

24517

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition and Contract

FROM: Diane G. Balistreri
Coordinator, Office for Women

DATE: January 27, 2012

SUBJECT: Authority to enter into an agreement with The Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc. to provide various child care services for an amount not-to-exceed \$190,000 for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012

The attached Resolution, if approved by your Honorable Board, would authorize the County of Westchester (the "County") to enter into an agreement (the "Agreement") with The Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc. (the "Child Care Council") to provide various child care services, for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012, for an amount not-to-exceed One Hundred Ninety Thousand Dollars (\$190,000), to be paid quarterly pursuant to an approved budget.

In April 2000, your Honorable Board authorized the County to enter into a similar agreement to begin this work. Your Honorable Board has continued it yearly since. The proposed Agreement continues the essential tasks of upgrading standards in this vital area. The Child Care Council surpassed its goals for previous contracts, and has firmly proven its ability to continue this much needed work.

The proposed Agreement will serve a public purpose by helping to alleviate the shortage of infant and toddler child care in Westchester County and to improve the quality of that care.

The goals and objectives of the proposed Agreement are for the Child Care Council to provide training, technical assistance; consultations and conferences to child care centers to ensure quality environments and appropriate programming. During the proposed contract term, the Child Care Council anticipates providing:

- technical assistance to 75 infant/toddler staff or directors;
- assessment-driven quality improvement consultations to 15 infant/toddler classrooms;
- an Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) credential program;
- post-CDA training support to graduates of the program;
- an Infant/Toddler Creative Curriculum course;

- two half-day Infant/Toddler Teacher Conferences for 100 teachers each; and
- quality improvement assistance and resources for teachers.

During the previous contract term, the Child Care Council provided technical assistance to 130 infant/toddler staff/directors and quality improvement consultations to 15 programs.

The goals and objectives of the proposed agreement will be tracked and monitored by the Westchester County Office for Women, which will be responsible for monitoring the Child Care Council's performance under this Agreement by means of site visits, as well as their quarterly statistics and narratives. The effectiveness of this program will be determined in a variety of ways. The Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) will be administered to ascertain progress and additional services needed. By the end of 2012, it is expected that 75% of participants will complete the training and submit their assessment applications; those who receive quality improvement assistance will implement planned quality changes in their programs; and teachers will complete a self-reflection tool to evaluate their understanding and indicate knowledge gained after receiving technical assistance. For example, in 2011:

- 100% of classrooms increased their ITERS scores after receiving intensive technical assistance; and
- 91% of participants rated the Infant/Toddler Teacher Conference as very effective.

This agreement is exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy pursuant to Section 3 (a) (xviii) thereof, which exempts contracts for the "advancement of the moral, physical, mental and social well being of the youth of Westchester County."

Accordingly, I recommend approval of the attached Resolution.

RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Coordinator of the Office for Women, be it hereby

RESOLVED, that the County of Westchester is hereby authorized to enter into an agreement (the "Agreement") with The Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc., for the period from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012, for the provision of the following services:

- Upgrading the quality of infant/toddler child care programs as specified in Schedule A;
- Improving the quality of child care programs in general as specified in Schedule A; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in consideration for services to be rendered, The Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc. shall be paid an amount not-to-exceed One Hundred Ninety Thousand Dollars (\$190,000), to be paid quarterly pursuant to an approved budget; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Agreement is subject to County appropriations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Agreement is also subject to further financial analysis of the impact of any New York State Budget (the "State Budget") proposed and adopted during the term of this Agreement. The County shall retain the right, upon the occurrence of any release by the Governor of a proposed State Budget and/or the adoption of a State Budget or any amendments thereto, and for a reasonable period of time after such release(s) or adoption(s), to conduct an analysis of the impacts of any such State Budget on County finances. After such analysis, the County shall retain the right to either terminate this Agreement or to renegotiate the amounts and rates approved herein. If the County subsequently offers to pay a reduced amount to the Contractor, then the Contractor shall have the right to terminate this Agreement upon reasonable prior written notice; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the County Executive or his duly authorized designee be and hereby is authorized and empowered to execute any and all documents and take any actions necessary to effectuate the purposes hereof.

Account to be charged/credited:

FUND	DEPT	Major Program, Program & Phase, Or Unit	Object/ Sub-Object	Trust Account	Dollars	Funding Year
101	11	0900	4380	N/A	\$190,000	2012

Budget Funding Year(s) 2012
(must match resolution)

Start Date: 1/1/2012 **End Date:** 12/31/2012

\$190,000

(must match resolution)

Funding Source: Tax Dollars \$190,000
 State Aid _____
 Federal Aid _____
 Other _____

Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.

Office for Women 2012 Expansion and Quality Improvement Grant Schedule A Scope/Specifications

Since 2000, 10 infant and 12 toddler classrooms have been created resulting in an increase of 85 infant and 179 toddler slots in locations all over Westchester. As of June 2011, there were 6,041 infant-toddler slots in regulated child care settings in the County, with 3,708 in licensed child care centers. However, the availability of child care slots is by itself meaningless if the child care experience that is delivered does not meet high standards. Most studies have shown that the teacher-child relationship is the foundation upon which a quality early childhood experience is built. In addition, research also makes a strong case for the importance of training and professional development, specifically, the attainment of credentials and degrees. The findings show that the educational levels of caregivers are among the top three factors that determine program quality.

