

## **Child Care Licensing Systems Improvement Budget Efficiency Savings Team (BEST)**

### **Recommendations Regarding the Oversight of Child Care Homes, Child Care Centers and Preschools To The Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment**

**January 14, 2009**

The Child Care Licensing Systems Improvement BEST Team is chartered to advise the Department of Health and Environment on improvements needed to redesign the child care licensing system and the standards of care to meet the child care needs of Kansas children and families in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The BEST Team is charged with making recommendations that support families and provide protections for children that:

- provide a solid foundation for child safety and well-being,
- support early learning, and
- enable child care providers to provide quality care that is available, affordable and accessible.

These recommendations strive to achieve a balance between safety, best practice, and marketplace realities.

After careful review of research, other state regulations and input from the child care community and the public, the following is the first set of recommendations to improve the licensing system in Kansas.

#### ***To increase child safety and consumer protection***

- The Legislature should revise the child care statutes to eliminate the category of registered family day care homes and require licensure and inspection of these homes by the Department.
- The Department should promulgate regulations to create a new category of licensed small family child care homes to replace what are now registered family day care homes. This category of small family child care homes should be required to meet a basic set of core requirements in order to become licensed.
- The Department and the Attorney General's Office should work together to strengthen consumer protections by encouraging county and district attorney's to prosecute unregulated child care.
- The Department should revise the regulations to strengthen supervision requirements for young children attending child care.

#### ***To increase child safety and quality of care***

- All caregivers should possess core knowledge of child development, health, safety and child care practices sufficient to meet the needs of children in their care.
- Early childhood stakeholders, state and community partners, educational and training organizations, should provide incentives to enable child care providers to access professional development opportunities.
- Professional development opportunities should be accessible, affordable and readily available statewide in communities and online. Professional Development opportunities, whether in a group setting or online, should be interactive and facilitated with opportunities for discussion.
- The Department should consider adopting pre-service requirements for center based staff and home based caregivers and consider increasing in-service training requirements.

- The Department should consider requiring orientation training, training on SIDS prevention and safe sleep practices, certification in first aid and pediatric CPR/rescue breathing and training that would assist in preparing providers for accreditation, a CDA credential, KQRS rating or other professional recognition.
- The Department should no longer include book reports and videos as options to fulfill pre-service and in-service training requirements.

***To increase flexibility, child safety and the availability of care for infants, toddlers and preschool age children***

- The Department should revise regulations concerning age range, group size and child/caregiver ratios for home based care to encourage the expansion of child care homes with two or more caregivers and to create a category of specialty homes for providers who wish to care for a limited age range of children such as infant/toddler homes.
- The Department should revise regulations concerning age range, group size and child /staff ratios for center based care to encourage and expand mixed age units.
- The Department should revise the definition of a school age child in home based care to reflect that the child is counted in the school age category on his/her 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The Department should revise the regulations to incorporate the exceptions granted in March 2008 concerning an overlap of preschool age children, health assessments, safe storage of disinfectant and other items, and crib and playpen use.

***To increase the availability of school age child care***

- The Department should continue the child care home exceptions granted in March 2008 concerning number of children who may be present and incorporate the exceptions into the rewriting of the regulations.
- The regulations concerning age ranges, group size and child/caregiver ratios should be rewritten to encourage providers to care for school age children.

***To increase consistency between different types of child care programs***

- The Department should revise regulations to provide consistent definitions wherever possible.

***To enable child care programs to make a smooth transition from the current regulatory requirements and child care licensing system to the new requirements***

- The Department should work closely with the Department of Administration and the Attorney General's Office to promulgate regulations that are clear, concise, and understandable to providers and parents and that are published in a user-friendly format.
- The Department should implement gradual changes to the regulations and the licensing process. Requirements should be phased in so that providers and others in the child care system have time to adjust and make changes in their programs and services.
- The Department should work with health departments, existing associations, and partner agencies to communicate the changes to a broad base of the regulated community.

***To assist policy makers in making informed decisions on child care matters***

- The BEST Team continues to be available to the Department, the Legislature and the child care community to provide leadership, expertise and recommendations for improvements to better meet the child care needs of children and families in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.