

**PRESIDENT CLINTON'S PROPOSAL:
CHILD CARE THAT STRENGTHENS AMERICAN FAMILIES**

January 7, 1998

"No government can raise or love a child. Mothers and fathers do. But government can help provide parents the tools they need to meet this most vital responsibility and succeed at work. Today, I am proud to propose a comprehensive \$20 billion plan to make child care more affordable, accessible and safe for American families. It will be the single largest child care investment in the history of our nation. Child care is an issue that touches nearly every family in America, one that should rise above politics and partisan interests."

President Bill Clinton
January 7, 1998

President Clinton announces an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. The initiative proposes approximately \$20 billion over five years for child care, including elements to **help working families pay for child care, build a good supply of after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.**

ENSURING AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, SAFE CHILD CARE. The President's child care initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care they can afford, trust and rely on. The new initiative:

- **Makes child care more affordable for working families.** To help working families struggling to meet the costs of child care, the initiative invests \$7.5 billion over five years to double the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than two million by the year 2003. The initiative also increases tax credits for child care for three million families and provides tax credits to businesses that provide child care services to their employees.
- **Increases access to and promotes early learning and healthy child development.** To improve early learning, the initiative includes \$3 billion over five years to establish an Early Learning Fund that helps local communities improve the quality and safety of child care for children ages zero to five. The initiative also increases investment in Head Start and doubles the number of children served by Early Head Start to 80,000.
- **Improves the safety and quality of child care.** To help ensure safe, quality child care, the initiative: steps up enforcement of state health and safety standards in child care settings, facilitates background checks on child care providers, increases scholarships and training for child care providers, and invests in child care research and evaluation.
- **Expands access to safe after-school care.** To help create safe, positive learning environments for the more than five million school-age children who lack adult supervision during a typical week, the initiative provides after-school care for up to half a million children a year and improves coordination of federal after-school initiatives to help communities.

BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY. The President's agenda to strengthen America's families includes: federal funding for child care has increased by nearly 70% since 1993; the 1996 welfare reform law increased child care funding by \$4 billion over six years; the Healthy Child Care America Initiative ensures that children in child care are in safe and healthy environments; Head Start funding has increased more than 57% since 1993, providing service to more than 830,000 children and their families; and the first ever White House conferences on child care and early development.

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES CHILD CARE INITIATIVE

January 7, 1998

President Clinton today announced an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. The President's FY 1999 budget will include **approximately \$20 billion over five years for child care, the largest single investment in child care in the nation's history**. President Clinton's initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care that they can afford, trust, and rely on. The President's proposal will help working families pay for child care, build the supply of good after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.

- **Doubles the number of children receiving child care subsidies** to more than two million by the year 2003 by increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$7.5 billion over 5 years.
- **Increases tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care** by investing \$5.2 billion over 5 years in the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. The President's proposal also provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services for their employees.
- **Provides after-school care for up to half a million children per year** by expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center program by \$800 million over 5 years to provide funds to school-community partnerships to establish or expand programs for school-age children.
- **Improves child care safety and quality and enhances early childhood development** by establishing a new Early Learning Fund as well as supporting enforcement of state child care health and safety standards, providing scholarships to up to 50,000 child care providers per year, and investing in research and consumer education.

Child Care Block Grant Increase	\$7.5 billion over five years
Child and Dependent Tax Credit Reform	\$5.2 billion over five years
Tax Credit for Businesses	\$500 million over five years
After-School Program	\$800 million over five years
Early Learning Fund	\$3 billion over five years
Head Start Increase	\$3.8 billion over five years
Standards Enforcement Fund	\$500 million over five years
Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund	\$250 million over five years
Research and Evaluation Fund	\$150 million over five years
TOTAL:	\$21.7 billion over five years

MAKES CHILD CARE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Doubles the Number of Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies to More than Two Million. The President proposes to expand the Child Care and Development Block Grant to help working families struggling to meet the costs of child care. This block grant is the primary federal subsidy program to pay for child care, enabling low-income parents to work. Funds are distributed by formula to the states to operate direct child care subsidy programs, as well as to improve the quality and availability of care. The President's initiative will more than double the number of children served from the one million served in FY 95 (the latest year for which data are available). The President's budget will increase funding for the block grant by \$7.5 billion (with a match) over five years, which will enable states to provide subsidies for more than two million children by 2003.

