



NJACCRRA, New Jersey's network of child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs), is dedicated to developing and maintaining accountable local CCR&R services. NJACCRRA seeks to positively impact early care and education policy, funding, and service integration through professional development, advocacy, data collection, and information dissemination.

**New Jersey Association
of Child Care
Resource and Referral Agencies**

P.O. Box 55816
Trenton, NJ 08638-6816

The annual conference of the
New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition is
November 3-4, 2006

A Message From Your President.....



NJACCRRA President
Nancy Thomson

School-age care is a critical piece of the child care picture. As such, this edition of our newsletter focuses on school-age care - also known as before and afterschool care, and care for out-of-school time. Our New Jersey community supports the need for accessible, quality school-age care. The Work First New Jersey and New Jersey Cares for Kids programs provide subsidies for school-age children up to age 13. Research demonstrates that quality programs engage children and enhance their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. They provide a social outlet and a safe haven for children during vulnerable hours when their parents are in the workforce.

Included in this newsletter is an article on the New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition (NJSACC), now celebrating its 25th year. NJSACC truly has been the driving force and key advocate for high quality programs, sound regulations, and appropriate funding of school-age programs. They are to be congratulated for their efforts, and we wish them another 25 years of success!

Wishing you a wonderful summer.....



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NJACCRRA NEWS

New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies

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Supporting New Jersey's Afterschool Providers

The New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition (NJSACC) works to promote and support the development, continuity, and expansion of quality programs for children and youth during out-of-school time. The out-of-school time community includes providers who offer afterschool, before-school, kindergarten wrap-around, and even summertime programming to families in New Jersey who depend on them for child care and enrichment. NJSACC has existed for more than 25 years to help build a strong network among these programs by:

- Providing training conferences, workshops, and information services
- Offering technical assistance that helps afterschool programs develop, expand, and improve services
- Working with decision-makers to define regulations and legislation
- Promoting improvement and accreditation systems that establish high quality services
- Developing public awareness of afterschool program issues
- Creating professional development opportunities

NJSACC accomplishes these objectives through a matrix of educational and networking events. The organization hosts a website at www.njsacc.org, which educates visitors on advocacy, funding, and educational opportunities related to school-age care in New Jersey. NJSACC also uses technology to keep professionals updated through "Afterschool FLASH," a free, subscription-based e-mail alert. A statewide annual conference, planned this year for

November 3rd and 4th, brings together more than 525 professionals over a two-day period. Last year the conference impacted 60,000 children in afterschool programs. In addition to offering individualized, on-site training for programs, NJSACC sponsors training events across the state on topics that include Hands-on Science; Adventures in Peacemaking (conflict resolution); Ages and Stages (child development); Behavior Management; Inclusion of Special Needs Children; Team-building; Activities and Planning; Trading Spaces: Indoor Room Design; and Snacks and Nutrition.

Special events are also frequently sponsored. During the upcoming summer, NJSACC is offering a week-long afterschool study visit to London. Participants will experience a mixture of presentations, visits to schools and children's centers, and discussions with policy-makers and practitioners from child care services across the United Kingdom.

The wide array of services offered through the NJSACC are provided under the leadership of Diane Genco, executive director, and supported by Jessica Heiberg, director of Program Services, and Stacy Dixon and Christine Corrrisiton, quality advisors. Strategic planning is overseen by NJSACC's Board of Directors, a team of seasoned professionals with broad experiences in out-of-school time. The organization operates out of a Westfield office but provides services and hosts events throughout the state.

"Our services are free," explained Diane Genco, NJSACC's executive director. "Our staff provide them with resources, on-site visits, and phone and on line support."

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School-Age Care: Family Resource, Community Investment

School-age care plays a role beyond giving children a place to go until their parents get home from work. Afterschool programs have become an important community resource for keeping kids safe, supervised, and stimulated during a time when they are most vulnerable. Juvenile crime triples between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., with the most violent of these crimes occurring in the first hour after school gets out. This is also a time when most kids smoke their first cigarette, try drugs, or experiment with their bodies. Teens who are unsupervised during afterschool hours are 37 percent more likely to become teen parents. Even if home alone, most children spend their time in front of the television or video game console. Nielsen Media Research tells us that children ages 6-15 watch an average of 23 hours of TV each week.

Afterschool programs can have tremendous influence upon a child's social, emotional, and academic development. Studies have shown that programs can improve math and reading scores, connect children with positive role models, and teach them about positive ways to serve their community. Perhaps most importantly, children learn to feel good about themselves while doing so. Especially in low and moderate-income neighborhoods, afterschool programs provide opportunities and resources that the family or community may not be able to. These include social relationships, recreational programs, and even a safe place to hang out.

Providing high quality programming for school-age children during afterschool hours is an investment in

our children's future. Yet, a recent survey conducted by the US Conference of Mayors indicates that only about 35 percent of children needing afterschool care are enrolled in programs. Look for opportunities to advocate for afterschool programming in your community and urge decision-makers to direct funding toward this critical resource. NJACCRRRA is committed to working with the New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition to ensure that all of New Jersey's children have access to

NJSACC (cont'd from page one)

One of the most important aspects of NJSACC's work is ensuring that NJ's afterschool programs maintain high quality.

