

**New York Union Child Care Coalition
(A Committee of the NYC Central Labor Council & NYS AFL-CIO)**

Facilitated Enrollment Project Report

Overview

The goal of the child care facilitated enrollment projects is to increase working families' access to child care subsidies by increasing income eligibility for working families to 275% of poverty (\$51,838 for a family of four) and by changing the way families can apply for subsidies. The New York Union Child Care Coalition (NYUCCC) and the project administrator, the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) have worked collaboratively with the NYC Administration for Children Services (ACS) to develop processes that have streamlined the access and administration of child care subsidies for working families.

The purpose of the information presented below is to 1) report on child care facilitated enrollment progress made to date, 2) use the facilitated enrollment experience to help determine a state-wide model for increasing working families' access to child care subsidies and increasing the income eligibility level to 275% of poverty and 3) begin to develop a strategy for achieving a state-wide model.

Summary of Results Achieved to Date

The project was able to successfully achieve its two initial objectives to improve the process for families applying for subsidies and to extend care to more families with incomes between 200% and 275% of FPL. Some of the primary results of the project include:

- Condensing very complicated child care application forms into a 2-page (one page double-sided) application.
- Facilitating the enrollment of 824 children who were approved and enrolled for subsidies, representing 586 Bronx families, 48 Westchester families and as of August 2004, 150 families who live or work in the Liberty Zone – the area of Manhattan below 14th Street.
- Creating easier entry to the child care system by allowing families to call to be prescreened for eligibility, with more than 2500 families prescreened.
- Conducting enrollment hours during lunchtimes, in the evening and on weekends at venues familiar and comfortable for working families e.g., work-sites, community based organizations, union headquarters.
- Developing a streamlined and responsive eligibility process in which most families applying are able to begin receiving subsidized care within two weeks and apply at times and with means most convenient to them, allowing families to fax and mail-in applications.
- Developing a streamlined efficient system for submitting applications to designated discrete ACS staff to determine final eligibility.
- Providing subsidies to low-and moderate income working families across the broader range of incomes up to 275 percent of FPL, with in the Bronx for example, 58 percent of families receiving subsidies having family incomes below 200 % of FPL and 42 percent with family incomes between 200% and 275% of FPL.

- Piloting in the Bronx a re-certification process for the first 100 or so families whose initial 12-month subsidies were expiring between March 2003 and July 2003.

Development of Application Form – One of the first and most notable achievements of the facilitated enrollment program was to significantly streamline the application forms and process for families applying for child care subsidies. Working together with staff from ACS, CWE, NYUCCC and New School University Professor Ajay Chaudry, a consultant on the project, developed a simplified two-sided (application) that received guidance from and was approved by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (and which together with earlier simplified versions such as one used in Onondaga County is a model for other counties across the state).

New York City is planning to eventually implement the version developed as part of the demonstration program for the whole city system. Along with the application other supporting documents such as the Absent Parent Form, Special Voucher Form, Employment Verification Form and Document List were also simplified to complete the facilitated enrollment package.

Facilitated Enrollment Summary

Facilitated Enrollment of Bronx Families – In the course of the initial one-year demonstration program CWE received 1081 applications from Bronx families, of which 624 were considered complete and eligible for submittal to ACS. Of these 586 families determined eligible, 824 subsidies were approved. A total of 113 applications were determined ineligible by either CWE staff (75 applications) or ACS (38 applications) because of ineligible levels of family income, existing ACS subsidies, or other eligibility reasons.

Applications received by CWE:	1018
Applications complete, eligibility determined, and enrolled:	586 (resulting in 824 children receiving subsidies)
Applications ineligible:	113
Applications incomplete or waitlisted:	382

Seventy-four of the 382 for whom there were incomplete applications were still pending applications in March 2004 when subsidy distribution was considered completed under the initial \$5 million pilot program and these families were waitlisted depending upon the availability of further funding. For the other 308 incomplete applications the allocated time for the completion of the application had expired over the course of the year.

Breakdown of enrollments by family income:

Family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) 61%

Family income between 200 percent and 275 percent FPL 39%

Breakdown in care by type:

Center Care 311 or 38%

Family Child Care 212 or 26%

Informal Care 301 or 36%

Breakdown in care by children's age group

Infants and Toddlers 36%

Preschoolers 31%

Schoolage Children 33%

Breakdown of Union and Non-Union Families

Union 51%

Non-Union 49% (child care centers, community based organizations, small business)

- Average annual cost per subsidy to date is approximately \$4600. This ranged from an average of \$2800 for informal care to \$4850 for family child care and to \$6300 for center care.
- Across all types of care parents' co-payment fees average a little more than \$30 per week or \$1600 annually, which equals approximately 26 percent of the cost of the care.

Westchester

The Westchester facilitated enrollment project targeted 50-100 families who live in two designated zip codes within Yonkers started in May 2003, and through the end of the year we have enrolled 48 children for child care subsidies. Cluster, a Yonkers community based organization was sub-contracted to work with the outreach team and enroll families and the Westchester County Child Care Council provided resource and referral services.

