

Who Cares For the Children

Childcare in the United States

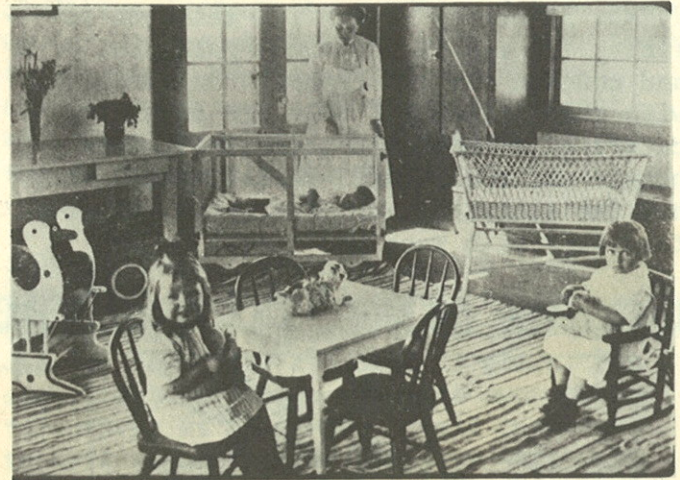
WHO NEEDS CHILDCARE?

Who needs childcare? Over 26 million children have mothers who now work outside the home. One fourth of these children are under six years of age. Many children spend part of their day in school. But what about care for those too young for school and for older children before and after school?

What happens to these children each day? Existing childcare facilities meet only some of the current needs. Right now in the United States there is licensed capacity for only 25% of the children who need care. The remaining majority may stay with relatives or neighbors or are left to care for themselves or with older siblings. For the minority of families who do find licensed care, high fees are common as low-cost government subsidized care is extremely limited.

Has childcare ever been and will it ever be recognized as a right of children and families? The history of child care centers in the U.S. dates back to the 1800's. However, since its beginning, the needs of families have been overshadowed by the government's economic priorities. Limited childcare was provided in the 1930's only to employ teachers during the Depression, in the 1940's only to lure women into increasing war production, and in the 1960's and 1970's only to reduce welfare roles. In comparison childcare policy in other countries, including western industrialized nations, provides for educational childcare that is viewed as essential to both women's equal participation in the workforce and to children's optimal development.

What lies in the future for childcare? The need for childcare soared from 1960 to 1975; the number of mothers in the workforce with preschool children doubled. By 1990, 45% of children under six will



have mothers who work outside the home. But nothing is being done to meet this demand. In fact we find a growing attack on childcare today. Efforts to create and expand publicly subsidized programs are accused of destroying the family and the American way of life. Existing public programs, like other necessary social services, are lumped together with wasteful spending and indiscriminately eliminated or subjected to increased bureaucratic regulation. Parents are forced to spend a growing share of their shrinking incomes on unaffordable childcare services.

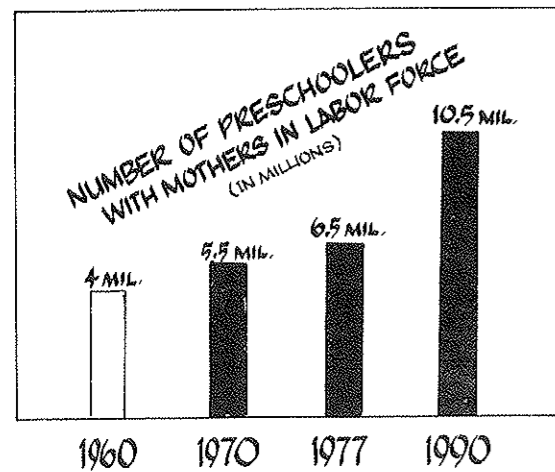
How did this all come to be? What is being done about it? Who Cares for the Children? is a 20-minute slide presentation which explains the source of these problems and some possibilities for changing the situation. The slideshow grew out of the continuing work of a group of parents, childcare workers, and community members to inform the public of the needs of today's families. And what will you do in this "Year of the Family" to help children and families obtain services they need?

Some Questions and Quotes to Talk About

Here are some questions and quotes focusing on the main issues raised by the slideshow. They can be used as a discussion guide before or after viewing.

1) "How a society treats its children reflects its respect for human potential and concern for the future." Do you agree with this statement? What are other indicators of a society's attitudes toward people and the future? Historically, what has the status of children been? How does this vary with race and class?

INCREASE IN NEED FOR CHILDCARE



2) Almost half the mothers of young children work outside the home. Also, more and more households are headed by single mothers. Yet many people believe that women should stay home with their children, especially when they are young. Why do you think this belief remains so strong despite the fact that fewer and fewer people can or choose to live this way? If it were possible for all women to stay at home with children, would that be good or bad? Why?

3) Frequently, childcare centers have been attacked as "destroying the nuclear family." Where does this argument come from and is it legitimate? Why do you think so little has been done to provide childcare despite the growing need?

4) Early nursery schools served primarily middle and upper class children while day nurseries served working class children. Today government services are almost exclusively for low-income and/or third world children. Private care is very expensive and beyond the reach of many families. What are the effects of segregating children by class and by race? What would be the benefits of changing the situation? Could it be changed? If so, how?

5) "By 1933 one third of the population was living with no source of income. Massive protest led to several social service programs including nurseries under the WPA..." (In the early years of WWII) "lack of childcare services forced many women to leave their children alone, often right outside the workplace. Angered by the situation, parents demanded childcare services." Sometimes protest is effective in securing services. Why do you think the government was willing to use its resources in these situations? Why was industry willing during the war to commit resources? Can you imagine what situations today could lead to more services?

