

Where Does the Money Go?

Where do your childcare dollars go? Did you know that approximately 50% of your Daycare Center's total budget goes to pay operating costs? These costs are fixed and have to be met no matter where your child is; a center-based program or a family childcare home. Recently many of these fixed costs have risen, but the fees that centers are still charging have remained stable when adjusted for inflation. As a result, provider salaries have declined approximately 25% since the mid '70's.

Many parents assume that teachers and caregivers are well paid since childcare seems so expensive. They take the amount they pay for childcare and multiply it by the number of children in care and assume providers are making tons of money. However, they often fail to take into account all of the expenses involved in a childcare business. When your center offers a high quality of care, operating expenses are also higher.

Quality childcare is expensive, but consider the alternative. The number of children per adult must be limited, because young children need close adult attention in order to thrive.

Example:

Based on 45 hours of care per week for your child (most children are in care longer) with a \$100 childcare fee for one week, your provider spends approximately....

\$ 4.00 extra per week on utilities

\$20.00 per week for meals above the state reimbursement level

(the state reimbursement for one child per day is inadequate at \$1.62)

\$ 3.00 per week in art & craft type supplies (markers, play dough, papers, etc)

\$ 3.00 on average per week on toys and equipment

\$ 3.00 for daycare insurance per week per child

\$15.00 for taxes (per \$100)

\$ 2.00 wear & tear on car on average to shop for daycare (based on standard mileage)

\$ 1.00 per week in advertising (business cards, ads, fliers)

\$ 1.00 per week in office materials expenses

\$ 2.00 per week in household supplies

(laundry soap, toilet paper, paper towels, diaper wipes, tissues, sanitizing solution, etc.)

\$ 4.00 maintenance/repair and improvements of home for daycare

All for just your child! \$100.00 - \$58 expenses = \$42.00 profit. That equates to roughly \$0.84 per hour for a ten hour day. Isn't your child worth it? Would you work for 84 cents per hour?

These figures based directly on tax totals and divided by the number of children your daycare Provider cares for

Family Childcare: Another Alternative

In a society where the majority of mothers and fathers are working outside the home, the need for quality childcare is growing at a rapid pace. A large contingent of the population is beginning to realize that center-based daycare is not their only option. Since it is now being acknowledged that the first three years of a child's life are the most important of their formative years, parents of young children are discovering that family child care can often better provide the individualized attention that children of this age need.

Just what is family childcare? In short, it is childcare that is offered in the provider's home. "Oh, so it's just someone who baby sits" you assume. Actually, quality family childcare is so much more than that. Quality providers are entrepreneurs who take pride in their small businesses and continually challenge themselves to remain at the leading edge of the child care profession.

One of the major benefits quality family childcare offers that center-based care simply cannot is a small group. Any parent of a young child knows that the fewer people their child is exposed to--the less likely they are to become ill. Center-based care may offer separate rooms for different age groups, but the fact of the matter is, that when large numbers of people--children as well as their parents--walk through a center's doors, as many as 100 people each day could be bringing their cold and flu symptoms into that environment! Factor in all of the center's employees and the potential for exposure to illness seems staggering.

More and more often, parents are choosing high quality family child care because they know that increased time and attention can be tailor-made for their children. It allows small groupings in an atmosphere resembling their own homes and they can offer loving care without having to sacrifice the quality of their programs. Due to the low ratio of children in each program to begin with, and the even lower number of infants enrolled, parents can really appreciate the individualized attention that is offered in a quality childcare home, and know that what is being offered really is serving their child's best interests.

Another major benefit that center-based care can't match is the consistency of the caregiver. In centers--where minimum wages are the industry standard--it can be detrimental for a child to become attached to their caregiver and then have that employee leave for "greener pastures." Children have to go through the trauma of dealing with feelings of abandonment and then re-establish a trust relationship with a new caregiver. This cycle is repeated time and time again in day care centers during the child's formative years. Alternatively, if your child spends more than 8 hours a day in a center, as most children of working parents do, he or she will be handed off to different caregivers throughout the course of each day. (Centers do not allow their employees to work overtime, so two full time shifts or three part time shifts are used for their normal 12-14 hour business day.) In contrast, since the family childcare provider runs a business from her home, parents can rest assured that their child can go from infancy to kindergarten with the same caregiver.

How can parents find quality family childcare? Just as you would ask your friends and acquaintances for personal referrals when looking for a new doctor or home decorator--that's the best way to seek out high quality family childcare as well. Most providers credit the bulk of their business to word-of-mouth personal referrals, as well as referrals obtained through professional organizations or corporate networks. Should a parent not have a referral to fall back on, then their best bet would be to get in touch with your local Indiana Association for Child Care Resource & Referral (IACCRR). Another good source for finding quality family childcare is to contact the National Association for Family Childcare to find an accredited provider. Their website is www.NAFCC.org. Organizations like this envision quality family child care as having a "ripple effect" in the community-where parents and providers alike recognize the need to expect and demand this exceptional type of care and advocate for quality programs to become the norm-not the exception-across the country.

