

Southern Early Childhood Association

Public Policy Notes

Life Expectancy in Parts of the South Worsening or Stagnating

Over the last four decades, one major goal of the health system in the United States has been to improve the health status of all people, particularly those at greater risk of poor health. Numerous programs, including early childhood programs such as Head Start, WIC, SCHIP and other health related programs have all worked to ensure that children and families are healthy and remain healthy throughout adulthood, regardless of socio-economic status.

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and the University of Washington recently released a report that included statistics about the declining life expectancy

rates for certain segments of the American population. Although the life expectancy in the U.S. increased more than 7 years for men and more than 6 years for women between 1960 and 2000, some groups in the population experienced either a decline or stagnation in mortality beginning in the 1980's.

This study looked at counties throughout the U.S., and the majority of the counties with the worst downward swings in life expectancy were in the Deep South, along the Mississippi River, and in Appalachia, extending into the southern portion of the Midwest and into Texas. These segments of the American population ex-

perienced a 4% decline or stagnation for males and a 19% decline or stagnation for females. According to researchers, "life expectancy decline is something that has traditionally been considered a sign that the health and social systems have failed." An analysis of death statistics for this population shows that the diseases most related to this trend are related to smoking, high blood pressure and obesity.

The study, *The Reversal of Fortunes: Trends in County Mortality and Cross-Country Mortality Disparities in the United States* is available at <http://medicine.plosjournals.org>.

Need a Speaker on Public Policy?

The National Governors Association has created the NGA Speakers' Bureau as a resource for groups and organizations that are seeking an expert on public policy issues.

The Bureau includes lead-

ing public policy experts covering a wide range of issues, including education; energy and environment; health care; homeland security; and social, economic, and workforce development.

Learn more about the new NGA Speakers' Bureau and individual policy experts at www.nga.org/experts. For more information, you can contact Caitlin Lally in NGA's Office of Communications at 202-624-5301 or clally@nga.org.

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Inside this issue:

Child Trends	2
Child Care Tax Credits	2
Immigration Raids	2
Healthy Child Care	3
Access to Pre-K	3
Child Abuse & Neglect	3
South Carolina Task Force	4

Special points of interest:

- Health Trends
 - Policy Reports
 - Child Care Tax Credits
 - Task Force on Quality
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Child Trends a Source of Research Reports on Child and Family Issues

Child Trends is a Washington D.C. based research organization that publishes reports on various issues that are of interest to child advocates. Many of their reports have implications for early childhood professionals and public policy development in states, and you will find good sources of data to use in your advocacy strategies.

A report released on May 6, 2008, *Factors Associated with Multiple-Partner Fertility Among Fathers*, provides information about the phenomenon of males who father children with more than one woman. This group of males represents approximately 17% of males ages 16-45.

Fathers who have children with more than one partner provide less financial support and spend less time with their nonresident children.

Another report, *Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings: A Compendium of Measures*, is a comprehensive summary of current program assessment instruments that contains comparative information on different instruments, a significant resource in the development of QRS systems. You'll find a link to the report on the SECA Website's Public Policy Page.

Child Trends produces reports in the following research areas:

- Child Poverty
- Child Welfare
- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- Fatherhood & Parenting
- Health
- Indicators of Health & Well-being
- Marriage and Family
- Positive Development
- School Readiness
- Teen Sex and Pregnancy
- Youth Development

If you are interested in receiving their regular E-Newsletter, you can sign up on their website. There is no charge for the newsletter. For more information, go to www.childtrends.org.

Three SECA States Change Dependent Care Tax Credit

In April 2006, the National Women's Law Center issued a report, *Making Care Less Taxing: Improving State Child and Dependent Care Tax Provisions*. The report summarized state child care tax credits and made recommendations on improving those credits.

According to the 2008 update of this report, three SECA states modified their dependent care tax credits in 2007.

In Georgia, the maximum credit

allowed was raised from 10% of the federal credit to 20%. This meant an increase in the credit from a maximum of \$210 for one child to a maximum of \$420 for one child.

Tax provisions for child & dependent care expenses can provide valuable assistance to families struggling to pay for the care necessary for them to earn a living. (NWLC)

Louisiana tied four new refundable school readiness credits to its QRS system. The credits include one for families, one for providers, one for businesses and one for directors and staff.

Oklahoma now requires families to choose between the existing Oklahoma child care credit and a new child care tax credit and makes neither credit available if the family's federally adjusted gross income exceeds \$100,000.

For more information about the report, go to www.nwlc.org.

The Impact of Immigration Raids on Children

Almost 5 million U. S. children have at least one undocumented parent according to a report, *Paying the Price The Impact of Immigration Raids on America's Children*. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has stepped up the number of raids they are conducting to locate undocumented immigrants, and the children of these immigrants are often left in a community without a parent or support

group. Parents are arrested or detained, without the ability to make arrangements for the care of their children. These children, and the communities in which they live, are left to cope with emotional trauma, psychological duress and mental health problems. Because of the growth of immigrant populations within the SECA states, this has become an issue as more of these raids are conducted.

The report focuses on the experiences of three communities in which these raids took place and notes the issues with ensuring the safety of children.

The report provides recommendations on how to ensure the protection and well-being of children during these events.

