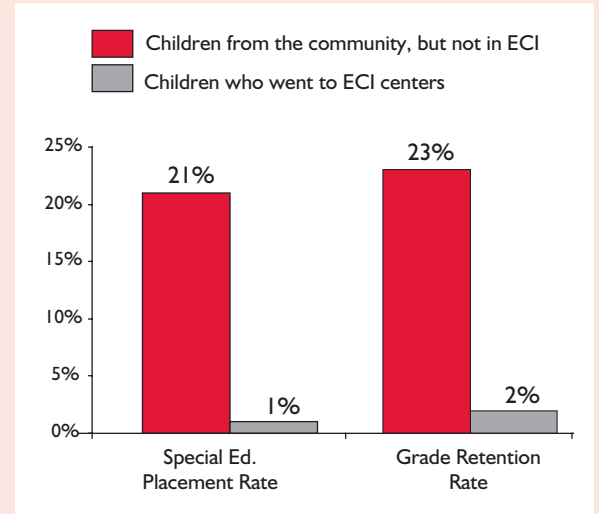
The Pittsburgh Early Childhood Initiative moves children scoring high for problem behaviors (hitting, kicking, biting, etc.) into the normal range.



EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

FIGURE 5

**Pittsburgh Program Cuts Percent of Kids Held Back or Put in Special Education**



EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

**North Carolina’s Smart Start Program:** Similar results were found in North Carolina when the state’s Smart Start program provided quality improvement assistance to child care centers. A study by the University of North Carolina’s Frank Porter Graham Center found that children in the centers that received substantial quality improvement help were only about half as likely to have serious behavior problems in kindergarten, compared to children in centers not receiving Smart Start services.<sup>8</sup> This is important because research consistently shows that children who exhibit problem behaviors in the early grades are at far greater risk than other children of becoming teen delinquents and adult criminals.<sup>9</sup> ■

# CHILD STORAGE ISN'T CHILD CARE: QUALITY IS CRITICAL

The programs that have been proven to have the most substantial impact in reducing antisocial behavior, delinquency and adult crime are *quality* pre-kindergarten and child care programs that include a strong parent involvement component. Conversely, especially for children burdened by other disadvantages, inadequate pre-kindergarten and child care damages their potential to become contributing adults and increases the danger they will grow up to engage in crime.

Tragically, faced with waiting lists for subsidized child care in some areas of the state and the high cost of child care throughout the state, many working parents have no better option than to leave their children in a setting that in many circumstances amounts to little more than “child storage”.

A nationwide study of child care confirms the

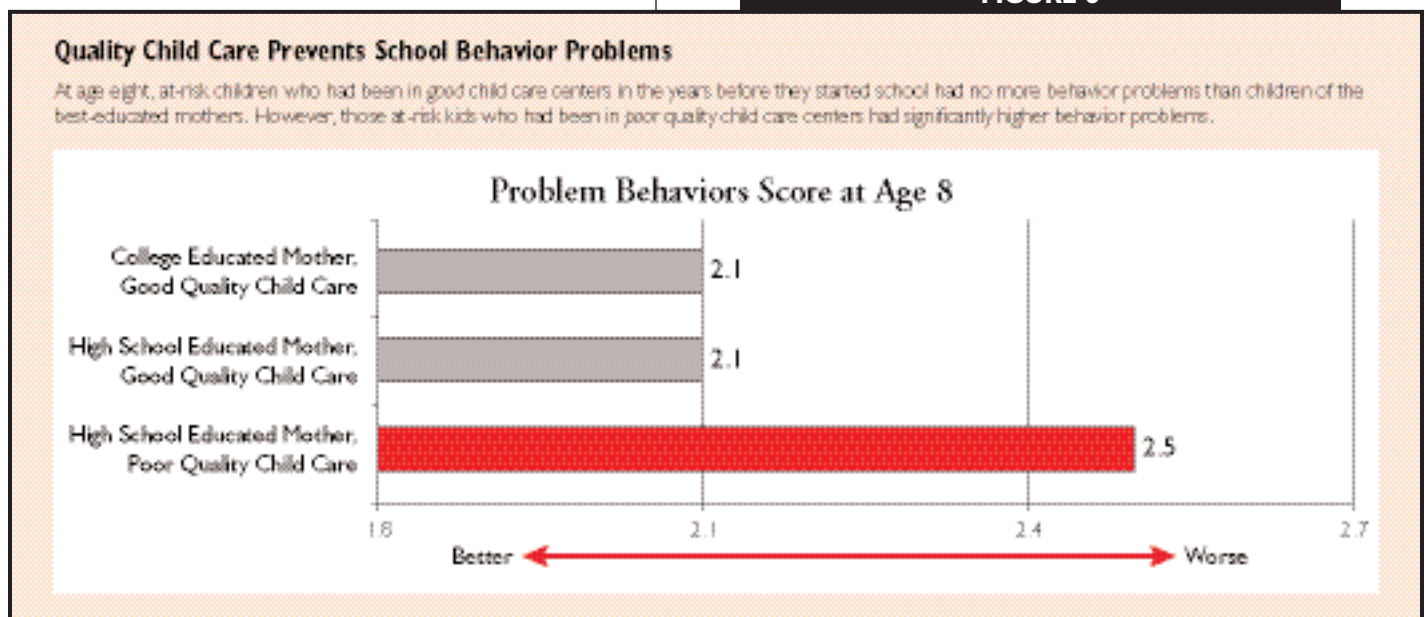
point that quality matters when it comes to problem behaviors later in life. The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study go to School research was conducted in four different states by a team from four different universities. The study first rated child care centers for quality. Years later, when the children who had been in the various centers were eight years old, their behavior was evaluated.

