



ILLINOIS

Pat Quinn, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

James P. Sledge, Director

February 2009

The Honorable Pat Quinn
Governor of Illinois
207 Statehouse
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Governor Quinn:

I am pleased to submit the 2008 Annual Report on State Employee Child Care Centers. Working parents are faced with the challenging task of finding quality childcare at an affordable cost. The State of Illinois is demonstrating its commitment to the care of employees' children through the operation of two on-site childcare centers located in Chicago and Springfield. Each of these centers provides a valuable service and benefit to state employees.

The State of Illinois remains committed to its employees by helping them meet their childcare needs. The state will strive to provide employees with the most innovative and high-quality work environment possible.

Sincerely,



James P. Sledge
Director

Overview

Public Act 87-552 amended the Illinois Personnel Code effective July 1, 1992, requiring that "(e)ach department shall develop a plan for implementation of flexible work requirements designed to reduce the need for day care of employees' children outside the home." To that end, the State of Illinois presently operates two on-site child care centers located in Chicago and 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, conveniently located in Chicago at the State of Illinois Building at 160 North LaSalle and directly across the street from the James R. Thompson Center, celebrated its sixteenth successful year of providing day care services primarily for state employees in September 2008. Early Child Care Services, Inc. (ECCS) manages the center, and the owner of the corporation, Stacy Olszewski who possesses her Director Credential from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), serves as the center director. This has proven to be a strong asset for the center which was recently accredited for the fourth time with the NAEYC; this accreditation will expire in 2013.

The center is currently licensed for 78 children, but ECCS chooses to maintain the center's high standards by limiting enrollment to 66 children. There are three full-time teachers for all four classrooms with an average class size of sixteen children, providing a 1:5 teacher/student ratio in all classrooms. As evidence of ECCS' commitment to both to its students and staff in the provision of quality childcare, the center has been running at capacity for the last couple of years, and they have not needed to replace a lead teacher in over five years.

Children ages two through kindergarten are provided full-time care. When there is space available, there is also drop-in care for individual days if the child's primary caregiver is unable to care for the child. In 2004, the center began enrolling six and seven year old students for a cultural summer program which includes field trips to museums, libraries and other special events happening around Chicago. This initiative has proven to be a huge success.

The center is beautiful with large rooms, a separate Discovery Room (designed by Kohl Museum) and a large outdoor playground located on the deck of the 21st floor. The center is staffed by dedicated and highly qualified early childhood teachers who provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is based on the belief that children learn through play. The innovative curriculum 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 a safe and nurturing environment.

In 2008, the center became part of the Chicago Public Schools in the Community Partnership Program. This association

- enabled the center to increase salaries for employees depending on their educational qualifications
- paid for employees to receive their bachelor's degree and
- increased training opportunities tremendously.

Bright Horizons Child Care Center at the Department of Revenue

The Bright Horizons Child Care Center, located in the Willard Ice Building which houses the Department of Revenue at 101 West Jefferson Street, in Springfield, celebrated its fourteenth year. The center is currently staffed by a director, five teachers and a part-time teacher in the afternoons. The curriculum and teacher interactions continue to be the main focus of the center with the goal of Ready for School as the backbone of the curriculum. This year the center held its curriculum night, reintroducing parents to Ready for School and showing them the letter progression for learning and writing to prepare the children to be ready for school.

This year the center continued to look for ways to create their own Bright Space, inspired by the outdoor space created at the Peoria Bright Horizons location. A Bright Space is a room created specifically for children, perhaps in a shelter, hospital, or community center that may not typically have a place that is child-friendly. To start fundraising efforts for this initiative, the center instituted Jeans Friday to solicit donations from their staff. To further support this goal, the center is resurrecting their Parent Group as parents have many valuable resources and ideas; the center will also look for a suitable partner.

The center strives to create a family environment, and parental involvement—from break-time visits to Fall Festival participation—is a critical element of the center's success. As the year drew to a close, several family-focused events occurred. The children presented approximately fifteen songs in their Winter Sing-A-Long for their parents in the lobby of the Department of Revenue. The center also collected items for the soldiers in Iraq as they had a former child's father serving. Lastly, the center collected items for families staying at the Inner City Mission in Springfield, and as always, the center's families were very generous.

Dependent Care Assistance Program

State of Illinois employees can pay for the care of their dependent children with tax-free dollars by using flexible spending accounts. Employees can set aside up to \$5000 in annual income for this purpose.

Illinois Department of Central Management Services continues to demonstrate strong participation since the program's inception in 1987. In calendar year 2008, an average of 1,720 employees participated in the program, and contributions totaled \$6,516,259.33.