

ANALYSIS
of
THE MESSAGES
of
THE
EARLY CHILDHOOD
MOVEMENT



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ANALYSIS *of* THE MESSAGES *of* THE EARLY CHILDHOOD MOVEMENT

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Introduction

On July 19 and 20, 2001, twenty-two people involved in early childhood development gathered at a meeting called “Exploring the Possibilities” sponsored by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation with the participation of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. hosted the meeting. The purpose of the gathering was to begin to create a shared communication strategy to increase support for dedicated federal and state resources for young children. Representatives included funders, grantees, researchers, and communication practitioners.

Meeting participants identified the need for information about both the organizations involved in early childhood development and education and about the messages they produce. As a result, and with a grant from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Annenberg Public Policy Center began a study of these messages.

This report presents a list of state and national organizations engaged in early childhood education and development (Appendix A), documents patterns found in the messages produced by these organizations, and suggests ways to improve these texts. The goal of this endeavor was to provide a guide to child-centered organizations that would help in developing a shared communication strategy by letting them know what other organizations are doing and saying and by providing suggestions for improvement.

While we are not experts in early childhood development, neither are many of the individuals and institutions that control the decisions that drive public policy change. We are, however, scholars in rhetoric and communication, and it is on this expertise that we drew in this analysis. This report is financed by The David and Lucille Packard Foundation. We thank Janna Robbins, Kim Meltzer, and Lorie Slass for helping with this report, and Lori Dorfman, Philip Sparks, and Elizabeth Burke Bryant for providing feedback. We also appreciate the assistance and guidance offered by Ann Segal, formerly of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

Overview

We begin this report by observing that there is broad consensus on the most prevalent issues (early care and education, health care, and poverty) in messages produced by organizations involved in early childhood education and development.

Next we discuss the importance of knowing one's target audience and crafting messages for it. We recommend that existing studies of the characteristics and values of potential audiences and how best to communicate with them should be compiled into a single, succinct, readable resource that is distributed to organizations for their use. We also highlight the need for more information about specific audiences and the testing of potential messages.

We then bring to bear current social-scientific thinking on persuasion and language use and outline several basic cognitive schemata and frames that are likely to arise when discussing children's issues. Based on this approach, we make recommendations about the types of frames, language, and spokespeople that may help enhance messages.

In addition, we look at messages through a traditional rhetorical lens and suggest that many organizations need to do a better job of communicating harms extant in the status quo, explaining why the condition of children concerns all people and offering specific solutions backed with solid evidence. As part of this section we examine arguments against greater state investment with children and suggest ways that organizations can do a better job of responding to common oppositional positions.

Finally, we present findings from our interviews indicating that organizations could do a better job of networking and information sharing, and recommend ways in which organizations can improve their websites. The last section of this report is a list of the organizations that participated in this study.



Executive Summary

- We contacted 92 state and national organizations primarily involved in early childhood development (birth to age five) to draw data for this study. Five types of messages were collected from these organizations: press releases, policy/issue briefs, calls for legislative action, studies, and fact sheets. Representatives of organizations were also interviewed.
- There is a broad consensus about key issues found in texts from the early childhood development community. The most common message topic was early care and education, followed by health care and poverty. Almost 70% of the messages we examined centered on these three topics.
- Our interviews and a study of participating organizations' websites revealed a notable lack of studies conducted by (or in cooperation with) early education organizations on public attitudes about issues concerning children. There were even fewer on the effects of frames or language in advocacy messages. A comprehensive review of extant studies, polls, and focus groups would provide information useful in crafting messages more effectively.
- Many groups justified improved or expanded early education programs on the grounds that mothers are working outside the home in greater numbers. However, this strategy may backfire by cueing traditional attitudes about motherhood, which can result in less support for public policies.
- Though some organizations are already employing such language, others may want to consider such terms as “our children” and “America’s children,” which emphasize the collective benefits that can result from improvements in early childhood development.
- Despite studies showing the public supports businesses helping families with early education, we found few examples of organizations discussing this issue. Organizations may want to focus more attention on the benefits businesses derive from assisting with early education.
- We found many examples in which words that were unlikely to help advocates, such as, “child care,” “staff,” and “adult” were used in texts. Instead, using terms such as “early education” and “teacher” may help attach positive meanings to arguments for early education programs.
- Though some organizations offer evidence to establish short- and long-term effects of quality early education, others should also consider providing such evidence.

- Messages about health insurance and poverty often centered on the needs of families. Organizations may want to consider putting children at the center of these issues because the young may appear to the public to be more worthy of help.
- Organizations may want to emphasize collective benefits more frequently in their arguments. Framing policy changes around collective benefits may promote collective action.
- While organizations consistently argued for the benefits of many programs, we found few cases where the need for change was well documented. In order to more effectively persuade policy makers that early development is an issue of national interest, organizations may want to focus both on how the status quo is harming people and why the public should care.
- We found many cases of texts that offered vague solutions to problems. Organizations may want to consider presenting more concrete solutions backed with solid evidence that the solutions will work, and they may want to link solutions to action steps the audience can take.
- Although inoculation minimizes the likelihood of counter-persuasion, the messages we analyzed tended not to include inoculative arguments against opposition. Organizations may want to be prepared for opposing arguments and bolster their own arguments accordingly.
- Studies show that when speakers appear to be arguing against self-interest their perceived authority increases. Organizations may want to consider employing novel or unexpected advocates to help deliver their messages. We found few cases where spokespeople or advocates were chosen for maximum impact.
- Our interviews with representatives from 33 early-childhood groups revealed a surprising unfamiliarity with other organizations doing similar work. Twenty-four percent of those interviewed could not name a single other organization working in this field.
- While some organizations have effective websites, others could improve the public policy components of their sites.





Data

Organizations were selected for study if they were engaged in projects to promote early childhood (from birth to five years) development or education in the United States at the state or national level. Our search for organizations began with those invited to the “Exploring the Possibilities” conference. We asked advocates who attended to name other organizations engaged in early childhood education or development. We also found groups through Internet research using the search terms “early childhood development” and “early childhood education.” All relevant organizations listed or linked on those initial websites or mentioned in subsequent interviews were also included.

All groups included in our database were contacted for interviews. Because questions about advocacy were the focus of this research, we examined five types of communication that represented the persuasive efforts of these organizations: press releases, policy/issue briefs, calls for legislative action, studies, and fact sheets. We asked organizations to send us these documents, and we downloaded them from the Internet.

All data were collected between November 1, 2001 and February 28, 2002. Information that arrived after the cut-off was not included.

We collected messages or interviews from 70 different organizations, conducted 33 interviews, and analyzed 151 press releases,¹ 98 policy and issue briefs, 75 legislative alerts and agendas, 84 studies, and 45 fact sheets. In return for this cooperation we promised not to name the specific organizations from which we drew examples for this report.

¹ We included only press releases dated January 2000 – February 2002.





Topics Covered in Early Childhood Messages

All Types of Data

We examined five types of data (press releases, policy/issue briefs, legislative agendas, studies, and fact sheets)² to determine the topics on which messages focused. The most common was child care/early education, followed by health care/dental and poverty. Almost 70% of the messages centered on these three topics.

There is broad consensus about the top issues in early childhood development.

It stands to reason that few messages focused on literacy, crime, or technology/media because we looked only at organizations and data targeting children birth to age five. Importantly, these data were coded according to major topic. For example, if a press release focused on child development in the context of improving early education, it was coded as early education. It would only have been coded as child development if development were presented as a main topic of its own (not set in another context).

These findings are consistent with a report done by the National Association of Child Advocates (NACA). In “Speaking for America’s Children” (2002), researchers asked leaders of statewide organizations that are members of NACA to identify the top issues affecting children and families in their states. The largest number of states identified early care and education as a top priority, followed by child health, and economic security/family supports.

Topic	Percent
Child Care/Early Education/Head Start	31%
Health Care/Dental	23%
Poverty	13%
Violence/Abuse/Neglect	12%
Spending on Children ⁴	8%
Foster Care/Adoption	6%
Child Development	5%
Crime	1%
Technology/Media	<1%
Literacy	<1%

The consistency of NACA’s and our findings about messages suggests that the agenda items that leaders of child advocacy organizations identify as their top priorities and the messages that these and similar organizations produce are consistent.

² Press releases were messages produced by the organizations and sent to the press to facilitate news coverage. Policy and issue briefs were documents analyzing or explaining the organizations’ positions on issues or policies. Legislative agendas were messages promoting specific legislative action. Fact sheets were educational documents that presented statistics and data about various topics. Studies presented the results of research.

³ Coded by most prominent topic.

⁴ Though spending on children is a component of most of the other topics, there were messages consistently produced that had spending as their dominant theme and they were coded separately.

However, there may be less consistency between what the public sees as its priorities and the issues on which these organizations are focusing their messages. According to the report “Effective Language for Communicating Children’s Issues” (p. 9), “When [a national sample of voters were] asked what Congress should focus on for children, 33 percent volunteer education, with all other responses in the single digits. However given a list of suggestions, the priorities are much more diffuse . . . drugs (40%), violence (38%), education (32%), child abuse and neglect (29%) . . . health care (9%).”⁵

Work is needed to align the issue agenda of the public with that of early childhood education advocates.