Children of high school-educated mothers who received good quality child care and pre-kindergarten had no more behavior problems than the children of college-educated mothers. But, children of high school-educated mothers who received poor quality child care had significantly more behavior problems. Good quality child care and pre-kindergarten levels the playing field.<sup>10</sup>

[SEE FIGURE 6]

Once again, this shows that quality matters, especially for the more at-risk children.

FIGURE 6



THE CHILDREN OF THE COST, QUALITY, AND OUTCOMES STUDY GO TO SCHOOL

## What are the Components of Quality Care?

The characteristics of good quality early childhood care and education are well recognized.<sup>11</sup>

They include, but are not limited to:

- **Frequent, warm interaction** among children and caregivers;
- **Trained caregivers** who understand child development and are sensitive to individual child and family needs;
- **Balanced daily program** with time for play, learning, rest and meals;
- **Enough adults** to respond to individual children (for example, the accreditation agency NAEYC recommends at least two trained caregivers for up to 20 preschoolers, ages four and five);
- **Safe, clean, pleasant environment** with areas for rest, quiet play and active play;
- A **learning environment** encouraging creativity, problem solving and social skills;
- **Equipment, toys and materials appropriate** to each child's age and abilities;
- **Nutritious and appealing** meals and snacks;
- **Open communication with parents** — visits and questions are encouraged;
- **Secure, stable environment** with low staff turnover;
- **Individualized educational and social services** available or by referral for children and family;
- Systematic **monitoring and evaluation** to continuously improve programs and benchmark progress.

Pre-kindergarten and child care require a partnership between parents, child care providers and government. All partners play a key role in achieving the well-being and healthy development of children. In fact, a common element of the previously cited studies is that they have at their core a parental involvement component. Each successful early education program offered coaching to parents on ways they can help their children develop their intellectual, emotional and social skills.

### ACCREDITATION BOOSTS QUALITY

One measure of child care quality is accreditation by nationally recognized organizations, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).<sup>12</sup> Accredited facilities typically are higher in quality than non-accredited sites. The accreditation process provides a means through which early childhood professionals and families can evaluate and compare early childhood programs with professional standards, and commit to ongoing improvement and evaluation.

For parents, accreditation provides a way to see at a glance whether a center meets minimum quality standards.

We don't expect individual consumers to conduct their own sanitation inspection of restaurants or grocery stores. Just as the health department certifies the sanitation at restaurants or grocery stores, child care accreditation is critical to parents who may be unable to take time off from work for multiple visits to observe a center.

Unfortunately, here in Pennsylvania, only 237 child care centers<sup>13</sup> out of 4,000 statewide<sup>14</sup>, or only about six percent, have received NAEYC accreditation.