The Facilitated Enrollment Project (funded in SFY 2002-2003) included both Bronx and Westchester County (Yonkers) demonstration component. The facilitated enrollment demonstration project, however, was more difficult to design and implement in Westchester County because of differences in the child care system (a higher parent co-payment system that made reaching the more moderate income families less feasible; a six-month re-certification that did not match the one-time 12-month subsidies of the demonstration program; and an ostensible guarantee on the part of the county to serve all those eligible

who wished to receive subsidies. The subsidized child care system in Westchester County did not match up well with the intent of the program. In addition it was very difficult for CWE, its subcontractor in Yonkers, and the County Department of Social Services to develop the expeditious facilitation processes that were developed in New York City between CWE and the city's Administration for Children's Services. In all, approximately \$144,000 of subsidy money was committed for 48 subsidies in Yonkers plus Westchester DSS charges for administration run estimated to be about \$40,000 for the duration of the subsidy administration meant that less than \$200,000 of the close to \$4.3 million in subsidy allocation from the \$5 million was used for the Yonkers component of the demonstration program. Average annual cost per subsidy to date is approximately \$3000. Parents chose family and group day care settings.

Liberty Zone

Formal outreach for the Liberty Zone facilitated enrollment project began in June 2004 (promotion of the project to working families began in March 2004). Outreach is being conducted at worksites, union halls and through our community partners: the Chinese American Planning Council, (outreaching to the Chinese community and working with UNITE! to reach garment workers) and Seedco (reaching families who work for small business). The United Neighborhood Houses' Grand Street Settlement is also working to increase capacity by establishing a network of licensed providers and identifying families who are eligible for facilitated enrollment to be placed in the new network.

As of August 2004, 27 worksite events took place, prescreening a total of 767 families. Out of those 767 families prescreened eligible. Out of the 767 families prescreened eligible, 131 or 17% of those families do not belong to unions. Also as of August 2004, 150 families have been approved by the Administration for Children Services to receive subsidies. An additional 156 families were prescreened and found to be ineligible for the following reasons:

1. Applicant is over income
2. Applicant is already receiving an ACS subsidy
3. Applicant's spouse not working
4. Applicant's children over the age of 13
5. Applicant does not live or work in the Liberty Zone boundaries
6. Applicant's child care provider is not located within the 5 boroughs

Further analysis of the Liberty Zone project will be available in November 2004.

Status of Future Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Projects

\$2.5 Million Brooklyn:	Plan being developed for submission to the OCFS
\$3.5 Million Bronx Extension:	Plan being developed for submission to the OCFS
\$2.5 Million Monroe:	Plan submitted to the OCFS; Children's Institute will serve as administrator
\$6 Million Capital Region	Preliminary Plan submitted to OCFS; staff being hired, project start pending announcement by NYS Senate

Lessons Learned

- In order to maximize our reach, facilitated enrollment projects should serve families who live or work within a community. For example work-site enrollments conducted at Jacobi hospital, a high need area, could only serve those families who live in the eligible zips. We have found that reaching families in the live or work Liberty Zone project is much more effective for reaching working families.
- Education and reassurance that working families can qualify for this project continues to be a key component of this project. Past subsidy application experiences where families may have been deemed ineligible due to income guidelines remains a barrier to overcome. Our message continues to frame and communicate this as a new pilot project for working families.
- In the Bronx we found evening events located in schools and work-site/community yielded greater enrollments than Saturday community based events. In the Liberty Zone, we are finding lunchtime or evening worksite/community events during the work week yields a better response.
- Turnout is greater when stakeholders collaborate to organize enrollment events and reach eligible families.
- There is potential to broaden our reach and further expedite the application process through a train-the-trainer model, where union staff and community-based organizations receive a training on pre-screening and the application process. A train-the-trainer session was held for the Bronx project. Participants felt that the training increased their understanding about the facilitated enrollment project, and requested additional training on pre-screening and the application in order to feel confident enough to share with constituents.
- Follow-up with families re: their application and being available to answer questions expedites the enrollment completion process. Upon receiving an application, families are assigned case managers to track the completion of their application.
- Informal Providers are sometimes reluctant to sign-on to the project e.g. not wanting to provide social security numbers. We are developing an informal provider training for those who have signed on to the project.

For Discussion:

Moving Forward -- What Kind of System Do We Want?

1. A child care policy which supports subsidies for working families, opens access for more moderate income families and promotes child care assistance for working families as an integral part of the child care subsidy system and early education.
2. A system that streamlines the application process for working families.
3. A system that is convenient for working parents; helping families balance the demands of work and family by offering access through worksites, community based organizations, unions, schools.
4. A system which enhances the child care subsidy program and not create a parallel structure.

Considerations:

1. How do we see facilitated enrollment interfacing with, and supporting social service districts?
2. Should we consider additional projects to provide additional learning in order to refine a state-wide model?
3. Should we consider extending current projects to demonstrate other facilitated enrollment initiatives/innovations, e.g. application via internet, more work on reducing parent co-pay and allow for further evaluation?

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