Specific Issues

When we looked at the specific messages within each topic we found a broad consensus on the nature of the problems (e.g., child poverty is too high) but greater variety in solutions to the problems. Below we outline areas of broad consensus on each issue.

CHILD CARE/EARLY EDUCATION

While early education (including child care and Head Start) was the most common subject of press releases, the specific issues covered were quite varied. Generally there did appear to be consensus on the fact that quality early education was too expensive and not readily available (especially to people with low incomes who tend to gain the most from such programs). Many organizations advocated that low-income working parents should receive help paying for early education, though various plans were advanced. They ranged from advocating more spending on programs such as Head Start to tax credits for low-income people and direct state child care subsidies. There was also a broad consensus supporting state involvement in regulating standards and assisting to improve quality. Again, suggested ways to improve quality varied. For example, some messages emphasized the importance of licensing, others accreditation, while others advocated better pay and subsidies for training of early education teachers.

HEALTH CARE/HEALTH INSURANCE/DENTAL

Most of the releases about health care focused on the importance of health insurance for children’s healthy development. When plans were advanced, they usually called for expanding or creating state-sponsored health insurance programs for low-income children. Many messages also focused on ways to improve outreach for existing programs. Plans for improving outreach, however, were quite varied. For example, some advocated programs that linked children in nutrition programs to programs for subsidized health coverage. Others advocated greater access to Medicaid.

⁵ Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children’s issues*.

POVERTY

Discussions of poverty focused on several themes. Efforts to document the child poverty rate and identify it as too high were common. Many messages focused on appeals to the government to do more to help the working poor. The most common plan proposed to alleviate poverty was a refundable tax credit for the working poor. Other plans related to the issue of poverty included: improving unemployment insurance, studying the effects of welfare reform on children, and increasing the supply of affordable housing.

VIOLENCE/ABUSE/NEGLECT

When violence was discussed, the focus was usually on the need for child abuse prevention. There was an easy consensus that not enough is being done to prevent and intervene where abuse and neglect occur, but there were various plans to solve the problem. The plans advocated by childhood development organizations included increasing funds for programs that prevent abuse (especially through home visitation), expediting public systems to respond to abuse, and improving training for child welfare workers. Gun violence messages were less common and usually argued that too many children die from gun violence. Proposals ranged from trigger locks and safe storage to limits on gun purchases.

SPENDING ON CHILDREN

Though spending on children is a component (even if implicitly stated) of most of the messages we examined, some messages made spending the central theme. These messages tended to employ much more similar themes than the other topics. President Bush's budget along with state budgets were often criticized for not allotting more money to programs that help children. Many texts argued against tax cuts on the grounds that money was needed to help children.

FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION

Texts on foster care and adoption tended to argue for more funding for various aspects of the system (such as group homes, training for successful adoption, and foster parents).

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

When child development was the main theme, it was often discussed in connection with the need for high-quality early education programs. Policy statements and issue briefs on child development were usually educational pieces about studies and research findings about the importance of the early years of development.

Topics by Data Types

There was a broad consistency in topics among the different types of messages in our study (see Table 2). Early education was the first or second most common topic in all message types. However, while health care was ranked first or second in policy statements, legislative agendas, and studies, this topic was less frequently addressed in press releases and fact sheets. If health care tops the legislative agenda for early childhood organizations it probably should receive ample coverage in press releases. Similarly, violence, abuse, and neglect were the second most common topic of fact sheets but placed fourth or below for press releases, policy statements, and studies. Finally, though spending on children was a very common topic in press releases, it hardly ranked in any of the other message types.

This suggests that organizations may want to review the degree to which topics they identify as legislative priorities are consistently addressed in their communications.

Table 2: Ranking of Top Five Topics for Different Types of Messages

Topic	Press Releases	Policy Statements	Legislative Agendas	Studies	Fact Sheets
Child Care/ Early Education/ Head Start	1	1	2	1	1
Health Care/Dental	5	2	1	2	4
Poverty	3	3	4	3	3
Spending on Children	2			5	
Child Development	4	5		4	
Violence/Abuse/Neglect		4	3		2
Technology/Media					
Child Welfare/ Foster Care/Adoption			5		

Table 3: Topics of Press Releases

Topic of Press Release	Percent
Child Care/Early Education/Head Start	19%
Spending on Children	17%
Poverty	11%
Child Development	10%
Health Care/Dental	9%
Violence/Abuse/Neglect	5%
Technology/Media	2%
Literacy	1%
Crime	1%
Child Welfare/Foster Care/Adoption	1%
Other/Various	23%

Note: Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Press Releases

The most prominent topic⁶ in press releases was child care (19%), followed by the need for increased spending on children (17%), poverty (11%), child development (10%), health care (9%), and violence (5%). The least common topics for press releases were: child welfare/foster care/adoption (1%), crime (1%), literacy (1%), and technology/media (2%).

⁶ Most prominent topic was determined by the sole topic of the document if there was just one. If the document addressed multiple topics it was coded as various.

Policy Statements and Issue Briefs

The most common topic in policy statements and issue briefs was early education (25%). This was followed by health care (22%), poverty (17%), violence (15%), and child development (8%). The least common foci were literacy (1%), technology/media (1%), and child welfare/foster care/adoption (4%).

Legislative Action/Agendas

Because legislative agendas usually address multiple topics with equal emphasis and tend not to have a single focus, we coded each item listed as a priority. Unlike most of the other documents examined, health care topped the list with 27% of the items mentioned in the legislative agenda. Early education followed with 25%, then violence (13%), poverty (10%), and child welfare/foster care/adoption (10%). The least likely topics to be mentioned were crime (1%) and child development (1%).

Studies

When we examined studies, we found a wide range of central topics. However, a majority concerned early education (55%). This was followed by poverty (8%), health care (5%), child development (5%), spending on children (2%), and child welfare (including foster care and adoption) (1%).

Fact Sheets

The final type of message examined was the fact sheet. More so than other forms of communication, many of the fact sheets did not address single topics but instead were focused on multiple topics. Still, child care was predominant (22%), followed by violence (18%), poverty (12%), and health care (8%).

Table 4: Topics of Policy Statements & Issue Briefs

Topic of Policy Statements & Issue Briefs	Percent
Child Care/Early Education/Head Start	25%
Health Care/Dental	22%
Poverty	17%
Violence/Abuse/Neglect	15%
Child Development	8%
Child Welfare/Foster Care/Adoption	4%
Technology/Media	1%
Literacy	1%
Other/Various	6%

Note: Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 5: Topics of Legislative Action/Agendas

Topic of Study	Percent
Health Care/Dental	27%
Child Care/Early Education/Head Start	25%
Violence/Abuse/Neglect	13%
Poverty	10%
Child Welfare/Foster Care/Adoption	10%
Spending on Children	6%
Crime	1%
Child Development	1%
Other/Various	6%

Note: Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 6: Topics of Studies

Topic of Study	Percent
Child Care/Early Education/Head Start	55%
Poverty	8%
Health Care/Dental	5%
Child Development	5%
Spending on Children	2%
Child Welfare/Foster Care/Adoption	1%
Other/Various	24%

Note: Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 7: Topics of Fact Sheets

Topic of Fact Sheets	Percent
Child Care/Early Education/Head Start	22%
Violence	18%
Poverty	12%
Health Care	8%
Other/Various	40%

Note: Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.





Audience Analysis

Getting Information

At the foundation of any effective advocacy effort is an understanding of the audience. Underlying this concept is the idea that the better one knows the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of the target of a message, the more effective the persuasive effort can be.

As part of this report, we conducted an informal Internet search for studies that would inform organizations about the attitudes of potential audiences. We found several studies and polls about the public's attitudes about child care and early education. The Early Care and Education Collaborative website (www.earlycare.org),⁷ for example, lists various polls on this topic and includes a summary of many of the findings that should help organizations think about their target audiences (at least for the issue of early childhood education). There were, however, several important limitations to the data we found on this site and others.

First, most of the studies of audiences and messages were not sponsored by organizations participating in our study and not linked with their websites.⁸ Very few of the representatives interviewed said their organization had commissioned or been involved in collecting data through surveys or focus groups. Even fewer had participated in studies that focused on language or message design. We collected just four studies from our participants that concentrated on what the public knows or wants with regard to early childhood development and only two that focused on recommended language use in designing messages. These are summarized at the end of this section.

This may suggest that organizations are not aware of helpful data, and that advocates may be crafting messages and communication strategies based on incomplete information about target audiences or message effectiveness. It is also possible that the organizations were simply unwilling to share their studies with us, or that they were using studies sponsored by other organizations but did not reveal that fact in the interview.

⁷ However, as of the time of publication, the site could not be viewed using Netscape. See our section on hints for effective use of the web.

⁸ As part of this project we collected all polling and focus group data that participating organizations were willing to share or had made available on their websites. Respondents were asked, "Have you conducted any public opinion polling or focus groups?" and "We are asking participating organizations to share a copy of the results of your polling or focus group research. Would you be willing to share a copy?"