How can parents distinguish between a quality provider and a sitter? Look for affiliation with one or more groups like Project Child or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Some other organizations that providers may be affiliated with are the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and 4-C Voice for Children. Memberships in groups such as these show a commitment to offering the best quality of child care possible. Additionally, the NAFCC distinguishes providers that meet professional standards of excellence in the areas of safety, health, nutrition, learning environment, interacting, outdoor play environment, and professional responsibility. All quality providers will meet or exceed parent's expectations in each of these areas. While finding an exceptional provider may seem like a daunting task, rest assured that they do exist in large numbers! The search is well worth the effort--after all, don't we all want to give our children the very best?

What Your Child Will Learn In A Family Day Care Home Typical Skills Children Learn in Family Daycare

Free play is one of the most important aspects of a quality daycare program. Free play sounds vague, but is very much a planned activity. The child has the freedom to choose among many different activities, but the teacher has created the classroom environment and arranged the choices the child will find. Free play is not time off for the teacher. On the contrary, she should be paying close attention to the children, interacting with them, offering guidance and help where necessary, noting progress and difficulties. Below you will find a list of some of the types of toys you will find in a quality childcare program. As you will see, what often looks like 'play' to an adult is, in reality, an important learning experience for a child. Toys do not have to be expensive, but they should be simple, safe, and long-lasting.

Block Play

Building blocks can be a great math and science toy because they help children learn about engineering and geometry. You can either buy a set of wooden, plastic, or cardboard blocks, or you can make your own out of egg cartons, cereal boxes, or wood scraps. For young children, make sure the blocks are big enough to handle easily and keep out of mouths. Have enough blocks in different shapes and sizes to build unusual structures. Have children paint the blocks in bright colors.

Puzzle Play

Puzzles help children learn to solve problems as well as learning about shapes, sizes, and colors. For toddlers, make sure the puzzle has some large pieces. You can make your own puzzle by pasting a magazine picture onto a piece of cardboard, then cutting it into large pieces. Or make a puzzle from one of your child's drawings. As children get older, they can do more difficult puzzles. Learning to work a puzzle is an important pre-math skill.

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play encourages children to think abstractly, which is an important prereading skill. Children come to understand that words represent ideas. Housekeeping/dress-up corner should be stocked with play items and props that encourage young children to play make-believe. Playing make-believe lets a child bring the complicated grown-up world down to size. Research demonstrates that children who are active in pretend play are usually more joyful and cooperative, more willing to share and take turns, and have larger vocabularies than children who are less imaginative. Imaginative play helps youngsters to concentrate, to be attentive, and to use self-control. When children pretend they also learn to be flexible, substituting objects for those they do not have. For example, a child will use an empty paper towel roll for a telescope. Through imaginative play, children learn empathy for others. Children will often act out a whole range of emotions when playing pretend, offering sympathy for a stuffed "doggie" that is hurt or for a doll that fell off a chair. We watch them scold a puppet for being naughty or tell a doll how proud they are because she used the potty.

Book Corner

Children learn language skills from books. Whether they are looking at a book individually, or being read to as part of a group, when you make books a part of a young child's day you set the stage for a lifelong interest in reading.

Finger Plays Or Songs

Cognitive/Language: Learns words, gestures, and melody (sequencing, repetition, speech and listening skills). Follows directions.

Physical: Coordination (small and large motor) for gestures and finger plays.

Music & Dance

Children enjoy both listening to music and making their own. Whether it's a group sing-along, marching in a percussion band, playing a triangle, or making up new lyrics to old favorite tunes, music is the universal language. Creative movement, learning to move your body through space, in time to the music or while pretending to be a falling leaf, is a creative way to tap into a child's imagination and artistic side. Music helps children connect the outer world of movement and sound with the inner world of feelings and observations. Children learn music the same way they learn language--by listening and imitating. Finger plays promote language development, fine-motor skills, and coordination. Young children are proud when they sing a song and can do the accompanying finger movements. Listening to music also teaches important prereading skills. As children use small drums or other percussion instruments (homemade or store-bought), they can play the rhythmic pattern of words. They can learn to hear the differences between fast and slow, loud and soft, one at a time and together, etc. When they try new instruments, they notice how each variation changes the music.

Outdoor Play

Running, swinging, climbing, jumping, hopping, digging in the sand--outdoor fun is one of the favorite parts of any young child's day. A good preschool playground will have enough space and sturdy equipment that a child can use his imagination while exercising. For example, the jungle gym structure might have connecting slides, tunnels to crawl through, and a bridge that connects one side of the apparatus to the other. A child will use multiple skills and create dozens of scenarios as he plays on this one structure. Outdoor play refines a child's gross-motor (large-muscle) skills. The cross-lateral movement (right arm/left leg and vice versa) involved is critical to a child's later success in reading and writing. Playground time is also an opportunity to explore and manipulate a different environment. Youngsters also love outdoor play because they can let loose their imaginations while getting physical. They can turn the jungle gym into a rocket ship, a castle, a firehouse--anything they choose

Art Play

Some art projects are part of a theme that the class is studying. For example, as part of the seasons' curriculum, the children might gather pine cones, leaves, and acorns during a fall nature walk. They will later use them in art projects, such as to make leaf rubbings, to assemble in collages, or to use as decorations for picture frames.