It doesn't have to be this way. When the Defense Department realized that the child care available to military personnel was woefully inadequate, it made accreditation a centerpiece of its strategy for improving quality. Today, 95 percent of military child care centers are accredited by NAEYC, compared with just eight percent of

civilian child care centers nationwide.<sup>15</sup> Pittsburgh's Early Childhood Initiative was able to boast that, "in only two years, 50 percent of programs met quality standards for NAEYC accreditation."<sup>16</sup>

One major obstacle in gaining accreditation is the ability of child care facilities to attract and retain trained teachers. In a field where the average worker earns \$16,270, annual staff turnover ranges from 31 percent for teachers to 51 percent for aides. Quality of care suffers when children are deprived of consistent caregivers.<sup>17</sup> [SEE FIGURE 7]

### PENNSYLVANIA ASSESSES AVAILABLE QUALITY

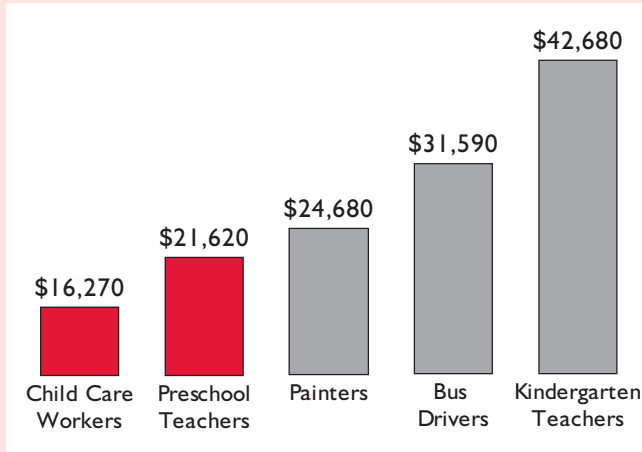
In April 2002, Pennsylvania Governor Mark Schweiker created the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Care and Education. The Task Force was "charged with examining the full range of proven evidence-based school readiness strategies available for early childhood care and education targeted at children age 0-8 and the existing Commonwealth services targeted to that age group."<sup>18</sup>

Included in the Task Force's October 2002 report is a study of early childhood care and education providers in Pennsylvania. The study examined the "structural" quality of providers by measuring the education and training of directors and staff, staff-child ratios, parent involvement, accreditation, staff turnover and other measures of quality.

FIGURE 7

#### Kindergarten Teachers Make Twice as Much as Preschool Teachers in Pennsylvania

This figure compares the mean annual wages of child care jobs to other occupations in Pennsylvania statewide in 2001.



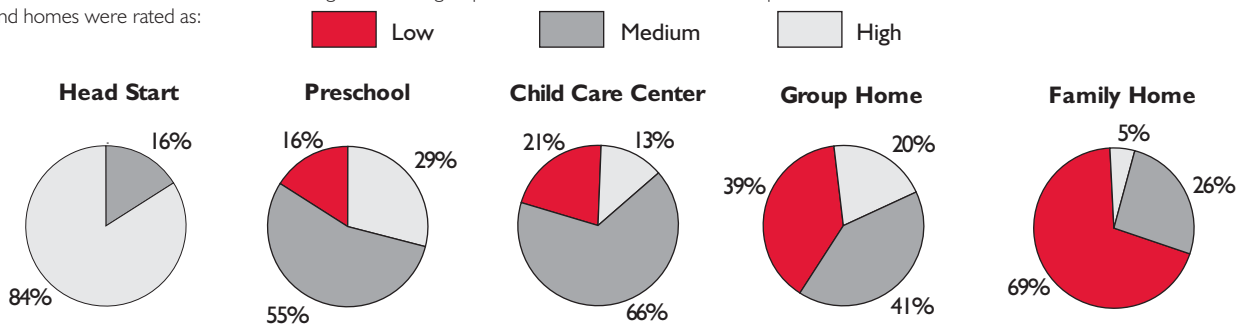
U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS 2002<sup>19</sup>

As the quality diagram shows [SEE FIGURE 8], center-based early childhood care and education providers tend to be of higher quality than group homes and family homes. *Even among child care centers, however, only 13 percent are of high quality and about 21 percent are rated low quality.* Among group homes, only 20 percent are rated high quality, but nearly 40 percent are rated as low quality. Only five percent of family homes provide high quality care.<sup>20</sup>