The second limitation is that while there were many studies that addressed the issue of child care, there were few on attitudes toward early childhood health and poverty (the issues that ranked second and third in predominance in the messages we examined). In fact, all of the audience studies forwarded to us (by the organizations we interviewed) were about child care and not health or poverty, even though these topics were well represented in messages being produced by early childhood development organizations.

Moreover, few studies looked at message effects. We found little data available about which language, values, and frames work and don't work with various audiences. Finally, all of the studies we found focused on the general public as the audience and not legislators, public executives, regulators, or opinion leaders. Depending on the goals of the organizations or their specific campaigns, such groups may be more fruitful audiences to study and target. Because the studies that we found gave us information about the general population as opposed to specific audiences, it was this general audience we kept in mind when preparing this report.

Recommendations

Organizations may want to consider investing in audience analysis to improve the targeting of their messages. Polling about public attitudes is clearly part of this process, but so too is the use of polls to help segment the general audience in order to ascertain which groups may benefit most from particular messages. In other words, it is useful to know who already agrees with the organization's agenda and who may never agree.

Organizations may want to consider targeting messages to people without strong opinions in favor of or against a child-centered agenda. Once a target segment is identified, the testing of messages and language could reveal important information about how to craft effective messages. The target audience may have different values or beliefs or prefer different language than the public in general. Similarly, legislators, public executives, and regulators may have different outlooks or knowledge bases than the public at large. Though we don't do it here, the distinction between audience segments, legislators, and the general public is likely to be worth teasing out in future research.⁹

Because many child advocacy organizations do not have the resources for effective studies of audiences, we additionally recommend a more systematic clearinghouse for such information. A summary of about a dozen studies of polling on early child education reported, "There were few differences between results among the states," suggesting that results from one state organization may help others.¹⁰ The Early Care and Education Collaborative site is on the right track, but the information offered is not complete. Moreover, the community may want to consider creating a more comprehensive site that includes studies about child health and poverty.

We additionally recommend a periodic literature review of both attitude polling and message and language testing in each of these areas be conducted and distributed to interested organizations to assist with message creation.

⁹ For more information, see Early Care and Education Collaborative. *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October, 14, 2002, from <http://www.earlycare.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

¹⁰ Early Care and Education Collaborative. *Child care polling analysis*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.earlycare.org/ccpa.htm>

Polling, Surveys, and Focus Groups

by Kimberly Meltzer

The following are the studies forwarded to us or found on the websites of organizations participating in our study.¹¹ We iterate that there are many more studies available that examine audiences, messages, and language surrounding issues involving children, but for this report we present only the ones that organizations said they had conducted. We suggest the creation of an easy-to-read summary and synthesis of all such studies as an important next step in helping organizations maximize their communication efforts.

What People Know and Want

“FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH.” APRIL 2001:¹² *(findings on language from same study treated separately on page 20).*

Methodology: *Twelve focus groups were conducted in four states: FL, MO, PA, WA. All sessions used similar discussion outlines. Also included four sessions among business and community leaders, four sessions among women (mothers and others), and four mixed-gender adult sessions (parents and others).*

Key Findings:

- Participants display some awareness of brain development in the early years of childhood. They consider emotional security, physical health, and nutrition to be the primary needs of infants and very young children; brain and intellectual development are perceived as secondary.
- Consensus exists that the period from ages three to five is the most crucial time both in a child’s intellectual development and in the preparation for school. Often, the most important preparation is seen to be in the area of social skills, self-confidence, ability to deal with others, discipline, and values rather than academic skills, such as letter and color recognition.
- Preschool is viewed as a “big leg up,” but not as fundamental a government obligation as safe child care.
- Parental education tops participants’ agenda for government action.
- Panelists believe that solving the problem of affordable child care is as much the responsibility of businesses as it is of the government.
- Participants are not yet ready for a full-blown “universal pre-k” proposal. They view an incremental approach as the best way to achieve this end. New programs should remain voluntary, not mandatory.
- New initiatives should be pursued at the state and local level, as there is very little enthusiasm for federal involvement in what traditionally has been perceived as a more local concern.

¹¹ We included studies that were forwarded to us by organizations between November 1, 2001 and February 28, 2002.

¹² Commissioned by I Am Your Child Foundation and conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associated, Inc.

“WHAT GROWN-UPS UNDERSTAND ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT: A NATIONAL BENCHMARK SURVEY.” JUNE/JULY 2000:¹³

Methodology: *Survey of 3,000 American adults, including 1,066 parents of children aged newborn to six years.*

Key Findings:

- Young children’s parents who have four-year college degrees know more about child development than less educated groups. Fathers have greater knowledge gaps than mothers. Prospective parents (who plan to have children soon but don’t have any yet) show the highest level of confusion and misinformation among subgroups.
- Areas in which parents have the least knowledge include: child’s ability to sense what is going on around him/her, most beneficial forms of play, expectations of children, discipline, and spoiling.
- The majority of adults support paid parental leave.
- The majority of adults support government assistance to help families pay for quality child care.

“EASTER SEALS SURVEY FINDS PARENTS WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR BETTER CARE.” JULY 2001:¹⁴

Methodology: *Total of 653 parents with one or more child under age six were surveyed randomly and unaided.*

Findings:

- Thirty percent of parents with children in child care would be willing to pay 10% or more above the current rate to ensure that their children receive the highest quality care available.
- Only one in four parents say that any of their top requirements (i.e., staff is warm, friendly, and approachable; well-trained; low child-to-caregiver ratio) are definite strengths of their current centers.
- Despite the discrepancy, 92% of parents are at least somewhat satisfied with their current center.
- More than half of parents with children currently enrolled in a child care center report that finding a child care center was at least somewhat difficult, and one in five had a very difficult experience.
- The majority of parents surveyed (78%) perceive inclusive child care-which places children of all physical, emotional, and academic abilities in the same learning environment-to be beneficial for all children, regardless of ability.

¹³ Commissioned by Civitas and Zero to Three and conducted by DYG., Inc.

¹⁴ Commissioned by Easter Seals and conducted by Yankelovich and Partners.

“KEY FINDINGS FROM A NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF PARENTS OF ZERO-TO-THREE-YEAR-OLDS.”
MARCH/APRIL 1997:¹⁵

Methodology: *In-depth telephone survey among a nationwide representative sample of mothers and fathers and legal guardians of children age 36 months and younger. The survey includes supplemental “over sample” interviews among African Americans (100) and Hispanics (100), which were then weighted back into the sample in their proper proportions according to U.S. Census figures. A total of 1,022 interviews were completed. Overall, the poll has a margin of error of 3.5%. The poll includes 243 parents of children birth to eight months, 279 parents of children age nine to 18 months, and 501 parents of children age 19 to 36 months.*

Key Findings:

- Fifty-three percent of parents say they are totally sure that they know what signs to watch for in their youngster when it comes to physical development. Thirty-eight percent say this for emotional, 37% for social, and 44% for intellectual development.
- Sixty percent of children birth to three years are cared for on a regular basis by someone other than their parents. Only one in five has been cared for exclusively by her/his mother or father since birth.
- The majority of mothers of very young children work at a paid job: 40% full time, 19% part-time. Another 8% who aren't working plan to return to the work force within the next six months.
- More young parents have only a high school education or less (37%) than have a college degree or more (29%).
- Thirteen percent of families in this country report an annual household income at or below the poverty level of \$15,000.
- Two fundamental barriers stand in the way of better parenting from parents' own point of view: time (37%) and concern that someone other than themselves or their spouse has more influence on their child (11%).
- Beyond the realm of family and friends, pediatricians are the professionals consulted most by parents (15%) when they need advice in their day-to-day lives about their children. Only 2% mention their child's caregiver as someone they usually turn to for help.

¹⁵ Commissioned by Zero to Three and conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

Language

“FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH”¹⁶ APRIL 2001: (*findings on what people know treated separately above*).

Methodology: *Twelve focus groups were conducted in four states: FL, MO, PA, WA. All sessions used similar discussion outlines. Also included four sessions among business and community leaders, four sessions among women (mothers and others), and four mixed-gender adult sessions (parents and others). Participants were asked to rate and discuss their feelings toward various terms used in discussion of early childhood issues, including child care, early literacy programs, pre-k or pre-kindergarten programs, child care, preschool, early learning programs, nursery school, and learning readiness programs (Hart, 2001).*

Key Findings

- “Nursery school” and “daycare” received the lowest ratings, and “child care” rated slightly better.
- “‘Early literacy programs’ test somewhat better, but some participants are confused about the term ‘literacy’ and whether it implies a focus on non-native English speakers, the learning-disabled, or all children in general.”
- “Nursery school is frequently dismissed in discussion as an outmoded term no longer in common use.”
- “Participants display the warmest reactions to ‘preschool,’ ‘pre-kindergarten,’ ‘early learning,’ and ‘learning-readiness.’ These terms imply brain activity and preparation for school, as opposed to ‘storage box.’”
- “Generally speaking, emphasizing the voluntary nature of certain programs makes them more palatable.”
- “Many panelists were hesitant about ‘government-run’ programs, but discussing ‘government assistance’ (to some families who need it) bypasses some of these red flags.”

¹⁶ Commissioned by I Am Your Child Foundation and conducted by Peter D. Harrt Research Associates.