Increases Tax Credits for Child Care for Three Million Working Families. The Child and Dependent Tax Credit provides tax relief to taxpayers who pay for the care of a child under 13 or a disabled dependent or spouse in order to work. The credit is equal to a percentage of the taxpayer's employment-related expenditures for child or dependent care, with the amount of the credit depending on the taxpayer's income. The President's proposal increases the credit for families earning under \$60,000, providing an additional average tax cut of \$358 for these families and eliminating income tax liability for almost all families with incomes below 200% of poverty (\$35,000 for a family of four) that take the maximum allowable child care expenses under the law. The President's budget will include \$5.2 billion over five years to expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit for three million working families.

Provides New Business Tax Credits. The child care initiative includes a tax credit to businesses that provide child care services for their employees, by building or expanding child care facilities, operating existing facilities, training child care workers, reserving slots for employees at child care facilities, or providing child care resource and referral services to employees. The credit covers 25% of qualified costs, but may not exceed \$150,000 per year. The President's budget will include approximately \$500 million over five years for these tax credits.

PROMOTES EARLY LEARNING AND HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Promotes Early Learning. Research shows that children's experiences in the earliest years are critical to their development and future success. The President's proposed Early Learning Fund provides challenge grants to communities (distributed by states) to support programs to improve early learning and the quality and safety of child care for children ages zero to five. Funds may be used for the following activities: providing basic training to child care providers (including first aid and CPR); connecting individual child care providers to centers for education and support; assisting child care providers to meet accreditation and licensing requirements; linking child care providers with health professionals; reducing group sizes and child-to-staff ratios; and providing home visits, parent education, and consumer education

about child care. The President's Early Learning Fund builds on state initiatives such as North Carolina's Smart Start, which helps North Carolina's children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start funds a broad variety of local efforts, including improving staff-to-child ratios, health linkages that have raised immunization rates, and parent education and mentoring programs to give new parents support. The President's budget will include \$3 billion over five years for this fund.

Increases Investment in Head Start and Doubles the Number of Children Served by Early Head Start. Head Start provides early, continuous and comprehensive child development and family support services, preparing children for a lifetime of learning and development. The President is committed to reauthorize Head Start and reach one million children by 2002. The President's budget will invest \$3.8 billion over five years to keep on track his commitment to serving one million children by 2002, and to double the number of infants and toddlers in Early Head Start to 80,000.

IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE

Steps Up Enforcement of State Health and Safety Standards. Building on the military's model child care program, this proposed initiative will fund state efforts to improve licensing systems and enforce child care health and safety standards, including by increasing unannounced inspections of child care settings. The President's budget will include \$500 million over five years for this program.

Facilitates Background Checks on Child Care Providers. On the day of the White House Conference on Child Care, the President transmitted to Congress the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, which will facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to sharing criminal history information for non-criminal purposes. Although the vast majority of child care providers are dedicated to the teaching and nurturing of children, one tragedy in child care is too many. Background checks are an important way to ensure that the people watching our children are fit for this responsibility.

Increases Scholarships and Training for Child Care Providers. At the White House Conference on Child Care, the President proposed establishing a Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund to enable states to provide scholarship funds to students working toward a child care credential. Eligible child care workers must commit to remaining in the field for at least one year for each year of assistance received and will earn increased compensation or bonuses when they complete their course work. The President proposed a federal investment of \$250 million over five years, which will support 50,000 scholarships per year. The President is also proposing to expand the Department of Labor's Child Care Apprenticeship Program to fund the training of child care providers.

Invests in Research. Because too little is known about our child care system, the President's budget will increase support for data, research, and evaluation. This research fund will also support a National Center on Child Care Statistics and a child care hotline that parents can call to get information about how to find child care in their communities and how to identify

appropriate, quality care for their children. In addition, the research fund will support demonstration projects to test approaches to help new parents who choose to stay home to care for their newborns or newly adopted children. The President's budget will include \$150 million over five years for this fund.

EXPANDS AND STREAMLINES AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

An estimated five million school-age children spend time as "latchkey kids" without adult supervision during a typical week. Research indicates that during these unsupervised hours children are more likely to engage in at-risk behavior, such as crime, drugs, and alcohol use. To meet this pressing demand, the President is proposing a dramatic expansion of after-school care.

