



# Neighborhood Networks Centers and the Childcare Challenge

**A**ccess to safe, reliable and affordable childcare is critical for residents seeking self-sufficiency. Neighborhood Networks centers are addressing childcare needs in their communities through a variety of traditional and innovative approaches. For example, Evergreen Villages Neighborhood Center in Olympia, Wash., operates onsite, after-school, and summer programs for children and youth. This is in conjunction with a Homework Club operated by the staff of a local school and volunteers. In Des Moines, Iowa, the Early Enrichment Center at Oakridge Neighborhood Services Neighborhood Networks Center offers kids safe supervision, structured programs, guidance in social skills, meals and individual introduction to computers.

## What factors facing families today make childcare such an important issue for Neighborhood Networks centers?

### ■ Affordability

The costs associated with childcare have become an issue for more and more low-income families as millions have left the welfare rolls for employment since the mid-1990s. Among the 48 percent of working families with children under age 13 that paid for childcare, the average monthly expense was \$286 per month, an average of 9 percent of earnings.<sup>1</sup>

### ■ Single-Parent Families

For single-parent families, the situation is even more difficult: Single-parent families do not have the same options as two-parent families for obtaining nonparental care and on average have less money to pay for childcare. Single-parent working families pay an average of 16 percent—\$1 of every \$6—of their earnings on childcare, a higher percentage of earnings than that paid by two-parent families.<sup>2</sup>

### ■ Insufficient Supply

Millions of welfare recipients expected to find and keep jobs will create an even

greater demand for quality and affordable childcare as they make the transition from welfare to work. In low-income neighborhoods, the supply of licensed and appropriate childcare providers is far less than in more affluent communities.<sup>3</sup>

### ■ Poorly Paid Workforce and Turnover

Childcare providers' wages are among the lowest of any profession. Low wages may lead to high turnover and an unstable environment for children.

## Neighborhood Networks Facts

**WHAT:** Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995 that encourages the development of resource and community technology centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 840 centers in operation\*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 600 properties with centers in planning\*

**WHO:** Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

\*as of 11/01

<sup>1</sup> *Childcare Expenses of America's Families*, 2000, Urban Institute Press, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Welfare Reform: Implications of Increased Work Participation for Child Care*, 1997, U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C.

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## Why is childcare an important component of Neighborhood Networks centers?

Neighborhood Networks centers provide opportunities for residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing to become more self-sufficient. To participate in job training programs, GED classes, and, ultimately, job placement, residents must have access to quality, affordable childcare. This can be a challenge for parents juggling complex schedules and insufficient resources. Typically, communities in which centers are located lack a sufficient supply of affordable childcare. Many employers and State officials cite childcare as a major challenge for workers struggling to find and keep jobs. If residents are to achieve self-sufficiency, childcare must be part of the solution—not part of the problem.

## How can I get involved?

Government, nonprofit and corporate partners can help residents achieve self-sufficiency by providing childcare-related resources.

- **The government** can link center residents with federal, state and local childcare programs and resources. The National Child Care Information Center ([www.nccic.org](http://www.nccic.org)) provides a searchable database of State Child Care Profiles.
- **Nonprofit partners** can share resources and programs and coordinate with centers on grants for childcare resources. For example, HOPE for Kids, a program of HOPE Worldwide, is a volunteer outreach program designed to meet the health and development needs of children in low-income communities. The nonprofit has affiliates in 42 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Neighborhood Networks centers can offer these groups access to communities in need of childcare and physical space in the center.
- **Private industry** participating in welfare-to-work or job training programs can offer onsite childcare or childcare subsidies to participants, who may later become permanent employees, and who will need stable childcare to remain employed.

## Online Children's Resources

These online resources offer guidance and information to those seeking answers to their childcare questions:

The Afterschool Alliance  
[www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

The Child Care Bureau  
[www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb)

Head Start  
[www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb)

National Association for Family Child Care  
[www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org)

National Child Care Information Center  
[www.nccic.org](http://www.nccic.org)

## For more information, contact:

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