“STRATEGIC RESEARCH ANALYSIS,”¹⁷ APRIL 2000:

Methodology: *600 interviews conducted between Feb. 8 and 11, 2000 among registered and likely voters in greater Kansas City. The survey was stratified by gender and region within greater Kansas City to reflect likely turnout in the upcoming 2000 general election. Margin of error is +/- 4%. Margin of error for demographic subgroups is larger. Interviews were completed using a CATI system. Additionally, two focus groups were conducted in Kansas City on March 15, 2000 among Caucasian registered and likely voters. One of the groups included only women and the other only men. Two more focus groups were conducted on March 16, 2000 among African American registered and likely voters. One group was women and the other men.*

Key Findings:

- Voters easily confuse early childhood care and education programs with daycare programs and, as such, question their usefulness.
- Daycare programs are considered unsafe, staffed by nonprofessional staff, and incapable of providing programs of educational value.
- If the perception of early childhood care and education programs as “daycare programs” staffed by non-professionals who provide little in the way of education value is allowed to persist, the campaign to promote these programs will have limited success.
- To effectively promote early childhood care and education programs, the community must emphasize the “education” in childhood care and education programs. Early childhood care and education programs should be portrayed as “schools for young kids,” staffed by qualified teachers and designed to give children an edge when they start school.
- Back up all claims about the impact of early childhood care and education, for the short- or long-term care, with statistical evidence.
- Avoid the suggestion that the programs are designed to be a parental substitute. Do not overemphasize taxes needed to support programs.

¹⁷ Commissioned by The Partnership for Children.





Frames, Language, and Cognitive Schemata

Frames (or the ways in which issues are presented) have been identified in the scholarly literature as having an effect on how people interpret issues and their causes. Communication scholar Robert Entman (1993)¹⁸ defined framing as “selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 51). In short, a frame provides a way to understand a set of events.

Cognitive schemata are a similar concept. Many modern cognitive theorists now conceptualize knowledge as organized in cognitive structures called schemata. In one view, concepts are represented in memory as nodes, and relations among the concepts as associative pathways between the nodes. When part of the memory network is activated, activation spreads along the associative pathways. As nodes of knowledge become activated (or primed), related nodes of information become more accessible (Balota & Lorch, 1986).¹⁹ Speed and probability of accessing a memory are determined by its level of activation, which in turn is determined by how frequently and how recently we have used the memory (Anderson, 1995).²⁰

Frames are important in crafting messages because the use of different language, words, images, and concepts may cue or prime the use of different schemata that may make certain conclusions or premises about an issue more or less likely. Different researchers have identified similar frames surrounding the issue of early childhood development. The ones presented here are synthesized and adapted from previous work.

¹⁸ Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward classification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 51-58.

¹⁹ Balota, D. A., & Lorch, R. F. (1986). Depth of automatic spreading activation: Mediated priming effects in pronunciation but not in lexical decision. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning Memory and Cognition*, 12, 336-345.

²⁰ Anderson, J. R. (1995). *Cognitive psychology and its implications* (4th ed.). New York: W. H. Freeman.

A Look at the Top Issues: Early Education, Health Care, and Poverty

Child Care/Early Education

In thinking about effective early education messages, it is important to take into account what most people think about the issue as well as the corresponding frames that appear in the media. Here we discuss three frames and their corresponding cognitive schemata. The first two are based on the premise that early education programs are for parents and not children. Both tend to paint child care providers as workers but not teachers, and both tend to present early education programs as places to store children rather than programs designed to enhance educational opportunity. The third frame, which we call early education, does not fall into these traps. Instead it highlights the educational component of child care while playing down the needs of parents who work outside the home.

SELFISH MOTHER

One of the most widely held beliefs is that children are best off when mothers do not work outside the home and instead stay home and take care of them. In one study,²¹ 79% of those surveyed agree that it is best if mothers stay home and take care of the house and children. Such attitudes stem in part from traditional or religious ideologies that are no doubt reinforced through the media. According to a study of the mass media,²² most mothers on television do not work for pay. In another study,²³ researchers found in a two-week examination of television programming “not a single example of a child who had child care in a daycare setting.”

The selfish mother schema is based on the premise that mothers should raise children and not work for money. If mothers choose to put their children in “daycare” it is because they are greedy or selfish and do not want to do what is best for their children. In other words, daycare meets the needs of mothers and not children. This frame is based on the idea that mothers are responsible for child care and use of daycare is an abdication of their duty. Daycare is a place to store children while mothers are doing something else.

Frames that prime this schema may be particularly damaging to advocates for state involvement in early education for several reasons. They place the responsibility for children on individuals (mothers) and not the community; they obscure the reasons families may need programs for young children; they hide the educational and other beneficial aspects of programs, and they may falsely imply that high quality child care is affordable and plentiful.

²¹ Cited in Coalition for America's Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children's issues*.

²² National Partnership for Women and Families. (1998). *Balancing acts: Work/family issues on prime-time TV*. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/teamed2/tvsurvey.htm>

²³ Human Services Policy Center. (1999). *How should we communicate about children's issues? Words, images, frames*. (1999, August 6). Retrieved January 28, 2003, from http://hspsc.org/projects/collaborators_network/pdf/UW_Kids_final.pdf

We found just one experimental study²⁴ that looked at the effects of different frames on audiences (news frames in this case). It found that when people saw stories that were framed with: a) employer-subsidized child care, b) a mother talking about the importance of early development, c) the need for basic safety in child care, or d) a control group with no exposure to a news story about early childhood development, the story featuring a mother talking about development (even though it took place in a child care setting) increased the amount of people who indicated that the family is responsible for child care by an average of 10% over other conditions. The same story resulted in less favorable attitudes about women in work, while the one about employer-subsidized child care increased such sentiments. The researchers concluded that the story that employed a mother as a spokesperson primed traditional attitudes about the family.

Though none of the textual messages we analyzed used the selfish mother as the dominant frame, we did find examples of language that may have cued traditional notions of motherhood. Since the idea of mothers working for pay is not widely supported in the public,²⁵ evoking working mothers in messages may cue sentiments about mothers' traditional roles and responsibilities instead of notions of collective responsibilities and advantages. The following examples all imply early education programs are needed because mothers work for pay [emphasis added].

- “Sixty-one percent of mothers work during the early years. The number of mothers with a child under three who are working has doubled from 1975 to 2000. Over half of these children of working mothers are in some form of child care before their first birthday.”
- “Child care has become a fundamental need for . . . families over the past two decades . . . Sixty-six percent of mothers with a child under the age of 6 are in the labor force.”
- “The sharp rise in the demand for child care in the United States has been linked to a rapid increase in the number of women working outside the home . . . More than half of mothers with children under age one work outside the home . . . ”

These types of examples were usually used to justify the need for greater resources or improved early education programs. However, the choice to name “mothers” as the cause for the need for child care may be more likely to cue conservative ideology that places the responsibility for child rearing in mothers' hands and rejects the notion of community involvement. Such wording may also obscure the social responsibility and collective benefits of early education.

Though we found many texts that implied mothers were the cause of child care problems, most of the messages did not use working moms as a justification for arguments about early education programs.

²⁴ Gilliam F. (1999, May). *The influence of local television news frames on attitudes about childcare*. In Coalition for America's Children and the Benton Foundation. *Effective Language for Communicating Children's Issues*.

²⁵ Cited in Coalition for America's Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children's issues*.

WORK

The schema surrounding the idea that “daycare” may be necessary so that people (especially people on welfare) can work is a double-edged sword. On one hand, studies show that people tend to be supportive of government help so that families can get off welfare. For example, a *Life Magazine*²⁶ poll found that 91% of people surveyed supported “[a]n increase in spending to provide child care services so parents on welfare can work for their checks or attend education programs.” One study²⁷ found that a majority of those surveyed “favor increasing federal spending to provide child care assistance to working parents . . . or giving tax credits to families that earn less than \$60,000 to help pay for child care costs” (p. 23). In fact, in a summary of polling data put out by the Early Care and Education Collaborative found that, “There is widespread generic support for government assistance in child care that is focused on low-income and welfare to work families,” and that “child care is seen as a necessary component of welfare reform by a majority of Americans.”²⁸ On the other hand, the work frame does nothing to promote the importance or place of education and development for the young. The work frame can present child care as simply a place of storage for children while parents work.

Like the selfish mother frame, the work frame was not the dominant one painted by advocates’ messages, however there were components of the messages that may have primed the use of this schema in the minds of readers. We found many examples in which the primary need for “child care” was cast in terms of parents’ need to work.

- “Since as a nation we have decided that even single parents should work rather than depend on welfare, those children, and many others are in some form of ‘child care.’”
- “Families need child care: The demand for child care in the United States has soared in recent years. This sharp rise has been linked to several factors: a rapid increase in the number of women working outside the home, parents’ longer work hours . . . and large numbers of families moving from welfare dependency.”
- “Recent changes in welfare law linking cash assistance to work or participation in work readiness programs will mean additional children in need of quality child care.”

Of course none of these statements stood on its own and the overall context of the messages was that quality care is important. Still, in choosing these types of justifications, advocates may be missing, obscuring, or downplaying important opportunities to talk about quality and the educational and developmental benefits of programs.