FIGURE 8

#### Pennsylvania Governor's Task Force Report Percentage of Providers Delivering Low, Medium, or High Quality Early Childhood Care and Education

On measures of the education and training of the staff, group size and staff ratios, staff turnover, planned curriculum and accreditation, the centers and homes were rated as:



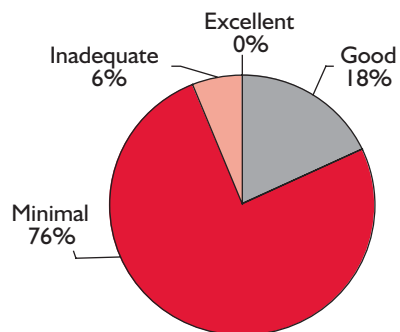
GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE REPORT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

A second report by the Governor’s Task Force, which announced quality results using additional measures that included observing interactions between caregivers and the children, reached similar conclusions. This second report states, “It is a major concern that less than 20 percent of providers were considered of good quality and that approximately 50 percent of providers were of minimal quality.”<sup>21</sup> Overall, 80 percent of care in Pennsylvania was assessed as minimal or adequate and the situation has worsened since the mid-1990’s.

The quality of available care in Philadelphia was also recently assessed. The Philadelphia Child Care Survey included 208 randomly selected centers and home-based child care settings serving children between two and five years of age. The survey found that less than one-fifth (18%) of center classrooms met the standards for good quality care. None of the programs observed, moreover, had scores that met the standards for excellent care as defined by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) standards. (The results of the survey and an explanation of the ratings are detailed below).<sup>22</sup> [SEE FIGURE 9]

FIGURE 9

**Few Philadelphia Child Care Centers Rated Good or Excellent**



**Inadequate Care:** Does not meet children’s basic needs. Children are not supervised closely enough to protect their safety. There is little or no developmentally stimulating interactions between staff and children.

**Minimal Care:** The environment is safe and the providers engage in some developmentally appropriate learning activities, but too few.

**Good Care:** Teachers are better trained, actively look out for children’s safety, and initiate activities that provide stimulating experiences.

**Excellent Care:** Trained staff offer a program structure but also take advantage of “teachable moments” and provide warmer, more involved interaction with children.

PHILADELPHIA CHILD CARE QUALITY STUDY

**PENNSYLVANIA EFFORTS TO IMPROVE QUALITY**

Pennsylvania has been slow to recognize and act on the importance of *quality* early childhood care and education. For many years after the 1995 enactment of the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, Pennsylvania focused almost exclusively on creating child care slots and generally neglected the quality of services offered by child care providers.

For a host of reasons, the Department of Public Welfare has begun to focus on the need to promote quality care environments for Pennsylvania’s youngest citizens.

**KEYSTONE STARS**

Pennsylvania’s principal systemic reform effort to enhance the quality of available child care is the new Keystone Stars program that was initiated in 2002 by the Department of Public Welfare. Using federal funds from the TANF program, Keystone Stars is a tiered rating and reimbursement system that rewards child care providers for investing in the components of quality care.

Keystone Stars identifies four levels of quality performance standards beyond basic state health and safety requirements. Providers can achieve a quality rating designated by one to four stars, similar to the diamond rating of hotels and restaurants. The four star rating reflects standards similar to the accreditation standards developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The quality performance standards in each level are research-based and linked to improved outcomes for children.

Keystone Stars provides financial incentives to centers that provide quality environments for children which will help the center make improvements without raising fees beyond what parents can afford. These improvements will help children achieve increased social and emotional development, enhanced learning skills and improved school readiness. In addition, Keystone Stars will eventually provide parents with a valuable tool to assess the quality of their child care provider.

Twenty-six other states have used similar approaches, and in New Jersey, a tiered-reimbursement program has already raised the number of accredited facilities by 33 percent.<sup>23</sup>

However, as Keystone Stars is a three-year pilot program, it only has enough funding to recognize approximately 300 to 400 center-based providers.<sup>24</sup> Without more funding, this critical quality-enhancing program can neither be expanded to engage more of the 4,000 center-based providers statewide, nor remain sustainable.