Provides After-School Care for up to Half a Million Children a Year. The President proposes a dramatic expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program to provide start-up funds (with a local match) to school-community partnerships to establish or expand before- and after-school programs for school-age children. The program increases the supply of after-school care in a cost-effective manner primarily by funding programs that use public schools and their existing resources, such as computers, gymnasiums, and sports equipment. The program also includes a set aside to fund programs run by community organizations. The President's budget will request \$800 million of entirely new money for this program, for a total of \$1 billion over five years.

Improves Coordination of Federal After-School Initiatives to Help Communities Make Best Use of Existing Resources. The President will put in place a collaborative effort involving numerous federal agencies to eliminate duplication and better coordinate federal funding for after-school programs in three to five pilot cities, including the District of Columbia.

The President's Child Care Initiative

January 7, 1998

Internal Questions & Answers

1. What is the President announcing today?

President Clinton today announced an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. The President's FY 1999 budget will include **approximately \$20 billion over five years for child care, the largest single investment in child care in the nation's history.** President Clinton's initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care that they can afford, trust, and rely on. The President's proposal will help working families pay for child care, build the supply of good after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.

- **Doubles the number of children receiving child care subsidies** to more than two million by the year 2003 by increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$7.5 billion over 5 years.
- **Increases tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care** by investing \$5.2 billion over 5 years in the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. The President's proposal also provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services for their employees.
- **Provides after-school care for 500,000 children per year** by expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center program by \$800 million over 5 years to provide funds to school-community partnerships to establish or expand programs for school-age children.
- **Improves child care safety and quality and enhances early childhood development** by establishing a new Early Learning Fund as well as supporting enforcement of state child care health and safety standards, providing scholarships to up to 50,000 child care providers per year, and investing in research and consumer education.

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2. The President has been in office for five years. Why is he proposing a child care initiative now? Is this a new problem?

The child care initiative underscores President Clinton's commitment to strengthening America's families. As the President has said, child care is "the next great frontier if we're going to make sure all Americans can succeed at home and at work." (7/28/97) The initiative that the President announced today builds on the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Family Medical Leave Act, the Child Tax Credit, the new children's health insurance program, and a host of other legislation the President has fought for to help American families.

The initiative also builds on President Clinton's continuing efforts to improve and increase funding for child care. Under President Clinton, federal funding for child care has increased by 70%, helping parents pay for the care of about one million children. The 1996 welfare reform law increased child care funding by \$4 billion over six years to provide child care assistance to low-income working families moving from welfare to work.

3. How are you going to pay for this big package?

The President's budget carefully pays for each and every element of his child care initiative. The package is funded in a variety of ways -- some on the mandatory and others on the discretionary side of the budget. The offsets for the mandatory items include -- but are not limited to -- expected revenues from a national tobacco settlement, which the President hopes and believes Congress will pass this year.

4. Since much of the funding of this proposal is based on the tobacco settlement, aren't you counting your chickens before they've hatched? What will you do if the tobacco settlement does not go through?

First, the initiative is paid for in a number of ways -- only one part comes from tobacco revenues. Second, and more important, we believe that a national tobacco settlement will pass. The President strongly supports legislation consistent with his principles, and many Republicans and Democrats alike are working vigorously to craft comprehensive legislation. Of course, no offset proposed in a budget is guaranteed; the Congress can reject any proposed way of financing a program. If Congress does not pass comprehensive tobacco legislation, we will work with Congress to find other offsets. This is a high Administration priority, and we will find an effective funding mechanism.

5. Aren't you just creating a new federal bureaucracy?

The President's child care initiative creates no new federal bureaucracy. Rather, it relies on states and communities to decide for themselves how best to address the child care challenges they face. Indeed, the funds for each major initiative flow either to states or communities, or

in the case of tax credits, to individuals themselves.

6. The White House Conference on Early Learning and Development highlighted the crucial development that takes place in the first years of a child's life. Given that the best caregiver is a parent, what are you doing to help parents stay at home with their children during this important time?

The program announced today is primarily oriented toward families where both caregivers go to work, usually for reasons of financial necessity. It is designed to ensure that children in these families receive quality care even though their parents are in the workforce.

The President believes strongly, however, that we should support parents who can and choose to stay home. Today's announcement also includes two proposals that will help these parents stay at home. First, the Administration will support demonstration projects in states and communities to test policies to help new parents who choose to stay home to care for their newborns or newly adopted children. Second, the President's Early Learning Fund supports parents who stay at home by supporting home visits and parent education.