Staff hired to care for infants and toddlers generally have the least amount of education, training and experience of those employed in the entire child care workforce. Those who do possess some early childhood background usually have limited knowledge and few skills in the care and nurturance of very young children. In the past decade, tremendous advancements in early brain development research have demonstrated that the period from birth to age three is pivotal for children's healthy growth and learning. A new body of knowledge regarding "best practices" specific to infants and toddlers has been generated; this expertise is in short supply in the child care industry even among masters level, highly experienced directors.

The Council's Infant Toddler Specialist and other expert consultants fill an acute and pervasive void in the county's child care industry by delivering a spectrum of services to strengthen individual child care businesses and the job performance of the infant/toddler workforce.

Through our previous, intensive work with infant toddler programs, it is evident that there are significant needs when it comes to program quality. In 2011, our Specialist worked intensively, utilizing the environment rating scales, with fifteen programs. Prior to her consultation services, eleven of those fifteen scored below a 5 on the 7 point environment rating scale, which means that they were not delivering a "good" quality of child care. After receiving intensive technical assistance, all fifteen programs made significant improvements and four achieved scores of 5 or above. This year, we will continue to utilize this intensive model in order to effect positive change in additional programs and build upon the foundation created by engaging some programs in a long term coaching relationship.

Because program quality is so heavily tied to the child care staff's education and training, we will expand support from our Professional Development Specialist to all of our CDA alumni, which includes approximately 130 former students. We have found that without professional assistance and support following the completion of the CDA training itself, many students do

not actually finish the credential application process, which is lengthy and confusing. Our CDA support services, expanded this past year, made a difference for those students and so we want to expand this phase of our CDA program. Our support will include guidance and technical assistance on applying for the credential, portfolio review and feedback, handling a deferral and the CDA renewal process. In addition, our Specialist will maintain contact with alumni in order to track their progress in the field after to encourage retention and advancement in the field.

Our Professional Development Coordinator plans and designs our training calendars in addition to advising trainees on topics and courses to attend. The Coordinator also markets all of our professional development offerings to the field on a regular basis, ensuring that the Council is offering the training that is most needed in the field.

Services to be delivered by the Council include:

- Technical assistance and training to infant/toddler staff on particular topics
- Assessment-driven quality improvement consultation project
- 120-hour Child Development Associate Credential Program
- Post CDA support for graduates of the Credential Program
- Professional conferences focusing on infant/toddler best practices
- Training to improve business and management practices
- Quality grants to improve environments and educational activities for children

Technical Assistance to a minimum of 75 infant/toddler staff or directors on topics such as best practices and indicators of quality for infant/toddler child care which have been endorsed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services.

Measurement of Results: Teachers of infants and toddlers will complete a self-reflection tool to evaluate their understanding and indicate knowledge gained of the specific topic being addressed.

Assessment-Driven Quality Improvement Consultation to 15 infant/toddler classrooms using either a full or partial Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) to assess baseline performance, create a quality improvement action plan, deliver focused on-site technical assistance and measure changes in classroom functioning. The ITERS is used internationally for this purpose and is embedded in the emerging quality rating improvement system in New York entitled, QUALITYstarsNY, which is designed to improve the quality of child care and provide parents with objective ratings on their child care options so they can make more informed decisions in the child care market place. The Council is eager to engage Westchester programs in this project so they are well-prepared for QUALITYstarsNY.

Measurement of Results: The IT Specialist will re-administer the ITERS at 90 days to ascertain progress and additional services needed. ITERS scores will be increased in at least 75% of the classrooms where the program improvement plan is fully implemented.

Deliver an Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential Program by an early childhood expert. The IT CDA Credential is awarded to teachers who have met national

standards and demonstrated their skill working with infants, toddlers and their families
Measurement of Results: By June 2011, 75% of the participants will complete the 120-hour training program.

Provide Post CDA Training Support to graduates of the credential program so they successfully apply for and obtain the CDA and understand options for professional advancement at area institutions of higher education such as Westchester Community College. Our goal is to increase the retention and advancement of well-trained infant/toddler professionals with specific supports.

Measurement of Results: By December 2011, a majority of prior Council CDA graduates still working in Westchester child care programs will receive advisement on their credential status, renewal procedures and opportunities for additional credit-bearing academic advancement. Local institutions will be aware of the Council CDA program.

Present two Infant Toddler Teacher Conferences for 120 infant/toddler teachers. The Council will present two half day events featuring regional and national experts tailored to the unique needs of those caring for infants and toddlers. Some topics being considered, based on needs expressed by the field are: "working with very young children who have specials needs" and "the importance of early intervention".

Measurement of Results: At least 85% of the participants will rate the conference as very effective.

Deliver a Training Series geared towards directors and administrators, these two series will focus on leadership and business practices, areas that often need strengthening since many directors do not always possess the skills and expertise required to run a fiscally sound business.

Measurement of Results: At least 85% of the participants will rate the series as very effective.

Distribute Quality Improvement Grants and Teacher Resources for the teachers involved in the assessment-driven quality consultation so they can address equipment and material deficiencies identified in the initial ITERS. Most of the participating programs have little or no funding to implement improvements to their environments or curriculums. Therefore, these grants would be used to purchase educational materials such as art supplies, manipulatives, blocks and age appropriate furniture that would lead to improved scores on the rating scales and in turn higher quality programming for the children.

Measurement of Results: Recipients of the grants and resources will implement planned quality changes in their programs.

Kathleen Halas
Executive Director
Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.
January 19, 2012