²⁶ *Life Magazine*, April 5, 1992. Roper on Line. Lexis Nexis: 0177301 Qst.# 76.

²⁷ Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children’s issues*.

²⁸ Early Care and Education Collaborative. *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.earlycare.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

We also found examples in which organizations tied the justification for early education programs not only to parents' need to work but also to the benefits of education; however, these were much less frequent [emphasis added].

- “There is an increasing demand for early learning programs both because families need child care to go to work **and** because families value education.”

This next example is similar though perhaps less effective because it could cue the selfish mother schema. Still, it is clearly trying to convey the benefits of early childhood education in addition to the need from a job force perspective [emphasis added].

- “Much of the demand [for child care] comes from the need for child care that has accompanied the rapid rise in the maternal labor force participation. Increased demand for early child care and education services also comes from families who—regardless of parents' employment status—want their children to experience social and education enrichment provided by good early-childhood programs.”

The work frame can promote the idea that parents are singly responsible for all aspects of child care. According to a Frameworks Institute publication,²⁹ the mentality that parents should be solely responsible for their children can be overcome by using terms such as “our children” or “America's children.” We did find such language, but only in a minority of the messages we analyzed (the following all came from headlines or titles).

- “In This Year's Election Debates: Where Were Our Children”
- “Issues Affecting The Well-Being Of Rhode Island's Youngest Children”
- “Mail In Medicaid Enrollment: Reducing Barriers To Health Insurance For New Mexico's Low Income Children”
- “States' Efforts Vary Significantly When It Comes To Caring For Our Children”
- “The State Of America's Children”
- “Investing In America's Children”
- “A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children To School With The Social And Emotional Competence They Need To Succeed”

Employers

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families,³⁰ nine out of ten people surveyed say employers should do more to reduce pressures on working families while three out of four say government should do more. Fifty-seven percent say it is important for employers to provide assistance in find-

²⁹ The Frameworks Institute. Telling new stories about children's issues. *Frame Works Kids Count E-Zine*. Retrieved February 25, 2002, from <http://frameworksintitute.org/products/issue6telling.shtml>

³⁰ National Partnership for Women and Families. *Family Matters: A National Survey of Women and Men Conducted for the National Partnership for Women and Families*. Retrieved February 25, 2002, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/content.cfm?L1=8&L2=1&DBT=Guides&GSID=17>

ing child or elder care. Women feel more strongly than men and parents feel more strongly than those without children about employers providing help with early education. However, “[m]en and women, Republicans and Democrats, agree that employers and businesses should do more to help working families. Everyone but Republican men agree that government should do more as well.” A review of polling data, put out by the Early Care and Education Collaborative, found that the public sees “a tie to worker productivity if employers or government provides good child care arrangement to employees.”³¹

One experimental study³² (described earlier) looked at the effects of different frames on audiences. It found that the news story about employer-subsidized child care had the greatest success in increasing the perceived importance of early child childhood development among subjects. Exposure to such stories was also linked to reduced concern about crime and drugs and resulted in greater support for spending on children’s programs.

A study by John McManus and Lori Dorfman³³ found that one of the major themes in stories about child care that appeared in newspaper business sections was that “child care provides broad economic benefit” (p. 10). Moreover, they found the argument that “business can’t afford to subsidize child care for employees” and the idea “that government cannot provide child care efficiently or effectively” (p. 10) barely appeared.

However, in the data we examined, comments about employer responsibilities, such as these, were unusual:

- “Business provides very little in terms of financing programs, and tax credit incentives have failed to measurably increase business’s support.”
- “Twenty-five states provide some sort of tax assistance to employers who help pay for their employees’ child care costs.”

Advocates may want to consider stressing advantages to employers in improving children’s situations (e.g., cost/benefit analyses, improved attendance, loyalty, etc.).

EARLY EDUCATION

The early education frame is based on the idea of providing education, not simply storage or “babysitting.” It focuses on the needs of the child and not the parent. Early education frames present child care as an opportunity for children to grow, learn, and develop. This frame present child care as school and the provider as a teacher. Early education is an investment in the future of our society. It is an investment

³¹ Early Care and Education Collaborative. *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.early-care.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

³² Gilliam, G. (1999, May). The influence of local television news frames on attitudes about childcare. *Effective Language for Communicating Children’s Issues*. Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation.

³³ McManus, J., & Dorfman, L. (2002, January). *Silent revolution: How U.S. newspapers portray child care*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group. The sample included major U.S. and California papers.

that will pay off by improving skills and providing more productive workers. Since there is a collective benefit resulting from early education it may help justify collective action.

A review of polling literature put out by the Early Care and Learning Collaborative, found that, “there is no large constituency for child care, but there is a constituency for education.’ Numerous polls and focus groups conducted in the past several years pinpoint links to early education as a key way in which large portions of the population can view child care more favorably.” The same report additionally reported that “Polling suggests that when child care is posed as a key component of school readiness that the issue gains additional public support,” and that “The public knows that high quality care can offer significant educational benefits.”³⁴

In the report “Effective Language for Discussing Early Childhood Education and Policy”³⁵ (1998), Richard Brandon synthesized the results of studies on attitudes about early childhood care and education. He reported that:

- Seventy-nine percent of people surveyed considered government spending on “preschool education programs for children” a high priority.
- Seventy-eight percent of those who rank early childhood education as very or extremely important to them personally put less importance on “child care.”
- Few people saw child care as a right but many saw public education as a right.
- Education was the top children’s agenda item for the public.
- Thirty-three percent said education was a top priority for federal action for children-while only one percent said daycare was.
- Two out of three support funding quality preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds as a way to improve education.

However it is important to keep in mind other findings in the same report. For example, while 70% favored “expanding funding to provide quality optional preschool programs for three and four year olds in our public schools even if it increased their taxes by \$100 a year . . . this issue received the lowest level of support of a series of children’s issues tested. It was on par with Internet connected classrooms” (p. 23).

Overall, these findings suggest that by framing child care as early childhood learning or education, advocates may be able to capture some of the good will and sense of importance that people already feel toward education and extend it toward earlier ages.

³⁴ Early Care and Education Collaborative. *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.early-care.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

³⁵ Brandon, R. N. (1998, Fall). Public Attitudes about Early Childhood Care and Education. *Effective language for discussing early childhood education and policy*. Washington, DC: Benton Foundation.

The Partnership for Children’s Strategic Research Analysis (2000) recommended that in order “to effectively promote early-childhood care and education programs, the community must emphasize the ‘education’ in childhood care and education programs. Early-childhood care and education programs should be portrayed as ‘schools’ for young kids, staffed by qualified teachers and designed to give children an edge when they start school.” Similarly, in focus groups conducted for the report “Effective Language for Discussing Early Childhood Education and Policy”³⁶ (1998), researchers found that “early learning” had the broadest acceptance and they recommend staying close to phrases such as “early-childhood education” and “early learning.” Similarly, “school” would be preferable to child care and daycare though it was not widely used in the literature we reviewed.

School and early education appear preferable to both daycare and child care because the American public is already conditioned to the notion of a collective responsibility for school and these terms should imply (to parents, policy makers, and those who run the programs) a productive, quality environment instead of one of passive storage. Moreover, many stay-at-home parents (particularly middle and upper class ones) send their children to school for a few hours a week because they believe that such education provides a benefit to children. School or early education (even for babies), unlike child care or daycare, is a collective responsibility based on the idea that it produces a collective benefit and gives the children a leg-up. The tailings of this word could work in ways that promote a pro-child agenda. However, until widespread use of this word for children under five becomes commonplace, exclusive use could cause confusion.

While “daycare” was not commonly used in messages, “child care” was still common. Take for example the following titles of messages used by organizations in our data set [emphasis added].

- “Family Child Care”
- “Child Care Basics”
- “Facts About Child Care”
- “State’s Child Care Regulations Fall Short of National Standards”
- “Quality in Child Care Centers”
- “The High Cost Of Child Care Puts Quality Care Out Of Reach For Many Families”
- “Child Care Inadequate Despite Improvements”
- “Business Investment in Child Care”
- “Recommendations for Improving Child Care”

³⁶ Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation. (1998, May). *Effective language for discussing early childhood education and policy.*

Of course many organizations have moved to the early education frame as is demonstrated by the titles of these documents [emphasis added].

- “Training For Quality: Improving Early Childhood Programs Through Systematic In-service Training”
- “Financing The Early Childhood Education System”
- “Investing In Early Childhood Education”
- “Study Of Best Practices In Early Childhood Education”

We found no examples of early education teachers being referred to as “workers.” However, there were many cases in which they were referred to as “caregivers” or “staff.” Much of the time the word staff seemed to refer to both teachers and administrators. Such uses of language run the risk of obscuring the education component of early education and the need for professional status (pay and education) for those who work with young children [emphasis added].

- “Small groups of children with a sufficient number of adults to provide sensitive, responsive care giving.”
- “Higher rates of compensation and lower rates of turnover for program personnel . . . ”
- “Attention [should] be paid to ensuring continuity in administrative and classroom planning to keep changes in staffing to a minimum.”
- “The single most important fact in quality child care is the relationship between the child and the caregiver. Studies on staff ratios show that when adults have fewer children to care for, the children’s verbal proficiency improves.”
- “Children who receive care from a small number of consistent providers can be better adjusted in the first grade and over the long term.”

