



## Child Care WORKS 2012 Policy Agenda

### **Quality child care builds the foundation for future prosperity**

**Child Care WORKS advocates for access to affordable, high-quality child care options. Our 2012 policy agenda includes the following issues and others reflected in the Child Care WORKS' 20/20 Vision for a New Decade.**

Family involvement and quality child care settings are two of the best ways to build a foundation for children's future prosperity. Stable, consistent and quality child care also enables Minnesota businesses to recruit and retain their employees, reduce absenteeism, and increase productivity. The child care industry itself is an economic engine for the state, supporting nearly 30,000 workers, many of whom are small business owners.

#### **1) Inform Parents and Enhance Child Care Quality**

Parents need information about the quality of care in order to make informed decisions and child care providers need opportunities and incentives to improve the quality in their care setting.

***Action Item:***

- Support efforts to expand *Parent Aware* statewide. *Parent Aware* is Minnesota's early care and education Quality Rating and Improvement System.

#### **2) Improve Effectiveness of Investments in Child Care**

In order to ensure the economic prosperity of all Minnesotans, Child Care WORKS has joined a coalition of organizations working on a variety of issues to ensure that Minnesotans families have access to the programs and services they need to be successful. Our work in this area will be based on the recommendations of the Minnesota Legislative Commission to End Poverty

***Action Items:***

- Increase eligibility for Child Care Assistance to 75% of Minnesota state median income and fully fund the Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance Program. By increasing eligibility and funding for child care, more working families will be able to access quality child care.
- Restore cuts to the child care system made in 2011, such as reimbursement rates and grants to the infrastructure needed to train, build and develop quality child care.

- Restore the Absent Day policy to allow families up to 25 days of excused absences in the event of illness or emergencies that require children to be absent from their provider. This will allow more consistency for families and better outcomes for children.
- Oppose any amendments to Minnesota's Constitution that would require a supermajority vote to raise taxes or use reserve funds, or would restrict lawmakers from using available resources. The impact of these amendments would be a loss of flexibility for our legislators to solve long term and unknown future challenges.

### **3) Improve Government Efficiency and Accountability**

In 2011 Minnesota made great strides in strengthening coordination and accountability by establishing the *Office of Early Learning*, *Early Learning Council* and *Governor's Children's Cabinet*. Child Care WORKS looks forward to working with each of these entities to provide on-going feedback, leadership and direction based on the needs of families and children in Minnesota.

***For more information, please contact Mary Nienow at [mary@childcareworks.org](mailto:mary@childcareworks.org).***