

## Complete Parent Outreach Strategy

Parents lack awareness of existing funds for child care. To build parent awareness of these programs and support for the Partnership's activities, the [Early Education Partnership](#) will conduct an extensive parent outreach campaign. This campaign should involve providers, schools, human services organizations, employers, and the media. This document reflects research on child care campaigns and conversations with members of the Early Education Partnership, parents and other community partners.

The goals of the Partnership's campaign are to help all families gain access to quality affordable child care by:

1. Educating parents about child care funds that are currently available;
2. Increasing the utilization rates of these programs;
3. Evoking public interest in child care finance advocacy and involvement with the Early Education Partnership;
4. Informing the public about the Partnership's creation of a universal system that combines public, private, and charitable funds.

The Early Education Partnership will oversee the outreach campaign with the assistance of the Day Care Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and other community groups. Child care is a community responsibility and should involve as many partners as possible.

### Principles of Outreach

Most outreach campaigns have focused on quality, not finance. Implications for the Partnership's campaign on finance can be drawn from research on outreach strategies for child care quality, child care advocacy, and government health programs for children.

This document explains the following key outreach strategy recommendations:

1. **Have multiple points of entry, including providers, schools, human services organizations, community centers, civic organizations, employers, and the media.**
2. **The Partnership should use materials that balance professional appearance with a caring, child-centered look .**
3. **The Partnership should test materials on a sample of the target audience before using them on a large-scale and build in a process for continuous feedback and evaluation.**
4. **The Partnership must include a focus on policy change as part of its outreach.**
5. **The Outreach campaign can be supported through partnerships providing in-kind support.**

### *I. Partnership Approach*

#### Research Background:

The more points of entry a campaign had, the greater the impact it made. [Child Care 2000 Campaign](#)<sup>1</sup> is one of the most multifaceted outreaches tried. A public-private partnership implemented the campaign in Washington State. Their project included billboards, bus advertising, public service announcements on radio and television, print media advertisements and articles, direct mail, posters, brochures, worksite employee outreach, and educational packets.

## Recommendations:

**Have multiple points of entry, including providers, schools, human services organizations, community centers, civic organizations, employers, and the media.** Contact the Child Care 2000 Campaign coordinator<sup>1</sup> for details about how their project was implemented. The Partnership should use the following as points of entry, targeting each with a specified set of materials.

### 1. *Providers*

Child care providers are an essential source of promotion for the Partnership because they have regular contact with parents using child care. The Partnership must first work in collaboration with the Day Care Council to thoroughly inform providers about the available funds and the Early Education Partnership's goals. This could be done through child care center directors' meetings, home providers' trainings, and any other means that the Day Care Council sees necessary or useful. Providers will also be given copies of the simpler brochure to give to all parents, the posters to put on display, and the fact sheets to give to parents who want more detailed information. Providers should be asked to include subsidy information on their applications.

### 2. *Schools*

Public and private elementary and middle schools should be asked to distribute the simpler brochure yearly to all parents. This would serve to publicize widely the available funds to all parents of school-aged children in Tompkins County. This audience includes parents who may not currently be using paid child care, but have an interest in doing so if it were more affordable.

### 3. *Community Organizations*

The Partnership may inform all local community agencies of their work with the assistance of the Human Services Coalition. Youth services organizations may be an especially effective way to reach a large number of parents. The Partnership could offer biannual information sessions for service providers and civic groups. This would enable human service workers to speak directly with parents they know about the child care funds most suited to their needs. These workers would also receive fact sheets and posters for each program. The Partnership would request that all agencies have copies of the brochure on display and restocked regularly. Summer camps and after-school programs should provide information about subsidies on their applications. The Partnership should coordinate with Catholic Charities to co-advertise child care funds with SCHIP.

### 4. *Employers*

Recommended strategies for employer outreach are explained in detail in a memo contained under the employer outreach section. This section will be carried out by the Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with Workforce Development. Employers will be mailed brochures, posters, and fact sheets. They will also be encouraged to use the Day Care Council's website to download and distribute updated information. Workshops on child care financing may be offered to employers.

### 5. *Media*

Finally, the Partnership will launch a multimedia component that will include billboards, public announcements on local television and radio stations, and posters on buses. These ads will serve to familiarize people with the Early Education Partnership and various child care funds. It will de-stigmatize the use of such funds by emphasizing the universal nature of the partnership. It will provide the general public, including non-parents, with a basic awareness

and respect for child care financing. These campaign techniques will make parents feel more comfortable seeking financial assistance for child care and encourage them to seek more information on programs.