These initiatives build on President Clinton's record of providing real choices and opportunities for parents. He has fought for: a \$500 per child tax credit for families with children; the Earned Income Tax Credit that gives 15 million working families tax relief; health insurance for children; increases in the minimum wage; and the Family and Medical Leave Act. President Clinton is committed to helping parents make the choices that are right for their families, whether that means working or staying home to care for their children.

7. What role did the First Lady have in developing this initiative?

The First Lady has been a strong voice for children and families for over twenty-five years and continues to work on these issues. Mrs. Clinton played an important role in developing the White House Conference on Early Learning and Development and the White House Conference on Child Care. During the policy development process for the child care initiative, the President looked to the First Lady for her advice and expertise on the problems with the child care system and on possible solutions.

8. How do you expect to get Republican support for this initiative?

Child care traditionally has been a bipartisan issue. In fact, two of the central elements of the President's child care initiative were strongly supported by previous Republican Presidents and Members of Congress. Both Presidents Reagan and Bush supported the expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and President Bush supported the creation of the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Many Members of the House and Senate from both sides of the aisle have shown a commitment to taking action by introducing legislation that would improve the quality of

child care, make it more affordable, and promote early learning. We look forward to working with them to pass significant child care legislation this year.

TAX CREDITS

9. Today, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) favors middle-income taxpayers and offers less relief to lower-income taxpayers. Wouldn't it be more fair to make the CDCTC refundable?

The President's proposed expansion of the CDCTC would wipe out tax liability for most families with incomes under 200% of poverty (*e.g.*, \$35,000 for a family of four) who have the maximum allowable child care expenses. In addition, the President's proposal significantly expands the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which is an effective mechanism to help low-income working families with child care costs. The two proposals together offer significant relief to both low- and middle-income parents.

10. Wouldn't eliminating the marriage penalty help millions of working families with children? Why aren't you supporting eliminating the penalty as part of your child care initiative?

The Administration believes that proposals currently on the table to eliminate the marriage penalty are prohibitively expensive in the context of a balanced budget. The President chose instead to provide targeted tax cuts to assist American families struggling to meet child care costs. These tax cuts will help more than three million families to pay for high-quality child care.

Helping working families, especially those with children, has been the centerpiece of the President's agenda on tax cuts. In 1993, the President expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit to give the average recipient with two children more than \$1,000 in tax relief. In 1997, the President signed into law a \$500 per child tax credit that will help 27 million families meet the costs of raising their children. In addition, his \$1,500 HOPE Scholarship Tax Credit and Lifelong Learning Tuition Tax Credit will help nearly 13 million students meet the costs of college and higher education. The President will continue to focus tax and overall economic policy on helping working families.

11. Won't the employer credit for child care expenses that the President is proposing create a windfall for companies already operating child care centers or otherwise subsidizing employee child care?

Very few for-profit employers are currently making child care services available to their employees. The credit will provide a real incentive to employers to create new employee child care programs. Also, for those employers who already have a child care program, the credit will help support expansion of services.

SUBSIDIES

12. Why are you expanding the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) when states aren't using all of their child care subsidy money now?

In fact, we are very encouraged by state reports which show they have obligated over 99% of the child care fund available under the new welfare law for FY 1997. This demonstrates the tremendous need states have for child care, and President Clinton has continued to urge states to invest their dollars into helping these working families. But let's be clear—this current initiative is not aimed at mothers on welfare. It's aimed at working parents who desperately need this assistance. For example, working families with annual incomes under \$14,400 that pay for care for children under five spend 25% of their income on child care -- and even then it's difficult finding accessible, quality care.

13. According to some news stories, states have big surpluses which they could spend on child care. Rep. Clay Shaw recently issued a report saying that states have significant and growing surplus federal welfare dollars. The report also said that given the surpluses and the increase in child care funding under the new welfare law, there isn't a need now for more child care money. Why are you proposing to add to CCDBG?

The Administration is very pleased that a strong economy and state welfare reform efforts have helped families move from welfare to work. But let's be clear—this initiative is not aimed at mothers on welfare. It's aimed at working parents. For example, working families with annual incomes under \$14,400 that pay for care for children under five spend 25% of their income on child care. Currently, we're serving only a small percentage of eligible children from working families: there are approximately 10 million children who are eligible for federal child care assistance, but we are able to serve only over a million of these children.