### OTHER PENNSYLVANIA PROGRAMS AIMED AT IMPROVING QUALITY BY ASSISTING TEACHER TRAINING

Besides the new Keystone Stars pilot program, Pennsylvania directs other federal funds towards improving the quality of early childhood programs. These teacher education, training and support programs include:<sup>25</sup>

- Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.): A program providing scholarships for child care staff to earn college credits in early childhood education and pays a portion of other costs.
- Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) Loan Forgiveness: A program providing student loan forgiveness for qualified applicants who work in day care centers or group child day care homes.
- Pennsylvania Pathways: The Department of Public Welfare's system for delivering educational opportunities to meet the training and career development needs of child caregivers.
- Early Childhood Education Linkage System (ECELS): A program operated by the American Academy of Pediatrics, provides health and safety training, technical assistance, and resource materials to child care providers.

Unfortunately, these programs only serve a fraction of the early childhood care and education provider system in Pennsylvania. ■

## REACH For Success<sup>26</sup>

At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, the Harrisburg School District began a pilot program designed to boost the school readiness of three- and four-year-old children. The program, Reaching Early Achievement for Children in Harrisburg or REACH, is a joint venture of the Harrisburg School District, City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania State University, Capital Area Head Start, the Kellogg Foundation and many corporate donors that committed a substantial portion of the funding.

To document the program's effectiveness, Pennsylvania State University will study and evaluate the program and track participating students through age 12. In the program's first year, 180 Head Start eligible children are being served in this high-quality preschool environment. For the 2003-2004 school year, the district hopes to enroll 400 children.

Partnerships like the REACH program demonstrate the viability of early education programs on a small-scale basis. To bring the program up to scale to include all children who would benefit will require a substantial investment from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Plans to offer REACH to all 1,200 of Harrisburg's 3- and 4-year-olds would require \$12 million annually. Harrisburg School District Superintendent Gerald Kohn says, "that the District will not be able to achieve this without state funding".<sup>27</sup>

# PAYING FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN AND CHILD CARE IS A HEAVY BURDEN

In 2000, the average annual fee for child care in Pennsylvania was \$5,668 for an infant and \$5,044 for a three- to five-year-old.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the average tuition and required fees for an in-state undergraduate at a Pennsylvania state university was \$4,695.<sup>29</sup>

The cost of pre-kindergarten and child care is a huge burden for most middle-class families. For poorer families and many moderate income families, it is insurmountable: paying for two children in child care costs as much or more than the \$10,300 a single parent can make working full-time, year-round at a minimum-wage job. For the middle-class family, where the average annual wage in the Commonwealth is \$33,809,<sup>30</sup> the cost of care for two children is almost one-third of their gross wage.

The federally funded Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) provides states with funds that can be used to help working families making less than 85 percent of the state's median income pay for child care. In order to receive the full federal CCDBG allocation, states must match a portion of the funding, and they may add additional funding. The resulting pool of federal and state funds is the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).

Families receiving this assistance are free to choose child care provided by a relative or neighbor, a child care center, or someone who provides child care in the provider's home. In 1999, the most recent year for which data is available, CCDF was so under-funded it served only 15 percent of those who are eligible in Pennsylvania under the federal eligibility standards.<sup>31</sup> Too often, families who receive this subsidy find it is inadequate to purchase quality child care, even *if* good care is available in their community.

The federal Head Start program, which began in

1965, provides comprehensive education, social and emotional development programs, physical and mental health and nutrition services, and parent involvement for children whose families are below the poverty line.

With broad bi-partisan support, Head Start has made great strides in providing higher quality early childhood education to low-income children, expanding 81 percent from 1989 to 1999.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, the program remains woefully under-funded, serving only about six in ten eligible three- and four-year olds nationally.

Here in Pennsylvania, the situation appears to be even worse.