Outreach will be both continuous and phased. Materials specific to a single program, such as the posters and fact sheets, will be phased to come out at the time when parents are most likely to act to utilize that program. The emphasis for each phase will be:

*Fall:* Flexible Spending Accounts

*Winter:* Federal and State Child Care Tax Credits, Earned Income Tax Credit

*Early Spring:* Department of Social Services Child Care Subsidies

## ***II. Outreach Materials***

### Research Background:

Effective campaign materials reveal an effort to balance a professional, serious appearance with a caring, child-centered look. Child care has a history of being viewed as a private concern of care and not a community responsibility for both care *and* education. Campaigns have attempted to show that child care has an educational and developmental value beyond having a place to be while mom and/or dad are at work.

A prime example of a deliberate attempt to change the public view of child care is the Child Care 2000 Campaign's slogan, "*Child Care...it's more than just graham crackers and a nap.*"<sup>1</sup> In a PSA run by Lifetime Television as a part of the award-winning [Child Care Aware](#) campaign, a preschool child is shown performing various activities at a child care center. There is a voice-over of this child giving her résumé. She lists "good parenting, quality child care, and early education programs" under experience and things like "social skills, problem solving, and loving my baby brother" under skills. The PSA closes with her stating, "Quality child care—it's learning for life." The visual includes fun, pleasant, and educational things, and the voice-over emphasizes learning and growth without being too adultish.<sup>2</sup>

The [National Women's Law Center](#) has very professional and informative fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, and detailed materials on child care financing programs.<sup>3</sup> The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy also has similar materials in its [A Helping Hand for Working Families](#) campaign in New York State. This campaign also includes suggestions for PSAs, press releases and other outreach.<sup>4</sup>

### Recommendations:

**The Partnership should use materials that balance professional appearance with a caring, child-centered look .** The following materials have been designed to imitate and build upon best practices of other campaigns and revised according to feedback from local parents and community members.

#### *1. Brochures*

There are two brochures. Both provide basic information about Flexible Spending Accounts, the Emergency Scholarship Fund, Government Funds, Cornell's Child Care Grant for employees, Federal Tax Credits, State Tax Credits, and Earned Income Tax Credits. Both brochures are dated to show when they have last been updated. They also state the goals of the Early Education partnership. One brochure is meant for a general audience. The second brochure contains more detailed wording and compares the costs of early-education with the cost of college tuition. This

brochure is most suitable for more targeted use among parents who are academically or professionally oriented.

## 2. *Fact Sheets*

Three fact sheets provide details on tax credits, flexible spending accounts, and Department of Social Services funds. These fact sheets break down the amount of funding families may receive depending on their income, explain the requirements for receiving the money, and tell families how to apply for funding.

## 3. *Posters*

There is a sister poster for each fact sheet. The posters are designed to be eye-catching and draw parents' attention. They should entice parents either to read the fact sheets, or to make contact with the agency referenced for more information.

## 4. *Other Media*

Materials not yet created are billboards, public announcements for local television and radio stations, newspapers and print publications, and posters for buses, all for the media outreach. These materials should be done professionally and should resemble other outreach materials to create an easily identifiable, standard "look" for the Partnership. All materials will need to be updated regularly, as tax credits and DSS subsidy amounts, and income guidelines change.

The Partnership needs to contact organizations that have done similar campaigns, especially those listed above. (See endnote for websites and contacts.) Continue to imitate and build upon effective materials. This will save time and ensure better outcomes.

*The Early Education Partnership may want to create its own logo to standardize materials.* We recommend that the logo represent as many of the following concepts as possible: care, community responsibility, money, early education, and economic development. Also, we recommend that it displays many of the following key players as possible: children, government, businesses, providers, and parents. We recognize that including all of these would be a challenging task. One idea for a way to incorporate these is to have a logo with a kid building with blocks. On the blocks could be symbols, such as "ABC", "\$", a heart, the chamber logo, or other representations of the previously stated concepts and groups of people.

Continue to be mindful of the importance of language and appearance, maintaining a deliberate balance between seriousness and caring fun. Our [\*Changing the Terms of Debate\*](#) paper speaks to the importance of being deliberate about the language used when presenting child care issues. It is essential that the Partnership's materials not only touch the heart, but also engage the mind.

None of the Partnership's materials say "Department of Social Services." This has been done deliberately because of the stigma attached with DSS. We recommend that the Partnership continue to use the terms "Government Funds" or "Tompkins County Day Care Unit" in place of "Department of Social Services." The Day Care Council should be listed as the first point of contact for all funds.

## ***III. Evaluation***

### Research Background:

Few of the major campaigns researched included any easily accessible, formal evaluation process though several claim to have obtained certain general results. One would assume that any media

campaign would have some sort of impact, but without a formal evaluation, the question of how much remains.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) has performed an extensive campaign called *Insure Kids Now!* This campaign does not focus on child care, but is targeting a similar audience and has done a more thorough [evaluation](#) than the other campaigns. One of their evaluations tested outreach materials on a large sample of target parents before implementation. The results led the evaluator to several conclusions.

