

## Quality Child Care

A POSITION STATEMENT OF THE  
**Southern Early Childhood Association**

P.O. Box 55930 - Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

1-800-305-7322

[gbean@southernearlychildhood.org](mailto:gbean@southernearlychildhood.org)

### Families Need Child Care

The demand for child care in the United States has soared in recent years. This sharp rise has been linked to several factors: a rapid increase in the number of women working outside the home, parents' longer work hours, the growing population of children under the age of six, and large numbers of families moving from welfare dependency.

Access to affordable, high-quality child care is critical to working parents. In 1996, 27% of families were headed by single parents. More than half of mothers with children under age one work outside the home, and one-third of all infants experience at least three different child care arrangements in the first year of life.

### Quality Child Care

“How we function as adults hinges to a significant extent on how our brain develops when we are young” (Shore, 1997, p. 4).

High quality care supports children's physical, emotional, social and mental development that can boost their school success in later years. “Early care and nurture have a decisive and long lasting impact on how people develop, their ability to learn, and their capacity to regulate their emotions” (Shore, 1997, p. xvii).

High quality child care is a comprehensive service to children and families. It provides educational activities and services to support children's health, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs. The quality of care children receive greatly impacts their futures. Parents want their children to receive experiences that meet their needs. High-quality child care can provide those experiences. Recent brain research shows that high-quality child care and early education can enhance children's later school success. Good nutrition, pleasant surroundings, positive stimulation, and educational experiences are all elements of quality care.

### Children Need:

- 1) To feel safe
- 2) To develop good self concepts
- 3) To participate in meaningful activities throughout the day
- 4) To develop social skills

- 5) To develop good health habits
- 6) To develop academic skills that will allow them to succeed in school and life

### **Quality Care Includes:**

Experiences which:

- Are appropriate for the child's age and culture.
- Allow children to be successful and challenged.
- Include play as a child's way of learning.
- Encourage independence while meeting the child's need to feel safe.
- Provide opportunities to make choices and solve problems.
- Include opportunities for "real work", such as cleaning up after play.
- Provide materials to handle, such as puzzles and construction toys.
- Support language learning through talking, books, and songs.
- Allow self-expression through art and music.
- Extend learning through field trips and visits by adults from the community.
- Provide opportunities to develop literacy through engagement with books and writing materials.
- Promote wellness and healthy living.
- Help children learn to be civil, respectful, and responsible.

Caregivers who:

- Model appropriate manners and behavior for children.
- Enjoy children, understand development, and respond attentively to their needs.
- Demonstrate respect for individuality.
- Have reasonable expectations of the child.
- Demonstrate positive ways of guiding behavior.
- Set clear, consistent, and fair limits for behavior.
- Encourage curiosity by responding to children's questions.
- Consider that children learn through activities with people and objects.
- Help children learn to deal with feelings and develop and practice conflict resolution skills.
- Respect parents and recognize that parents are the most significant influence in a child's life.
- Provide for communication between parents and caregivers through:
  - Talking at arrival and departure times.
  - Holding conferences.
  - Contacts by telephone and notes.

An environment that:

- Is beautiful and aesthetically pleasing.
- Is safe and developmentally appropriate for the age of the child.
- Has a low child to adult ratio and small groups of children with a teacher.
- Has caregivers who are trained in early childhood development and education.
- Provides for a smooth transition from home to the child care program.

- Lessens separation anxiety for the child as parents leave for the day.
- Provides consistency in daily activities and caregivers.
- Has a relaxed and flexible order to the day.
- Is clean and free of hazards.
- Guards against the spread of illness.
- Provides nutritious meals and snacks.
- Encourages physical activity.
- Allows time for active and quiet play, rest, and other routines.
- Supports exploration, investigation, and discovery.
- Exceeds minimum licensing standards of city and/or state.
- Has many of the elements of a high-quality home atmosphere.

## **SECA Supports Quality Care**

Everyone concerned with children's development shares the responsibility for quality child care. This responsibility even extends beyond parents, educators, and human service professionals to our policy makers and the leaders in neighborhoods and business communities.

The Southern Early Childhood Association supports licensed, high-quality child care programs to protect the safety and welfare of all children.

### Position Paper Developers

Mildred Dickerson, James Madison University  
 Martha Ross, James Madison University  
 Ruth Ann Crum, University of Kentucky

1996 Revisions by Clarissa Leister-Willis, Executive Director, and Nelle Peck, Director of Research and Professional Development, Southern Early Childhood Association.

2000 Revisions by Nancy P. Alexander, Northwestern State University Child and Family Network; Dot Brown, Early Childhood Services, Inc.; and George S. Morrison, University of North Texas.

### References

Bredenkamp, S. and Copple, D. (Eds.). (1997). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs Revised Edition*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Frede, E.C. (1995). The role of program quality in producing early childhood program benefits. In R. E. Behrman (Ed.), *The future of children: long-term outcomes of early childhood programs* (pp. 115-33). Los Altos, CA: The Center for the Future of Children: The David & Lucile Packard Foundation.

Morrison, G.S. (2001). *Early childhood education today 8th Edition*. Columbus, OH: Prentiss-Hall, Inc.

National Commission on Children (1993). *Just the facts*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the brain: New insights into early development*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

The Cost and Quality Team. (1995). *Cost, quality, and child outcomes in child care centers: Executive summary*. Denver: University of Colorado at Denver.

Wedst, J., Wright, D., & Germino Hausken, E. (1995). *Child care and early education program participation of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

For information on other SECA Position Statements, call 1-800-305-7322.

First Printing, 1986  
Sixth Printing, 2000