There were, however, many examples of the use of the word “teacher” as well.

- “Early-childhood teachers are already working with families to help young children make the most of the learning opportunities in their early years.”
- “The best way to raise the quality of programs for all young children is improving the preparation of early-childhood teachers.”
- “Teachers should give young children tasks that with effort they can accomplish . . . ”
- “Because developmental domains are interrelated, educators should be aware of and use these interrelationships and organize children’s learning experiences in ways that help children develop optimally in all areas and that make meaningful connections across domains.”

The Early Care and Education Collaborative concluded after reviewing polling about child care that “There is no doubt that links to early education and ties to workforce development are the two most critical elements in an effective communications campaign on child-care issues.”³⁷

Use of Statistics and Data

The Partnership for Children’s Strategic Research Analysis (2000) report suggested backing up all claims about the short- and long-term impact of early childhood care and education with statistical evidence in order to be more convincing. We did find examples of the use of studies to back up claims in the data we analyzed, most commonly on the long-term effects of early education programs. However, little statistical evidence was provided for other topics of interest to the early education community.

- “A 22-year study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool program in Ypsilanti, Michigan showed that leaving at-risk three and four-year-olds out of the quality preschool program multiplied by 5 times the risk they would become chronic lawbreakers by the age of 27.”³⁸
- “The Nurse Family Partnership assigned a group of at-risk mothers to receive home visits by specially-trained nurses who provided coaching in parenting skills. Compared to homes without visits, the program reduced child abuse in visited homes by 80 percent in the first two years, and the children were only half as likely to be delinquent in their teens.”
- “One of the studies . . . tracked for 14 years 989 at-risk children who attended Chicago’s Child-Parent Centers when they were 3 and 4 years old. Compared to similar children not in the programs, only half as many of the kids who attended had two or more arrests when they became teenagers.”

Health Care

CHILDREN AT THE CENTER

Much of the data we coded on health care focused on lack of health insurance for children. According to the Great Expectation public opinion poll in 1996 “voters think of health care as a family problem — not a children problem. The majority of Americans believe that unemployed adults and seniors have the biggest problem getting health care coverage. Only 8% believe that children have a problem getting health care coverage.” Similarly, according to the report “Effective Language for Communicating Children’s Issues”³⁹ “People rarely think of health care as a children’s issue . . . even when asked specifically to identify the top two or three most important health problems facing children, 24% of the public cannot name one problem . . . only 5% cite lack of medical care as an issue . . . Children’s lack of health coverage is largely invisible to the public. When asked who has the biggest problem getting adequate health care coverage only 8% point to children” (p. 16).

³⁷ Early Care and Education Collaborative. *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.early-care.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

³⁸ One reviewer cautioned that organizations may want to stay away from using the High Scope experiment because it is out of date and involved very few children. In general, however, his type of evidence should strengthen messages.

³⁹ Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children’s issues*.

It is unlikely that this lack of awareness has to do with the messages produced by children's organizations. Almost all of the messages we found framed the issue in terms of the need for health insurance for children and not families.

When the issue was framed in terms of families it was clearly intentional because the organizations sometimes argued for health insurance for all people. We recognize that advocating for more universal family coverage may benefit children in the long-term. However, for organizations focusing only on expanding health care for children, advocates may want to consider making children the focus of their arguments about health insurance. Such messages may be more likely to appeal to the public's sense of compassion, whereas arguments for family health care may be more likely to cue attitudes about independence and the bootstrap mentality.

Most of the examples we found did put children at the center of the problem [emphasis added].

- “We have only enrolled 57% of the estimated 63,000 children . . . eligible for health insurance.”
- “Please support the creation of a single Medicaid eligibility level for children.”
- “Children's access to timely health care is greatly compromised when they lack health insurance.”
- “One in five children is uninsured.”
- “More than 1.4 million children lack public or private health insurance coverage.”

Poverty

CHILDREN AT THE CENTER

According to the one study⁴⁰ (1999), people have conflicting ideas about poverty. On one hand, 70% agree that the “federal government has a responsibility to try to do away with poverty,” while at the same time 71% reject a systemic cause for poverty, agreeing that “most people who don't get ahead have only themselves to blame. But 66% will say that most people are poor because of circumstances beyond their control” (p. 15).

Underlying these attitudes may be an important dichotomy that people maintain — notions of the worthy and unworthy poor. Working poor are more likely to be perceived as worthy of aid than the unemployed poor. However, as one report⁴¹ noted, “while the ‘working poor’ are perceived positively as people who work hard and do the best they can, it is not a reference that inspires collective action.”

We found several examples in which children's poverty was cast in the context of parents' poverty.

- “Of over 5.7 million Californians living below the poverty level — 40% of whom are children . . . ”
- “One third to one half of families will not benefit from the [sic] Bush's tax plan.”

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

- “Children living with a single parent are nearly ten times more likely to be poor than children living with two parents.”
- “Families with children make up the majority of the working poor (63%).”
- “Low-Income Families Must Have Necessary Supports To Make It In The Workforce”
- “New Report On Hardships Faced By Low-Income Working Families Who Have Left Welfare”
- “Nearly 400,000 children under the age of 18, or 29%, live in working poor families.”

It may be more effective to talk only about children’s poverty since they may be more likely to be seen as guilt-free and worthy of help. We also found examples of messages that employed this strategy [emphasis added].

- “Children Left out of Bush’s Tax Plan”
- “Children with little economic security [have] . . . lower levels of school readiness and slower intellectual development and lower levels of educational and socioeconomic attainment as adults.”
- “Poverty puts children at a greater risk of falling behind in school.”
- “Child Poverty Fact Sheet”
- “Booming Economy Leaves Millions Of Children Behind: 12.1 Million Children Still Living In Poverty”
- “Children in Poverty: A Citizen’s Guide”

Other Frames

Systems and Individuals — Statistics and Examples

Stanford professor Shanto Iyengar⁴² (1987, 1990, 1991) found empirical evidence of framing effects. He concluded that the structure of a news story (i.e. the way the story was told) affected how the audience perceived the causes of a problem. For example, when a story focused on a specific unwed mother (episodic frame), the readers were more likely to blame the problem of poverty on the actions of the poor and not on systemic factors. The opposite was the case when the story cited statistics (thematic frame).

Similar principles can be applied to the way in which press releases frame stories about early childhood education and development. We found that statistics were very common in press releases, with almost all including at least one statistic and most including many more. Because long lists of statistics can lose their impact compared with a few well-chosen ones, statistics may have been overused in many press releases. For example, note the list of statistics in this press release:

“One in six children in the United States continues to live in poverty and is more likely to be poor than 20 or 30 years ago. . . . 10.8 million children lack health insurance; while 3 million have been enrolled in CHIP and Medicaid, an additional 6 million who are eligible have not. Infant mortality rates

⁴² Iyengar, S. (1987). Television news and the citizen’s explanation of national affairs. *American Political Science Review*, 81(3), 815-831; Iyengar, S. (1990). Framing responsibility for political issues: The case of poverty. *Political Behavior*, 12, 19-40; Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible?. How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

remained at 7.2 infants per 1,000 births-not dropping for the first time in 25 years. . . . The number of poor children living in households where someone works continues to climb, reaching 78 percent in 1999-up from 61 percent in 1993”

This particular list of statistics continued for another full page.

In contrast, specific, vivid examples were very rare in press releases. When stories about individuals were usually about children who had been victims of gun violence. For example:

“Lorraine Reed Culver[s] . . . two daughters were alone in their Prince William County, VA home when Stacie, 16, was murdered and Kristie, 14, was raped, stabbed and left for dead. She barely survived. The young man who laid in wait for the two girls to return home from school was sentenced to death When politicians say we can't afford to invest in helping families get good child care and after-school programs they are cheating Americans out of the solutions that might have prevented the vicious attacks on Stacie and Kristie.”

The use of statistical data in place of dramatic narrative may help to promote thematic frames over episodic ones and as such convey the idea that problems are systematic and therefore require collective solutions. At the same time, press releases may have more impact if fewer well-chosen statistics are used rather than the long lists that we often found.

Collective Action/Collective Benefit

As we analyzed these data, we noticed a lack of appeals based on collective benefits. Despite the fact that most messages were calling for some type of collective action, the messages rarely made reference to the ways in which people generally would benefit.

According to a 1999 report “Public Opinion and Children’s Issues,”⁴³ “Investment in prevention is a theme that makes common sense for many people. Putting a little money in programs today like health care and child care . . . as a means to prevent more costly, ‘out of control’ behavior and activity down the road seemed to strike a cord in focus groups.”

Framing issues in terms of collective benefits may be an effective way to overcome the independent, self-sufficient mentality. For example, organizations advocating early childhood education programs may want to consider mentioning the ways in which everyone benefits when all children have access to quality early education (improved standard education, less crime and juvenile delinquency, etc.). Similarly when all children have access to health care people benefit because there are less communicable diseases and illnesses that can result in serious conditions and eventually require expensive special education or accommodation.

In rare cases we did find organizations that discussed the collective benefits of prevention, usually in appeals for improved early education programs. This notion was even more rare in arguments for other issues concerning children.

