

2010 Annual Report on State Employee Child Care Centers

Overview

Pursuant to 30 ILCS 590, known as the State Agency Employees Child Care Services Act, the Department of Central Management Services may authorize state agencies to contract for the provision of child care services for its employees. To that end, the State of Illinois presently operates two on-site child care centers, one located in Chicago and one in Springfield, as evidence of its commitment to provide a valuable service and benefit to state employees.

State of Illinois Child Development Center

The State of Illinois Child Development Center, located in the Michael A. Bilandic Building, 160 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois, celebrated its 18th successful year in September 2010. Early Child Care Services, Inc., Stacy Olszewski, Director, manages the Center. The Center was recently accredited for the fourth time with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); this accreditation will expire in 2013. Ms. Olszewski has also received her director's credential from NAEYC.

There are three full-time teachers in each of the four classrooms with an average of 16 children (1:5 ratio) per room. Children ages two through five are provided full-time care with priority enrollment given to children of state employees. The Center has been running at near capacity since 2001. When there is space available, the Center provides care on a day-to-day basis for children who are not enrolled full-time in the center and a primary care giver is unavailable. The center prides itself with very low turnover of teachers; the average length of employment is six years. This year, one teacher attained her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education, and another teacher earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education.

In 2004, the Center began providing care for six and seven-year-old students with a cultural summer program. The children are able to take full advantage of the museums, libraries and special events located in the Chicago area. The summer program has proven to be a huge success as parents are offered high quality summer child care that includes fun and educational opportunities for their children.

The Center offers spacious classrooms, a separate Discovery Room designed by Kohl Museum, and a large outdoor playground located on the deck of the 21st floor of the Bilandic Building. The Center is staffed by dedicated and highly qualified early childhood teachers who provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum in a safe and

nurturing environment. The innovative curriculum, based on the belief that children learn through play, includes whole language, math their way, science, social studies, art, music, movement, and computers. The children grow and develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically during their time in the Center.

In 2008, the Center became part of the Chicago Public Schools in the Community Partnership Program which has enabled the Center to:

1. Increase their employees' salaries based on their educational qualifications;
2. Financially assist Center employees to earn bachelor degrees; and
3. Increase training opportunities for their staff.

By taking advantage of the program's opportunities to better educate, train, and compensate the Center's employees, the Center's children and parents are afforded higher quality child care and education.

Bright Horizons Child Care Center, Department of Revenue

This year marked Bright Horizons' 16th year at the Department of Revenue. The center had a few exciting changes and additions to the program. The first exciting change was the addition of an infant room that opened in July 2010. The theme of the new program is *A Great Place for Babies*. These infant rooms are different from typical child care centers' infant rooms because the program promotes a respectful infant environment where babies can crawl and explore at their level. There are no high chairs or bouncer seats in the room, just happy babies being held as they eat and having the freedom to crawl around. Using *We Care Health and Safety* procedures in the room further creates a safe environment.

The other exciting change this year was the addition of a junior kindergarten classroom. This program is for those children in their last year of child care before attending kindergarten. The emphasis in this program is to further prepare the children for kindergarten with the *Ready for School Program*. The individualized program works with the children on their individual levels but also includes group activities.

The center continues to have its preschool room for the three and four-year-old children using *The World at Their Fingertips* curriculum which focuses on math, science, language and art.

Due to the above program additions, the faculty has increased by two teachers and is currently staffed with Tracey Tisckos, Director, seven full-time teachers and one part-

time teacher; all teachers are First Aid and CPR trained. The center is proud to have six teachers who have obtained their bachelor's degrees. Bright Horizons promotes continuing education for its employees and offers a great benefits program; thus, the center experiences a very low teacher turnover. This offers the children consistency in their care and peace of mind for the parents.

Dependent Care Assistance Program

State of Illinois employees can pay for the care of their dependent children with tax-free dollars by utilizing flexible spending accounts. Employees may set aside up to \$5,000 annually through payroll deduction for this purpose.

The Illinois Department of Central Management Services reports strong employee participation since the program's inception in 1987. In calendar year 2010, 1,635 employees statewide participated in the program with contributions totaling \$6,379,073.20.