For America's working families to succeed in the workplace, they need quality choices in affordable and accessible child care. The President's initiative, with its combination of increased subsidies for low-income families and tax credits for moderate- and middle-income families, will provide working parents the opportunity to remain self-sufficient and succeed both at home and at work.

14. When the President signed the welfare bill, he claimed that the big increase in CCDBG would make welfare reform work. Now that he is proposing adding to it, is he admitting that his previous child care efforts were not sufficient?

No. The President fought to spend \$4 billion more on child care in welfare reform legislation to help mothers on welfare go to work, and he continues to believe that child care is a critical component of welfare reform. However, low-income parents who have never been on

welfare are also struggling to afford child care, and *all* working families want their children to be in safe, healthy settings where they can learn and grow. These initiatives address the concerns and needs of *all* working families in this country. In particular, expansion of the block grant will enable many states to provide subsidies for the first time to the non-welfare working poor.

15. In order to keep up with the additional need for child care under welfare reform, aren't states creating new slots at the expense of quality? What protection do you have against states just increasing slots without regard to quality if you simply increase the block grant?

The President believes that we must make child care more affordable as well as improve quality because he believes that both are important. That is why his child care initiative includes investments in both, and that is why the President fought hard during the welfare debate to preserve 4% of funding through the child care block grant for state investments in quality.

QUALITY

16. What does the Early Learning Fund actually do? How will you measure results?

Recent scientific research has demonstrated that experiences during the earliest years of life -- before children reach school age -- are critical to their cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Nurturing and stimulating children in the first years of life help their brains develop and prepare them for the challenges of school and later life. We also know that too much child care for infants and toddlers is inadequate: one respected study found that 13% of regulated and 50% of unregulated family child care providers offer care that is inadequate for children ages zero to three. President Clinton's proposed Early Learning Fund is designed to improve early learning and development for our youngest children; to ensure health and safety in child care; and to support parents as they raise their children.

The President's Early Learning Fund builds on state initiatives such as North Carolina's Smart Start, which helps North Carolina's children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start funds a broad variety of local efforts, including improving staff-to-child ratios, health linkages that have raised immunization rates, and parent education and mentoring programs to give new parents support.

17. How is the Early Learning Fund different from Early Head Start?

Early Head Start is a relatively small program that reaches only certain poor families. The new initiative will promote early learning and provide parent support and education to parents at a wider range of income levels. The Early Learning Fund also differs from Head Start and Early Head Start because it targets support to communities that have developed innovative approaches to foster early learning and meet the child care needs of families.

18. Wasn't the President already committed to serving one million children by 2002? What's new in this Head Start initiative?

The President's child care initiative proposes an additional \$1 billion targeted to Early Head Start to double the number of infants and toddlers served, in addition to his commitment to reauthorize all of Head Start to reach one million children by 2002. The total cost is \$3.8 billion.

19. Much of the research the White House has highlighted tells us what we need to do to ensure healthy child development. Given that these practices are the same everywhere, why have you not proposed national standards?

We do know what works. As we learned at the White House Conference on Child Care, safe facilities, ongoing guidance from health professionals, and child care providers who are well trained and adequately compensated result in quality care. However, we also learned at the conference that many states have good quality standards, but do not have the resources to fund enforcement of those standards. The President's Standards Enforcement Fund will help states improve licensing, enforce standards, and increase unannounced inspections of child care settings. In addition, particularly when it comes to the youngest children, different states face different challenges in their child care systems. That is why the President's Early Learning Fund gives states a menu of allowable activities to promote early learning and development so that states can concentrate on those areas where they are falling behind. In this way, the quality of care will improve across the country.

20. At the White House Conference on Child Care, you championed the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact. What happened to the Compact?

The National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact has been transmitted to Congress. The Compact is an important part of the President's child care initiative, and the President will push for its passage when Congress returns.

21. Won't the scholarship fund raise the wages of child care workers, and in turn, increase the cost of child care and make it unaffordable for many families?

This proposal is modeled after North Carolina's T.E.A.C.H. program; North Carolina has not seen higher costs since it put T.E.A.C.H. in place. Because child care workers are likely to stay in their jobs longer if they are trained and better compensated, any additional costs of increased wages will be offset to some extent by savings associated with reduced staff turnover.