For all outreach materials, they found that it was essential that the audience was reached in a familiar and appropriate environment. Also, materials needed to provide enough information to encourage action by parents. For SCHIP's TV ads, they found the following strategies to be effective: making a positive emotional appeal, avoiding scare tactics, tapping into core values, narrowing in on a single benefit, and keeping the ads specific to the local community.<sup>5</sup>

#### Recommendations:

**The Partnership should test materials on a sample of the target audience before using them on a large-scale and build in a process for continuous feedback and evaluation.** What the Cornell Workshop did with the brochures at Cabin Fever is one example of a test drive for materials. It proved to be extremely helpful in creating stronger brochures for parents. It was also helpful to seek feedback on materials from professionals in the community who work with parents. The Partnership should include a thorough evaluation of its Outreach Campaign. This could include tracking the utilization rates of subsidy programs.

Also, it could include surveys to parents and employers that would test their knowledge of available subsidies. These surveys would be administered before the campaign begins, and after it has gone on for a substantial period of time. Also, Tompkins County should see an increase in the demand for legal child care as a result of this campaign. This demand can also be tracked. The Partnership's evaluation of its Outreach Campaign will be stronger if its evaluation is empirically based.

#### ***IV. Policy Change***

##### Research Background:

Most existing programs do not provide sufficient financial assistance for parents. Tax credits and Flexible Spending Account limits are too low and not indexed for inflation. We have provided a brief history of the child care tax credit, [The Child Care Tax Credit: Too Little, Too Late](#), showing it is half the level it needs to be. Government subsidies for low-income families only reach 12% of eligible children. The Partnership could advocate for increased Federal and State support for these programs.

The language used when lobbying must obtain a deliberate balance between appeals to the heart and appeals to the head, an emphasis on economic development and education.

The [Child Care 2000 campaign](#) successfully convinced Washington State's Governor, Gary Locke and a bipartisan group of lawmakers to pass a bill in 1997 requiring all licensed child care providers to receive a basic level of education, and allocated additional resources for providers to meet this requirement. Their materials were everywhere, making them difficult for policymakers to ignore. They targeted policy-makers during a designated legislative session.<sup>1</sup>

In Florida, a Child Care Partnership presented a matching-grants proposal to state legislators. This proposal followed a child care symposium for legislators by the Child Care Action Campaign and

Florida's Children's Forum. The proposal received bipartisan support and led to the passing of a Child Care Partnership Act in which the government agreed to match private sector funds on a one-to-one basis. The government gave \$2 million in 1996, and \$10 million in 1999.<sup>5</sup>

#### Recommendations:

**The Partnership must include a focus on policy change as part of its outreach.** It must vocalize its beliefs and mission to federal, state, and local legislators. The Partnership demonstrates to policymakers the importance of community that expresses a strong interest in child care financing.

#### ***V. Funding***

##### Research Background:

Most campaigns have received funding from foundations, state and federal government, and other sources. Free PSAs and advertising are common. Campaign expenses vary depending on their extensiveness, type of materials, timeframe, and geographic span.

The [Child Care 2000 campaign](#) received over \$100,000 in free advertising space from local television, radio, billboard, and marketing organizations. In addition, the campaign was allocated \$84,500 from the state, \$21,500 from the federal Child Care and Development Fund, and \$58,000 from foundations, and private and non-profit partners.<sup>1</sup>

##### Recommendations:

**The Outreach campaign can be supported through partnerships providing in-kind support.**

Using the multiple partners listed above, outreach can be conducted with existing staff (employer human resource officers, civic and human service groups, providers and youth service organization, United Way and local foundations) Free advertising space from local television, radio, and marketing organizations, similar to that received by Child Care 2000, would be essential.

Local civic associations such as Kiwanis, Rotary Club, Masons, Elks, and Lions, may be willing to take part in this outreach campaign. The Partnership should approach these associations and ask to present their mission and Outreach Campaign to them. The Partnership should continue to seek financial support from Foundations (including the new Tompkins County Community Foundation), the United Way and state and federal government.

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<sup>1</sup> [Child Care 2000 Campaign](#). Contact: Elizabeth Bonbright Thompson, Executive Director of Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network. Phone: (253) 383-173. Email: ebthompson@childcarenet.org

<sup>2</sup> Child Care Aware PSAs on Lifetime Television (can be viewed on this website). <http://www.lifetimetv.com>. Also, <http://www.childcareaware.org>.

<sup>3</sup> National Women's Law Center. <http://www.nwlc.org>.

<sup>4</sup> Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy's *A Helping Hand for Working Families* campaign materials. [http://www.scaany.org/2002\\_helpinghands.pdf](http://www.scaany.org/2002_helpinghands.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Target Audience Assessments of SCHIP Print, Radio, TV, and In-Theater Advertisements. [http://www.hcfa.gov/init/outreach/toc\\_targ.htm](http://www.hcfa.gov/init/outreach/toc_targ.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Stoney, Louis. *Financing Child Care in the United States*. 2001. <http://www.emkf.org/pdf/childcare2001.pdf>