"Our services are free to programs. Programs simply request a technical assistance (TA) visit. NJSACC looks at TA as being a 'Guide By the Side'," explained Diane Genco. "If an afterschool program requests a visit, we assist in developing an on-going program improvement plan for each program. Our staff provide them with resources, on-site visits, and phone and on line support."

Technical assistance and program support are central to NJSACC's mission. Its website offers 12 technical assistance papers that outline critical issues related to the implementation, environment, staffing, management, and funding of out-of-school programs. The organization works to promote the National After-School Association's Program Improvement and Accreditation system by offering advisors and training related to national standards for quality. A slate of annual recognition awards helps celebrate the accomplishments of dedicated professionals working in afterschool programs across the state.

While the majority of services provided through NJSACC are available to any professional or organization seeking assistance, the organization also supports an extensive membership network representing 500 afterschool professionals. Affiliated members receive special privileges, including advance notice on grants and funding, select conference discounts, networking opportunities, and ongoing educational mailings.

Visit www.njsacc.org or call (908) 789-0259 to become more involved in the services available through the New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition.

School-age Care Web Resources

Afterschool For All: www.afterschool2010.org

Afterschool.gov: www.afterschool.gov

Afterschool Alliance: www.afterschoolalliance.org

Lights On Afterschool Campaign:

www.afterschoolalliance.org/lights_on/index.cfm

Nat'l AfterSchool Association: www.naaweb.org

Nat'l Institute on Out-of-School Time: www.niost.org

New Jersey After 3: www.njafter3.org

New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition: www.njsacc.org

School Age Care ListServ:

<http://ecap.crc.uiuc.edu/listserv/sac-l.html>

School-Age Notes Newsletter: www.school-agenotes.com

The After School Project: www.theafterschoolproject.org

Excellence in Afterschool Programming

Exceptional afterschool programs work hard to balance careful supervision, good management principles, knowledge of the child's social and developmental needs, and the recognition that kids just want to have fun. While state regulations guide how programs operate, the school-age care profession has developed standards, based on research and practice, that help identify outstanding afterschool programming. Parents and referral specialists should look for some of the following indicators, adapted from the *Standards for Quality School-age Care*, a publication by the National AfterSchool Association, and from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time's paper on *Understanding Standards for Quality*, which demonstrate that a provider is implementing high quality afterschool services:

Programs and activities should be well-planned; they should address the social, recreational, and intellectual interests of participants and reflect the local needs of the community. Good programs present a daily schedule so that staff and children know what to expect, but they also allow for flexibility. Often, children are included in planning and evaluating activities. Programs must build strong linkages with parents, with the school system, and with the larger community. Communication between these partners is critical.

The staff hired to work with children must be capable of fostering a supportive environment. Staff ratios must allow for some individual interaction with the children. Excellent programs understand that staff members will be in situations to influence how children make choices and develop responsibility. Staff must understand how a school-age child's developmental needs manifest in their behavior and use positive techniques to guide this behavior. They must be able to function reliably as individuals and as members of a team. Likewise, they should be able to manage children as individuals and when in a group.

A high quality environment includes indoor and outdoor space that provides for an appropriate range of activities. It is clean, safe, and welcoming. Activities should address a wide range of interests among the school-age child: academic, technological, artistic, and recreational. They should include opportunities for self-expression, decision-making, and skill-building. Both cooperative and competitive play should be included. Safety is always considered. Daily snack choices meet the nutritional needs of children and are

chosen with appropriate timing, portions, and allergen-controls.

Staff members must also be supported as they fulfill their roles. They should be carefully screened to meet qualifications. Strong programs provide an initial training/orientation and provide ongoing professional development. These programs consider supervision and staff support an important program element and recognize that staff also have needs as basic as a place to hang their coat and safely store personal belongings. Most importantly, staff members must always have someone they can immediately turn to with a concern about a child.

Strong management principles also contribute to a high quality program. These include regular program evaluation measures, strong fund development and fiscal management systems, and clear program policies. Policies and rules should be specific, written, widely-distributed, and well-known to staff, parents, and the community. All members of the team must deliver a consistent message to children.

These indicators of high quality afterschool programming were adapted from *Standards for Quality School-Age Care*, available through The National After-School Association at www.naaweb.org/pdf/OrderForm.pdf, and from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time's paper on *Understanding Standards for Quality* at www.niost.org/publications/cns_2.pdf.

Upcoming NJACCRRRA Activities

NJACCRRRA's first annual report will be published during the summer of 2006!!!!

The report will highlight the work achieved by NJACCRRRA and its member agencies between 2004 and 2006. The annual report will be a great marketing and advocacy tool to share with decision makers, funders, and programs within your local and statewide networks. Copies of the report will be available at www.njaccrrra.org.