22. If you are proposing a huge increase in federal research of child care issues, shouldn't you wait to make policy based on what you learn from the research?

While there is much we don't know about our child care system, we do know enough to act. Child care is a pressing problem in America: 45% percent of all children under the age of one are in child care on a regular basis; much of this is inadequate; and families with annual incomes under \$14,400 that pay for care for children under five spend about 25% of their income on child care. We cannot afford to wait to improve the quality of care these children receive.

AFTER- SCHOOL PROGRAMS

23. Your after-school proposal requires programs to be run in the schools. What do you do for those children in communities where the school will not or cannot provide an after-school program?

While a major purpose of the 21st Century Learning Centers Program is to make use of underutilized school facilities, the program includes a set aside to fund programs run by community groups. In addition, the President's FY 1999 budget includes \$95 million for after school and other prevention programs administered by the Department of Justice. Innovative programs that are run by community groups in museums, recreation centers or other places outside schools may receive funding from this after-school initiative.

GENERAL

24. Much attention has been given to the au pair system since nineteen year old Louise Woodward was tried for killing a baby in her care. What are you doing to reform the au pair system?

The U.S. Information Agency (the agency that runs the au pair program) announced in September updated regulations on the screening and placement of au pairs. Under the new regulations: au pairs who care for children under two years old must have 200 or more documented hours of infant-care experience; au pair training will include 24 hours of child-development instruction; au pairs will be limited to working 10 hours a day and 45 hours a week; their pay will be increased from \$115 to \$139 a week; and the screening and selection process will be improved.

25. What are the child care options for parents who work at the White House?

Employees of the Executive Office of the President (EOP) can enroll their children in the nearby U.S. Kids Child Development Center, a center accredited by the independent National Association for the Education of Young Children. Additionally, White House parents may enroll their children in any of the 27 other Federal child care centers in the greater Washington, D.C. area.

26. What is the child care system for federal employees?

There are more than 230 child care centers for civilian government employees in federal buildings in as many as 36 states, including 108 centers overseen by the General Services Administration (GSA). Seventy-three percent of GSA sponsored centers are accredited by the independent National Association for Education of Young Children, and GSA is working to reach 100% accreditation within two years. Striving to meet the needs of parent workers, 89% of GSA centers have infant care, 74% have drop-in/emergency care, and 42% provide summer programs for school-aged children. In addition, more than 80% of centers are open 11 or more hours per day. Notably, nearly 70% of the child care center directors have ten or more years of experience in early childhood education.

27. Apparently many low-income federal employees cannot afford the federal child care system. What are you doing to help them?

The federal government, like the private sector, still faces challenges in providing affordable care to lower paid employees. GSA has studied this problem intensively this year and has released a report to Congress outlining a plan to increase revenues and enrollment, reduce operating costs, and expand the availability of tuition assistance for parents who can't afford to pay full fees.

28. You have touted the military's child care system as a model for the nation. Isn't it good because they spend so much?

While the military does invest significant resources into their child care system, they also set and enforce high quality standards (including through unannounced inspections), support family day care networks, offer a strong resource and referral system, and provide a wide variety of care options, all of which increase quality without large investments.

The Department of Defense's Child Care System serves over 200,000 children daily (age zero to 12), making it the largest employer-sponsored child care program in the nation. Through this system, the military offers full-day, part-day, and hourly child care, part-day preschools, before- and after-school programs for school age children, and extended hour care. Because of the Department of Defense's commitment to excellence in child care, since 1992, the number of military child care facilities that are accredited by the independent National Association for the Education of Young Children has risen from 55 to 353. Currently, over 75% of military child care programs are accredited, as compared to only 7% of other child care facilities nationwide.

29. Washington D.C.'s child care system is in crisis. What are you doing to improve the child care system in this city?

Administration officials, concerned over the state of child care in the District, have met with D.C. officials on several occasions to discuss ways to improve the quality of care the children who live in the District receive. A working group including major stakeholders -- the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Management and Budget, the office

of the Mayor, the D.C. Council, the Control Board, and other city agencies have forged a partnership to improve the quality of child care services in the District. The District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs has issued a draft Strategic Plan to improve child care quality.

In addition, the President will include D.C. as one of three to five pilot cities involved in an interagency effort to eliminate duplication and better coordinate federal funding streams for after-school programs.