



## **2015 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 23rd successful year in September 2015. Early Child Care Services, Inc., Stacy Olszewski, Director, manages the Center. Last year the Center earned its accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Ms. Olszewski personally holds a credential as a director, preschool and infant/toddler.

There are three full-time teachers in each of the four classrooms and an additional small classroom with one teacher and 10 five-year-old children. 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 or 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 whose primary caregiver is unavailable. The center prides itself with very low turnover of teachers with the average length of employment of nine years for lead teachers. Four out of five lead teachers have Bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education. Two of the lead teachers have Master's degrees.

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, recently replaced in October 2013, located on the deck of the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 the employees' salaries based on their educational qualifications;
2. Financially assist Center employees to earn bachelor's degrees; and
3. Increase training opportunities for the 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**

Bright Horizons celebrated their 21<sup>st</sup> year at the Department of Revenue. In December 2015, Keith Pursey celebrated his one year anniversary as Director after serving five years as a lead teacher and one year as the Assistant Director. The current staff consists of five full-time teachers and two substitute teachers. All lead teachers have either an Associate's or a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood or a related field.

Bright Horizons has an innovative curriculum. *Handwriting without Tears* and *Everyday Math* are just two of the components of the Center's curriculum. In September 2013, both programs were implemented in the Preschool and Kindergarten Prep classes. *Handwriting without Tears* teaches the children how to easily understand the formation of letters and how to start the writing process. *Everyday Math* is exactly what it sounds like: Math in our everyday lives. The children are taught how to solve simple math problems in their everyday life. Parents are given ideas on how to incorporate math on their drive home, in their homes, or even at the grocery store! Both programs are very well-received, and the families love the growth they see in their children.

Bright Horizons has long viewed its responsibility to ensure that the children they care for have all the benefits of a curriculum that incorporates activities and programs focused on healthy habits and overall well-being. As in past years, the Center has

worked to further improve the already strong menus provided in collaboration with Arena Food Service. In 2012, the Center completely eliminated offering juice in favor of serving water with snack. The Center also began work on improving the large muscle development time using *Movement Matters* so that all children are working on a formalized weekly exercise program.

The Center has one Infant room, one Toddler room, one Twos room and one Preschool/Kindergarten Prep room. Bright Horizons enjoys low ratios which gives the teachers a chance to focus more on each individual student.

### **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 2015, 1,768 employees statewide participated in the program with contributions totaling \$6,918,996.74.