6) Kaiser Industries committed much money during WWII to provide childcare services. Since then, very few corporations have become involved in childcare in any significant way. What do you think accounts for this situation? Why do you think corporations are reluctant to become involved? Some people say that corporate childcare would lead to too much control of people's lives by their employer. Do you agree or disagree? Could safeguards be built into corporate involvement in childcare? How could corporations become more involved?



7) "I think that one of the primary reasons that childcare in specific is being cutback is that there's a lot of unemployment and women are being blamed for that because they're coming into the workforce and so they see this as an easy way to keep women out. If they don't have childcare they can't work. And women, of course, are not the reason for unemployment; there just are not enough jobs. And women need to work for the same reasons men do, to support their families." In your opinion, what are the causes of unemployment? Why don't more people protest the lack of childcare services? Is childcare only a women's issue?

8) Different communities may have different needs and aspirations for themselves and their children. How can this affect the meaning of "quality childcare"? What do you think constitutes a quality childcare program?

9) The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America has set up several childcare centers and also has worked to obtain legislation that enables unions to bargain with employers for contributions for day care services. What are the pros and cons of union involvement in childcare?

10) Childcare workers are very low-paid, despite their education and training. Many work long, hard hours and staff turnover is high. If children are considered so important, why are their caretakers so exploited? In what ways do you think working conditions affect the quality of care provided? Higher wages often mean higher fees for parents. What ways can parents and childcare workers work together to deal with their problems? What kind of organization could help childcare workers?

11) "The women's movement of the late sixties demanded that all should have access to government-supported childcare which did not segregate children by class. For some, childcare promised more opportunity; for others it meant they could continue to work assured their children were safe and happy." Why is childcare such an important demand of the women's movement? How has the popular notion of a women's role affected the supply of childcare services?

HOW CHILDCARE NEED IS MET



12) "In recent years parents and workers have obtained childcare only when they have organized in their communities and workplaces. They continue to fight not only to expand and improve childcare, but also to maintain existing services." What effect on the quality of care does constant fighting for survival have? In what ways can people join together to obtain more than they have?

Resources for Childcare Advocacy

Employer-Supported Child Care

"A Union Sponsored Day Care Center". Amalgamated Social Benefits Assoc.
323 South Ashland Blvd. Chicago, Ill. 60607

"Local Union Guide for Establishing Child Care Centers". Carol Haddad,
Labor Program Service, School of Labor and Industrial Relations. Michigan
State U. (Contains examples of contract language for negotiations)

"Survey and Analysis of Employer-Sponsored Day Care in the U.S." Ph.D dis-
sertation by Sara Kathryn Perry, University of Wisconsin, 1978. Available
from: University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor MI 48106

Child Care Workers

Boston Area Day Care Workers United. District 65, 636 Beacon St. Boston Mass 02215

Childcare Staff Education Project. 384 63rd St. Oakland, CA 94618. (Have conducted
a survey of 95 child care workers obtaining information on wages, benefits, working
conditions, job satisfaction and burn-out)

Child Care Information and Referral Centers

Wu Yee Resource and Referral Center. 571 Vallejo St. San Francisco, CA 94133

Northern Calif. Child Care Resource and Referral Network. 320 Judah St. Ste.2,
San Francisco, CA 94122. (Will be producing a book on how to establish an I&R center)

Film

"Good Day Care". Iris Films, Box 5353, Berkeley, CA 94205. (A 30 min. Canadian
film focusing on the positive benefits of center based care)

Other Books

Corporations and Day Care: Profit-Making Day Care, Workplace Day Care, And A
Look at the Alternatives. Women's Research Action Project, Box 119 Porter
Square Station, Cambridge, Mass 02140

Child Care-Who Cares? Pamela Roby, ed. Basic Books Inc. N.Y. N.Y.

SLIDE SHOW PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

N.Y. Public Library, Oakland Public Library, San Francisco Unified School
District, Oakland Museum, "Policing America" Slide Show, Institute of Gov.
Studies Library--U.C. Berkeley, Berkeley Day Nursery Annual Report, Portal
to America (ed. Schoener), Day Care Book (ed. Breitbart), Children and Youth
in America (ed. Bremner), The Little Child in Our Great Cities (Ireland),
America's Working Women (ed. Baxandall et al), Life Magazine, Saturday Evening
Post, Lewis Hine Collection, Architectural Record, Magazine of Social Inter-
pretation, National Archives, W.P.A. Farm Security Admin., National Youth Admin.

PARENTS AND WORKERS UNITED FOR CHILDCARE Slide Show Committee: Judy Baker, Jeanie
Dooha, Bess Jones, Carolyn Leong, Don Mar, Marcia Peterzell, Sandy Sugie, Louie
Sweeney, Isabel Toscano, Marcy Whitebook, Ruth Yee.

Who Cares for the Children?, including this study guide, is also available in
Cantonese, Japanese and Spanish. For information on ordering please contact
Parents and Workers United for Childcare, 366 Clementina, San Francisco,
California, (415) 391-0388.

We are interested in compiling a more complete list of resources, particularly
local projects, to distribute with the slide show. If you would like to be
included, send us information about your work. Comments and criticisms about
Who Cares for the Children? are also welcome.