⁴³ Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota. *Public opinion and children’s issues*. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.cdf-mn.org/PDF/Publications/PublicOpinionChildren.PDF>

- “The value of early intervention through quality early-childhood education is well documented. Every dollar spent on quality early education saves \$7 in negative outcomes such as school dropout, juvenile delinquency, special education, teen pregnancy and long-term welfare dependency . . . ”
- “Noted baby doctor T. Berry Brazelton and law enforcement leaders have called on Congress to increase funds for school readiness and child care and quality after school programs, and for prevention of child abuse, all of which are proven to reduce crime and save lives.”
- “. . . Cited a national poll that showed that nine out of ten police chiefs believe investing in quality child care and after school programs would ‘greatly reduce crime.’”
- “Evidence of the effectiveness of school readiness child care and after-school programs was offered by Sheriff Jones. A 22-year study of at-risk kids who attended and were left out of the Perry Preschool in Michigan showed that those left out when they were three and four years old were five times more likely to be chronic law breakers at age 27 than those who attended.”
- “There is an over-reliance on families to pay the lion’s share of the costs of early-childhood education even though the benefits extend beyond the individual child to society as a whole through reduced special education placements, juvenile crime, and grade retention.”

Low Income/Working Families

Phillip Sparks of the Communications Consortium Media Center found that “a number of polls and focus groups indicate that support for early care which focuses on low-income communities garners support if the overall message is conveyed that moderate- and middle-income families will eventually be part of the mix.”⁴⁴ We tended not to find this kind of two-tiered argument in the data we analyzed, though there were many examples of arguments made on behalf of low-income families and there were arguments for all children (as is exemplified below).

- “More than 30,000 low income working families in Virginia are eligible for child care subsidies but cannot get help because of lack of funding.”
- “Children from all socioeconomic backgrounds are equally deserving of starting out in school ready to learn.”
- “One billion for Head Start so that the program can provide school readiness child care for more eligible children from poor families.”

We did find one example that made an appeal on the basis that a program would help not just the poor but others as well.

- “Many of the provisions of the Act focus on help for the most vulnerable children. But many sections, such as environmental safeguards, strengthen public education, and improve the quality of child health care and child care would help all children, regardless of their economic status.”

⁴⁴ Via personal correspondence, July 12, 2002.

Government-Sponsored vs. Community Neighborhoods

“Numerous studies document that early education programs framed as ‘government-sponsored’ are viewed skeptically by the public,” according to Sparks.⁴⁵ Alternatively, “when viewed by the public as sited in communities and neighborhoods and run for/by communities” such programs are supported. We found that though use of the term “government-sponsored” was rare, many proposals were still presented as state programs, as these examples demonstrate [emphasis added]:

- “Some potential cuts that have been proposed during the past few weeks . . . the elimination of state funding for facilities to provide medical services to the homeless.”
- “How well are our states meeting the needs of America’s children? . . . Find out which states are doing the most-and the least-to care for our children.”
- “It is time for every state to find and enroll every eligible child in CHIP or Medicaid.”
- “The primary benefit from public regulation of the child-care and early-education market is its help in ensuring children’s rights to early-care settings that protect them from harm and promote their healthy development.”
- “States should invest sufficient level of resources to ensure that children’s healthy development and learning are not harmed in early care and education settings.”

Examples that spoke about inclusion of families or neighborhoods, such as these, were much rarer.

- “Early-childhood teachers are already working with families to help young children make the most of learning opportunities in their early years . . . this grant will build on those relationships and help families and teachers join together to protect young children and give them a safe and healthy start.”
- “Networks of family, friends, neighborhoods and faith communities are enlisted to help children and support troubled families.”
- “Increasing the availability and access of community-based mental health services for children and adolescents in the Commonwealth . . . ”

Parental Support/Parental Education

Sparks⁴⁶ additionally argues that “numerous focus groups . . . identify the need to always tie parents into effective early care messaging. ‘Parental support’ and ‘parent education’ are identified as critical in the early care framing message.” Again, we found only a few examples of messages that included parents in the equations.

- “Give parents help and support. Serve as a resource to parents about domestic violence services for mother, father and children.”
- “Troubled families are provided with support services even in the absence of a finding of abuse/neglect.”

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*





Building a Case

Organizations crafting messages about early childhood development might consider how their messages could be used as arguments in policy debates. When crafting policy arguments, debaters are taught to describe and provide evidence that a problem exists and that a proposed solution will work. The argument should show not only that the problem exists but also that it causes harm and is significant (with implications relevant to the audience). The solution should be linked to the problem and backed with evidence showing it solves the problem without producing undesirable consequences. Ideally, a mechanism for instituting the solution should be presented as well.

Many documents we examined did not present complete arguments. Documents often described a problem without identifying the undesirable consequences of failing to address it. Moreover, harms were rarely linked to the audience. Such messages may leave readers with an “it doesn’t affect me” attitude. In addition, solutions were often vague and rarely backed with evidence that they would work. The absence of concrete, evidence-supported solutions may lead audience members to conclude the problems are unsolvable. In fact, we know⁴⁷ that although people understand that children are in trouble, they often can’t connect children’s problems to policy solutions.

Presenting a Problem

Texts tended to do a good job of documenting the benefits of various programs (especially to children), but did a poorer job of showing the harms associated with the absence or underfunding of programs. The messages also tended not to demonstrate why the public should care.

We noticed that in many cases when problems were identified, their existence was not well-documented. Take for example this fairly typical text,

■ “There is a relatively low supply of quality child care, especially for infants and young children . . .”

The text did go on to explain, “The quality of early child care has a significant impact on child well-being, ability to learn, and readiness for school.” However, this does not answer such questions as: How many children are in need of care? Who is harmed by the low supply? How bad is the problem? Why should I care if someone else’s children don’t have quality care? How many more providers are needed and how many are available?

⁴⁷ Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children’s issues*.

Similarly, many of the messages noted the importance of low child to teacher ratios in ensuring high quality early education. This assumes that changing the ratio will improve learning and development. However, the consequences of poor ratios were rarely documented.

Of course documenting harms may not always be easy. As one of our reviewers noted, “Evidence shows that kids do better in quality care, especially if they come from poor families — but that doesn’t mean that poor parents are bad parents.” However, it is still possible to document harms at the aggregate level by arguing, for example, that under the current system crime is higher or standardized test scores are lower than they would be if all children had access to quality early education. Another reviewer suggested personalizing the harm by asking, “which of these children shouldn’t have a chance to reach her full potential?” thus implicitly arguing that without Head Start (for example) many children will be harmed by not reaching their full potential.

Though it is still possible to read into such arguments that poor parents are bad parents, using collective harms takes the focus off of parents and puts it on society, while personalizing harms puts the focus on the child. Still, organizations should be prepared to refute the accusation that (for example) they do not trust parents to raise their children.

Presenting a Solution

Not only were problems often vaguely presented — so, too, were solutions. The Early Care and Education Collaborative found in focus groups that “Americans have a hard time explaining what ‘quality’ care is” when it came to questions about child care.⁴⁸ This is not surprising given our observation that many of the solutions proposed in the texts were vague. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, though people understand that children are in trouble, they are not able to connect children’s problems to policies. The authors of that report argued that organizations must do a better job of pointing the way to helpful policies.⁴⁹ Many of the messages we analyzed failed this test. Few recommended concrete policies, actions, or steps that the audience could take. When action steps were offered they were often vague.

- “We hope that this report encourages all states to rise to at least the level of the leading states in promoting positive outcomes for young children and families.”
- “. . . Urged members of the committee and their colleagues to seize this opportunity and move quickly on a positive agenda to build a more just and compassionate society.”
- “If our society really wants to help all young children grow and learn, we need to make greater commitments in several areas. Improving the preparation of new teachers is an important step in the right direction.”

⁴⁸ Early Care and Education Collaborative *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.earlycare.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

⁴⁹ Coalition for America’s Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children’s issues*.

- “Called on the State Legislature to give a higher priority to programs that help kids get the right start in life and prevent crime.”

We also found, however, examples of action steps that were concrete:

- “We urge the presidential candidates . . . [to] strongly endorse the goal of reducing the U.S. child poverty rate by at least half within this decade.”
- “The president must ensure that Congress includes the Snow-Lincoln refundable tax credit provision in the final bill.”
- “. . . Called for increased funding of: 1 billion for Head Start, so that the program can provide school readiness child care for more eligible children from poor families . . . ”

There was also a notable lack of evidence that proposed solutions would eliminate problems. Though some organizations did present studies as evidence that, for example, improving child care could reduce crime, they were the exception and not the rule. Evidence demonstrating that similar problems were solved using similar solutions was rare.

Preparing a Rebuttal

We looked at the websites of several think tanks that we expected might oppose the types of public policy initiatives endorsed by child advocacy organizations (Hoover Institution, Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, and the Cato Institute) to see what they had to say about early childhood development.⁵⁰

We found that many of their policy papers contained arguments in the form of rebuttals. They had anticipated arguments for greater state and federal involvement in early childhood development and challenged them. By contrast, such inoculative argument structures were rare in literature of early childhood development organizations.