According to the Pennsylvania Head Start Association, less than half of the three- and four-year-olds eligible for Head Start in Pennsylvania are currently receiving it.<sup>33</sup> One reason for this is that Pennsylvania is one of only nine states that does not invest any of its own funds in a separate state preschool program or supplement the Federal Head Start program.<sup>34</sup>

Head Start is changing children's lives for the better, with nearly all studies that measure school progress showing reduced grade repetition, reduced reliance on special education, and higher high school graduation rates.<sup>35</sup> Yet few Head Start centers achieve the full promise of the High/Scope Perry Preschool program after which they have been loosely modeled. One obvious reason is they have never been adequately funded to do so. Efforts to increase funding for quality improvements for Head Start always end up being weighed against the pressing need to pro-

vide full-day, full-year care (only 11 percent of Pennsylvania children enrolled are in full-day programs),<sup>36</sup> and the greater need to serve eligible children from poor families left out due to lack of funding. While improvements in Head Start can be accomplished with modest investments in training alone, more substantial progress will require more funds to attract and retain skilled teachers.

Early Head Start was created to provide comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income babies and toddlers from birth to age three. However, in 1998-99, only about a thousand children received services, or less than two percent of the eligible Pennsylvania children.<sup>37</sup> ■

## Types of Pre-kindergarten and Child Care In Pennsylvania<sup>38</sup>

**PARENTAL CARE:** In Pennsylvania, only 36 percent of children under age six are in full-time parental care, similar to national statistics.

**CHILD CENTER:** This is a program that cares for seven or more children who are not related to the center operator. Pennsylvania has 3,938 facilities, with an estimated capacity of 236,000 children.

**GROUP HOME:** This is a program that cares for between seven and 12 children who are not related to the operator. Pennsylvania has 791 homes, with an estimated capacity of 10,000 children.

**FAMILY HOME:** This is a program with one caregiver who cares for between four and six children who are not related to the caregiver. Pennsylvania has 4,110 homes, with an estimated capacity of 25,000 children.

**LEGALLY UNREGULATED CARE:** A child care setting in which a relative/neighbor caregiver provides services for three or fewer children unrelated to him or her. The caregiver may also care for as many as six grandchildren, but in no case may the total number of children served exceed six.

**HEAD START PROGRAM:** A federally funded comprehensive preschool program for children from low-income families that is regulated by the federal Administration for Children and Families. In Pennsylvania, services are offered through a network of nearly 660 centers serving only 28,386 three- and four-year-old children of the 65,000 eligible children.<sup>39</sup>

**PRESCHOOLS AND NURSERY SCHOOLS:** These programs are registered with the Department of Education and meet its regulation requirements. During the 2000-01 school year, Pennsylvania had 119,318 total children in public kindergarten both part-and full-day, and 34,699 enrolled in private kindergarten full- and part-day.<sup>40</sup>

# PENNSYLVANIA CAN PREVENT CRIME AND SAVE TAXPAYERS MONEY

Wise investments in early childhood education not only prevent crime, but they also help the kids served to become productive adults. This is illustrated by the results from the High/Scope Perry Preschool program that tracked its participants and the kids who didn't get the program until they were 27 years old. As a result, the savings to the public from investments in quality early childhood education are substantial. [SEE FIGURE 10]

**High/Scope Perry Preschool:** Rutgers University economist Steven Barnett has estimated that the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program produced nearly \$150,000 per participant in savings from reduced crime alone.<sup>41</sup> Even after discounting these savings to take into account interest that could have been earned on the preschool

investment while the High/Scope toddlers were growing up, Barnett concluded that the net savings were more than \$70,000 per participant in crime-related savings alone, and a total of \$88,000 once welfare, tax and other savings are included.<sup>42</sup>

In short, every dollar invested in the High/Scope Perry program returned \$7.16 to the public. These savings count only the benefits to the public at large — without even taking into account the enormous direct benefits to the kids themselves.<sup>43</sup>

Barnett estimates that the cost to society of failing to provide at least two years of quality early-childhood care and education to low-income children is approximately \$100,000 per child, totaling about \$400 billion for all poor children now under five.<sup>44</sup>

A RAND Corporation study found that even after excluding all benefits to crime victims and other citizens, and discounting to account for alternative investments, savings to government alone from providing the High/Scope services came to twice the program's costs.<sup>45</sup>

**Chicago Child-Parent Centers:** New research proves that similar savings can be realized when quality early-childhood programs are brought to full scale. As described earlier, Chicago's Child-Parent Centers program has provided quality early childhood education to almost 100,000 at-risk kids since 1967.<sup>46</sup> A study that tracked almost 1,000 children who attended the centers in 1984, and 550 similar kids who did not attend found that the program produced over seven dollars in benefits for every dollar expended. If the increased lifetime earnings of the participants are excluded,

FIGURE 10

## Quality Pre-kindergarten and Child Care Programs Save Taxpayers Money

Even after accounting for inflation, over seven dollars was saved by the public for every dollar invested in a preschool and home visitation program.



