

## CHILD CARE PROJECT

### Supporting Quality Rating System & Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards

Preschools have made tremendous changes in their environment for children. Since implementing the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards 3 years ago, all child care centers and preschools have used early childhood best practices to establish interesting play centers. Prior to this education, some rooms were cluttered, poorly arranged, and using many items that were not the most appropriate for children's learning.

Since the increased education and one-on-one staff involvement with the Family Resource Center's Early Childhood Consultants and Home Evaluators, the learning environments are better able to meet the developmental needs of children. This includes promoting more positive behavior skills. The Family Resource Center is proud to help make a difference for all children to feel safe and comfortable and that they all belong, which helps them in turn to become more independent and confident learners.

There is also more emphasis being placed on diversity awareness. Dolls, puppets and other learning toys that demonstrate this diversity are being provided through various funding tools.

The Iowa Food Program (CACFP) provides reimbursement to childcare providers and centers for preparation of nutritious meals. It involves some extra paperwork and more careful monitoring of meal planning which discourages some providers from participating. However, as evidenced by the story at the right, there are many benefits that outweigh the negatives to participating.

Training is offered for providers by the Family Resource Center in classroom settings as well as one-on-one. Levels of training completed help to professionalize the services being offered by a provider. The training might include "business kit" training which gives providers a methodical way of tracking their business services and the related expenses. There might be trainings on how to use certain developmental toys to encourage motor skills development, or trainings are provided on age-appropriate developmental skills to use as benchmarks for measuring levels of growth and learned skills.

The Family Resource Center continues to seek outside funding for other great developmental tools that are available if only for the funding to implement them!

#### Michelle's Reasons for participating in the food program

endorsed by the Family Resource Center's Child Care Project:

- I'm saving money
- The children are getting better nutritional food and all of them (myself included) are learning more about our bodies, our health, and what is good for us to eat.
- Since the end of the class, I and the children have all lost unneeded weight because we are eating a more balanced and healthier diet.
- I am now working on receiving a level 3 on Iowa's Quality Rating System

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*Food Program has its benefits!*

Early childhood education and training is making a difference for in-home providers. One example is a registered provider in the Building Families area. When Michelle was first visited, she stated that she would not ever, absolutely never be a part of the CACFP food program. She attended a training taught by FRC staff that included a session explaining the food program. Although she listened to the presentation about the food program, she still would not buy "into it". But as she continued the weekly classes where she gained more education from repeated discussions on best practices in early childhood, she agreed to keep an open mind and have the representative of CACFP come visit her home.

By the end of the 10 week class, she was signed up and not only willing to be on the food program, but was trying to persuade the rest of the class to participate.

See at the left what changed her mind!

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