For a copy of the report, go to www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/UrbanLaRazaReport.pdf.

Health Resources in Child Care

The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed a Website developed to children's health issues, www.healthychildcare.org. This site contains information specific to health practices and issues in child care and has a child care provider resource page with many resources for providers and parents.

The Academy has also developed a list of Child Care Health Consultants. These consultants are the contact point for the Child Care Initiatives undertaken by the American Academy of Pediatrics in your state.

Alabama/Dr. Cheryl Anne Outland (caoutland@charter.net); *Arkansas*/Dr.

Jill Fussell (fusselljillj@uams.edu); *Florida*/Dr. David O. Childers, Jr. (david.childers@jax.ufl.edu); *Georgia*/Dr. Thomas Allen Clark (tasclark@aol.com)*Kentucky*/Dr. Susan Pollack (shpoll@uky.edu); *Louisiana*/Dr. Patricia T. Peairs (ptpeairs@cox.net); *Mississippi* / Dr. Eboni Smith (esmith2@ped.umsmed.edu); *Oklahoma*/ Dr. Eda D. Rhoades (eddr@health.ok.gov); *South Carolina*/Dr. Julia B. Balance (julia.balance@palmettohealth.org); *Tennessee*/Dr. Seth Jerome Scholer (seth.scholer@vanderbilt.edu); *Texas*/Dr. Barry D. Bzostek (bbzostek@cook-childrens.org); *Virginia*/Dr. Tracy

Wright (twright@gmail.com); *West Virginia*/Dr. Pippi McCoy Lambros (lambros@marshall.edu).

Children's health programs are on the state and federal legislative agenda, and potential cuts are looming. Health care for children is a critical issue in the South, and it will take a strong partnership among many groups to affect the eventual outcome.



Get to know the consultant listed in your state and find out how he or she can provide information that will sup-

Access to Pre-kindergarten Programs for All At-Risk Children

- In 2007, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) published *Ready to Start: Ensuring High-Quality Pre-kindergarten in SREB States*. The report stated:
- SREB states led the nation in pre-kindergarten enrollment in 2006.
- Enrollment growth in many SREB states has equaled or surpassed the national average gain since 2001.
- All but one SREB state now pro-

vides sufficient access to pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds in poverty.

- About half of the states do not have family-income eligibility re-

quirements: if states have requirements, they are linked to indicators of low income, not poverty.

- Partial day programs and language barriers continue to be problems.
- The number of low-income children in SREB states is growing.

The standards that continue to challenge most states are teacher credentials, teacher training and assessment of readiness.
SREB, 2007

For the complete report, go to www.sreb.org. (All SECA states are included in the SREB region.)

Working Group on Child Protective Services Formed

The American Humane Association and International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) have formed a partnership to develop the Working Group on National Child Maltreatment Data Collection Programs.

This Working Group is the first funded to develop a global network to address the needs of consolidated and shared data collection and will work interna-

tionally as well as domestically with data collection systems.

The new group will focus purely on child protective services and hopes to contribute to "real world" solutions and evidence-based policy and practices to address long-standing issues in public child protective services.

The goal of the working group is to promote more effective and desirable results for children in the child protec-

tive services system.

Founded in 1877, the American Humane Association is the only national organization dedicated to protecting both children and animals. ISPCAN was founded in 1977 and is a multidisciplinary international organization focused on the prevention and treatment of child abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Southern Early Childhood
Association
1123 S University , Suite 255
Little Rock, AR 72204

Phone: 800-305-7322

Fax: 501-227-5297

Email:

info@SouthernEarlyChildhood.org

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Public Policy Resources from SECA

- **Position Statements** on issues that are pertinent to the field of Early Childhood Education.
- **Summaries of reports and data** for the SECA states.

Check out the Public Policy and Position Statement pages. This information is not copyrighted and is available for your use. You'll also find links to the public policy pages of your state affiliate websites. (Just click on **The SECA States** button at the top of the SECA homepage.) Be an informed and prepared advocate for children!

We're on the Web
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org

South Carolina Task Force on Early Childhood Quality Standards

In February 2008, the South Carolina Task Force on Early Childhood Quality Standards submitted its final report to Governor Mark Sanford and the South Carolina General Assembly.

Proviso 1.69 of the South Carolina General Appropriations Act of 2007-2008 required that the South Carolina First Steps State Office convene a task force to develop quality standards for programs serving children ages 0-4, excluding the 4K Child Development Education Program. Membership was to include both public and private providers and was to be chaired by the Director of the First Steps State Office.

During the initial research phase, the Task Force sought to 1) identify the attributes associated with early childhood program quality and 2) explore innovative public policy measures known to support and sustain quality attainment.

The final report put forth these recommendations:

- Provide incentives and other supports to families selecting quality programs.
- Provide incentives and other supports to early childhood educators to advance their professional credentials and maintain stable employment in qual-

ity settings.

- Provide incentives and other supports to providers operating quality programs.
- Build upon the state's existing ABC tiered reimbursement system to trigger incentives tied to quality and provide consumer information.

Strategies to meet these goals include the use of tax credits, implementation of initiatives under the South Carolina T.E.A.C.H. and Wages\$ programs and incentives for professional development.

For a copy of the report, go to www.scfirststeps.org.