HIGH/SCOPE PERRY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

the monetary savings to the government and crime victims total \$3.83 per dollar invested. These estimates only count monetary savings and exclude the value in reducing the pain and suffering of the crime. The real savings to the public are actually much higher.<sup>47</sup>

Even excluding those savings from victim pain and suffering and the increased lifetime earnings for participating children, monetary savings alone generated by the program from serving just the 100,000 children it has thus far served in Chicago will come to \$2.6 billion. Making programs like this available in Pennsylvania could also save billions of dollars.<sup>48</sup>

If these savings estimates seem high, consider that in 1993 alone, violent crime in Pennsylvania cost the government, victims and society as a whole \$11.6 billion dollars. Over five billion of that was from violence committed by juveniles.<sup>49</sup>

#### **Pittsburgh's Early Childhood Initiative (ECI):**

ECI reduced the percent of children who needed to repeat a grade from 23 percent to two percent. When a child is held back to repeat a year in school, taxpayers must pay for a whole year of extra schooling. ECI also reduced from 21 percent to one percent the portion of children requiring special education.

Ron Grimm, Ph.D., superintendent of the Woodland Hills School District explained the savings from ECI: "For taxpayers, the implications of quality early care and education are staggering. In our district, the average yearly per-child cost of special education supports is \$8,300; that is in addition to the cost of regular classroom education. Over 12 years, that's \$99,600 per child."<sup>50</sup>

No wonder leading economists like University of Chicago Nobel prize-winner James Heckman conclude that the nation should be investing significantly more in early-childhood education, explaining that, "The greatest benefits of these [early childhood education] programs are on socialization and not IQ. Social skills and motiva-

tion have large payoffs in the labor market."<sup>51</sup> William Gale and Isabel V. Sawhill of the Brookings Institution agree on the value of early childhood education, writing that these investments provide government and society "with estimated rates of return that would make a venture capitalist envious."<sup>52</sup>

**The bottom line:** Investments in quality child development are money-savers, not budget-busters. ■

# CONCLUSION

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Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect the public safety. As the crime prevention evidence presented in this report indicates, government cannot fully meet this responsibility without making sure that all families have access to quality pre-kindergarten programs.

Law enforcement leaders who work every day to track down, arrest and prosecute criminals know that this vital defense is only part of the fight against crime — and that it cannot undo the harm already inflicted once a crime has been committed. Victims of violence know this better than anyone else. Pennsylvania must invest at the front end in programs proven to keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place, instead of paying much more for failure at the back end.

The good news is that investing in quality pre-kindergarten and child care really work to reduce crime and save money.

Pennsylvania and the federal government are both falling short of the investments in quality pre-kindergarten education. Because of lack of funds, Head Start serves less than half of the eligible three and four-year-olds in Pennsylvania.<sup>53</sup> Also due to lack of funds, only 15 percent of eligible kids from lower income working families receive assistance in paying for child care.<sup>54</sup> Of the early

education and child care programs that are available in the state, 80 percent of them are assessed as “minimal” or “adequate.”<sup>55</sup> In addition, Pennsylvania is one of only nine states<sup>56</sup> that does not invest any of its own money in a separate state preschool program or supplement the Federal Head Start program.

The Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association, the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, and the more than 100 Pennsylvania law enforcement members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *PENNSYLVANIA* solidly back efforts to increase Pennsylvania early childhood care and education funding.

It is time for Pennsylvania to commit to a plan that will assure all Pennsylvania families affordable access to quality pre-kindergarten programs if they want their children to participate.

These investments are sound education policy, sound fiscal policy, and are needed to ensure the safety of all Pennsylvanians. ■

# ENDNOTES

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20 North Market Square, Suite 400  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

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