

Cornell Childcare Services Subcommittee – Position Statement

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Title: Future priorities for Childcare Services Subcommittee (CSS)

Status: draft #2

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Topic summary: In its first year (2007-2008), the focus of the Childcare Services Subcommittee was on the opening of the Cornell Childcare Center on campus. Bright Horizons Center on campus. The new center managed by Bright Horizons helps address the shortage of quality infant care, in particular, and makes the reality of an onsite center a reality for a large number (ca. 300) families. It does not, however, address all current or future childcare needs at Cornell, so the committee turned in 2008-2009 both to monitoring the Center's success and to considering additional ideas for enhancing high quality and affordable Childcare options for the Cornell community. With this document, the CSS charts its plan for continued involvement in the development and support of childcare services for the campus community.

Discussion summary:

Topics discussed in 2008-2009:

- **Affordability:** As documented in the Subcommittee's Accessibility Statement finalized this spring, affordability of childcare remains a major obstacle for many Cornell families. As an outcome of our analysis and discussion, the committee forwarded recommendations to HR in May 2009 for altering the distribution of Childcare grants for 2010. HR will have less money to distribute though the grant program in 2010 than it had in 2009, and many Cornell families will see no pay raise in the coming year, while Childcare costs will continue to rise in most cases.
 - Affordability of Cornell Childcare Center: Anecdotal evidence and committee members' own experience indicates that even with Childcare Grant, cost has made the Center inaccessible for many families who were offered admission.
 - Discussed various issues particular to student parents. Affordability is a major issue. HR formed an Advocates Group for student parents. There's a new website via Dean of Students, with links to resources: <http://studentparents.dos.cornell.edu/> Undergrad students met with Pres. Skorton, Vice Pres. Murphy, and the Director of Financial Aid in April, and they were receptive to moving ahead with their policy initiatives.
- **Accessibility:** The CSS sees a need to continue to evaluate the unmet demand and future evolution of demand for Childcare. Human Resources is doing an annual survey to gather information on these issues.
 - Ideas for continuing to improve access to infant care. The Subcommittee found out this year that Cornell HR does keep a Family Helper List that

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shows people looking for work as nannies and babysitters. The information is available online:

<http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/workLife/balancing/babysitter/index.html>

- Quality:
 - In 2008-2009, the CSS heard several reports about programs to enhance the quality of local day care programs (A university-sponsored “Caring For Quality Project,” a Baby PhD program, and the state’s proposed Quality Stars New York.)
 - In January, the CSS approved a Vision statement for Childcare services provided at Cornell that called for best practices in the field of early care and education to be reflected in the design and operation of the center, and for the center to strive to represent Cornell's values, among other things being a place where the University's diversity statement is visibly and intentionally practiced.
 - The CSS discussed computer and media use by young children in general and the practice at the Cornell Childcare Center in particular, and in June approved a Computer and Media Use Statement.
 - The CSS is interested in the compensation and benefits of Cornell Childcare Center staff and their access to training and professional development. These are issues connected to the provision of quality programming and attracting, developing, and retaining quality staff. Among the issues discussed in 2008-2009 was the high cost of parking assessed on Cornell Childcare Center staff.
 - The CSS made recommendations for forming a more active and effective Parent’s Advisory Committee at the Cornell Childcare Center, which HR relayed and which were implemented.

Recommendations:

The CSS will continue to monitor and make recommendations regarding the affordability, accessibility, and quality of Childcare available both on and off campus. Specific suggestions for 2009-2010 include:

- The Subcommittee should continue to document quantitatively and qualitatively issues of affordability and accessibility of care. Consider updating the tables in the Accessibility Statement and looking for additional data.
- The Subcommittee should revisit the means of subsidizing costs and consider how, in these more challenging economic times, we can encourage Cornell to continue to increase its investment in subsidies directly to this center and to childcare options for faculty, employees, and students more generally.
- The Subcommittee should continue to assess the impact of Cornell’s Childcare Center on the community’s childcare needs and evaluate the Center’s policies and practices regarding enrollment, fees, and curriculum; support of Cornell's mission; staff training, effectiveness, and satisfaction; and climate for diversity and family inclusion.

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- The Subcommittee will request at least an annual visit from the Cornell Childcare Center's Director and at least an annual joint meeting with the Center's Parents' Advisory Committee.
- Keep regular communication with Family Service Committee. This was facilitated by the CSS vice chair attending FSC meetings.
- In the fall, ask Mildred Warner to report on the analysis of the data gathered in HR's last survey.
- Consider how Cornell could help with the childcare needs of Cornell families with special needs children.
- Ask Sue Dale-Hall for feedback about what the availability of infant care in the community generally is like now and what impact she has seen from the opening of the Center at Cornell.
- Examine the issues and consider solutions for making childcare affordable to undergraduates and graduate students.
- Continue consideration of the cultivation of off-campus childcare resources: What are the most pressing needs? Licensing? Financial? Space? Access to training? Quality assurance?
- Discuss plans for further expansion of on-campus services: What is the next priority? After hour care? Emergency childcare services? A facility on central campus? Continued expansion of infant care on campus?

Appendices: none.