Advocacy organizations may want to consider preparing messages or including new sections in existing messages that anticipate and rebut arguments against proposed policies. We further recommend that future research focus on development of standard rebuttals to opposition arguments. A compilation of such recommended arguments could be distributed to organizations to use in the crafting of their messages.

⁵⁰ The question of how much support these opposing positions had was outside the scope of this report, though such information clearly could be useful to organizations in the crafting of their rebuttals. This too may be a worthwhile avenue for organizations to pursue.

While the premises of arguments were usually uncontested within the literature of the early childhood development movement (e.g., all organizations tended to argue that child care is not affordable or that poverty is too high), the plans advocated tended to be different. In the messages of those who oppose greater state or collective efforts to improve early childhood services, these premises as well as policy proposals tended to be challenged. In this section we highlight the major arguments made against collective efforts to improve early childhood development so that organizations can better prepare to counter these arguments. We have provided examples of the opposition arguments in the footnotes.

CHILD CARE

Arguments against increased state involvement in child care tended to incorporate five main themes. These arguments tended to be the most prevalent and well documented.

Harm from Early Education Programs

Opponents argued that children were harmed in daycare. Some contended that all child care is inadequate and that the only safe place for children is home with family.⁵¹ Other arguments focused on scientific evidence that children in early education programs tend to be more violent, bond less with parents, incur more illness, have trouble with authority, etc.⁵² Whereas early childhood development organizations proposed improving quality as the solution, conservative institutions tended to use the same problems as evidence that no further investment should be made.

No Evidence of Benefit from Early Education

Opponents challenged the notion that early education provided any benefit to children or society.⁵³ Some argued that there is no evidence that middle-class children gain from early education⁵⁴ or argued that studies on Head Start showed only short-term benefits.⁵⁵ Opponents also argued that all evidence showing benefit was out of date or did not address the issue of cost effectiveness.⁵⁶ The Perry preschool study, which was frequently the only study cited by child advocates, was criticized by opponents as being the only study among many to show benefits. The study was also criticized for showing only short-term gains, being methodologically flawed, and not being representative.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Morse, J.R. (1998). *Why the market can't raise our children for us* (Hoover Digest, 4). Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/publications/digest/984/morse.html> Morse, J. R. (1999). *It takes a family* (Hoover Digest, 2). Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/publications/digest/992/morse.html>

⁵² Knight, R.H. (1991, March 20). *Federal support for early-childhood programs: Caution is needed* (Backgrounder #821). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/BG821.cfm>

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

Costs Are Not High/Supply Is Not Low

Some opponents argued that the high cost of child care occurred because of the very policies promoted by child development advocates, such as government licensing.⁵⁸ Others simply argued that daycare is affordable, suggesting that real costs tended to be far less than those cited by child development organizations.⁵⁹

Others challenged the need for daycare, citing data from the U.S. Labor Department and the Census Bureau that they say show that two-thirds of the nation's young children are being raised at home. Moreover, some argued that there is actually an oversupply of daycare.⁶⁰ Opponents also argued that even families with two working parents could care for children at home by shifting schedules and relying on family members instead of using out of home early education programs.⁶¹ Those who conceded that the supply was low tended to paint it as a short-term problem that the market would correct on its own without the help of government.⁶²

No Evidence That Government Help Improves Quality

Opponents tended to argue that studies show no dramatic differences between regulated and unregulated daycare and that there is no long-term evidence of benefits from regulating child ratios, teacher qualifications, or group size.⁶³ Instead opponents argued that regulation increases cost and reduces supply.⁶⁴

Tax Relief and Traditional Families are Best for Helping Children

Opponents proposed traditional marriage and family life as the best way to help children.⁶⁵ These arguments tended to promote (general) tax breaks to give families more money.⁶⁶ However, the federal tax credit for dependent care was opposed on the grounds that it rewards people for putting their children in daycare and discourages home rearing.⁶⁷ These arguments often promoted easing business restrictions on labor (such as requirements for overtime pay), which they said would provide workers with more flexibility to take care of children themselves.⁶⁸

⁵⁸ Mellor, W. H. (n.d.). *City hall's license to kill civil society* (Policy Review). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.policyreview.org/jul96/thmell.html>

⁵⁹ Knight, R. H. (1991, March 20). *Federal support for early-childhood programs: Caution is needed* (Backgrounder #821). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/BG821.cfm>

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Haskins, R. (n.d.). *What daycare crisis? Cato Review of Business and Government*. Cato Institute. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.cato.org/pubs/regulation/regv12n2/reg12n2-haskins.html>

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Knight, R. H. (1991, March 20). *Federal support for early-childhood programs: Caution is needed* (Backgrounder #821). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/BG821.cfm>

⁶⁶ Mitchell, D. J. (1998, February 11). *Return the revenue surplus to the taxpayers* (Backgrounder #1155). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Taxes/BG1155.cfm>

⁶⁷ Rector, R., & Fagan, P. (1999, January 14). *The Clinton daycare proposal: An attack on parents and children* (Executive Memorandum #506). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/em506.cfm>

⁶⁸ Mellor, W. H. (n.d.). *City hall's license to kill civil society*. Institute for Justice. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.policyreview.org/jul96/thmell.html>

HEALTH CARE

Unlike the issue of early education programs, the think tanks tended not to challenge the premise that people are in need of health insurance or health care. Moreover, we found few essays and policy briefs that dealt specifically with the issue of children and health care or health insurance. Most of the pieces addressed the more general need for the population to have access to health care.

Think tanks we researched tended to argue that private companies would meet the needs of those lacking insurance better than government programs.^{69, 70} Other opponents challenged the idea of expanding Medicaid to include the working poor on the grounds that people preferred private coverage. They argued that putting working families in the same system with the unemployed would “segregate” them from the rest of society.⁷¹ Alternative proposals included a refundable tax credit for the purchase of health insurance. Organizations advocating this plan argued that it gives greater flexibility to families without the liabilities of government programs.⁷²

When opponents did challenge the idea that there is a shortage of health care and insurance, arguments tended to run along these lines: The rise in uninsured children is small, many of the uninsured are already eligible for Medicaid, uninsured families tend to lack coverage for only short periods of time, and the absence of health insurance does not prevent children from getting health care.⁷³ Others argue that parents are choosing not to have health insurance.⁷⁴

POVERTY

As with the issue of health care some of these think-tank writers agreed that child poverty is too high.⁷⁵ However, they also tended to identify welfare dependence and single parenthood as the primary causes.⁷⁶

When poverty rates were challenged, the Census Bureau’s approach to displaying income disparities was criticized. Such arguments noted that people with higher incomes tend to work more hours and

⁶⁹ Napier, K. (1997). *Private prescriptions for children’s health* (Policy Review, 85). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.policyreview.org/sept97/homefront.html>

⁷⁰ Goldsmith, S. (2000). *What compassionate conservatism is-and is not* (Hoover Digest, 4). Hoover Institution. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/publications/digest/004/goldsmith.html>

⁷¹ Butler, S. M. (2002, March 20). *Time for bipartisan action to help families without health insurance* (Backgrounder #1528). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved on January 28, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1528.html>

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Tanner, M., & Lopez, N. (1997, February 11). *Beware kidcare*. Cato Institute. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.cato.org/dailys/2-11-97.html>

⁷⁴ Bandow, D. (1997, June 2). *The back door to nationalized health care*. Cato Institute. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.cato.org/dailys/6-02-97.html>

⁷⁵ Rector, R., Johnson, K. A., & Fagan, P. F. (2001, May 23). *Understanding differences in black and white child poverty rates* (Center for Data Analysis Report #01-04). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/CDA01-04.cfm>

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

have more skills, and that the census does not take into account the effect of taxation.⁷⁷ Other attacks on the census definition of poverty were that income levels classified as poverty are artificially high, and under such definitions one can be poor but still have adequate food, shelter, and clothing. Secondly, opponents argued that the census ignores accumulated assets and looks only at income; thus, a millionaire who has had a bad year can be classified as poor by the Census Bureau.⁷⁸

Solutions to poverty advocated by these theorists tended to center on reducing federal regulation and taxes, finding local and not federal solutions, providing more choices for children including subsidies for religious schools, and greater tax credits for charitable donations.⁷⁹ They argued that the best remedy to poverty is a growing economy and a reduction of out-of-wedlock births and single-parent families.⁸⁰ Other solutions centered on ending welfare. Such arguments rest on the idea that private charities will be more efficient and provide better services than government-run programs.⁸¹

VIOLENCE/ABUSE/NEGLECT

In the think-tank messages, child abuse tended to be attributed to the breakdown of traditional families. These arguments suggested a child is safest when his or her biological parents are married and least safe when a mother is living with a man other than her husband. Some authors criticized welfare payment structures and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as policies that penalize marriage, and therefore feed child abuse.⁸²

These messages tended not to deny that abuse and neglect exist, and some proposed solutions ran along similar lines to those of child advocates, such as focusing child welfare resources to separate children from abusive situations. However, some policy solutions recommended by these groups differed from those employed by child advocates; among them: (a) mandatory drug testing of pregnant mothers who are suspected of drug abuse, (b) promotion of adoption, including trans-cultural adoptions, (c) promotion of orphanages where appropriate, and (d) replacement of sex education in the schools with abstinence and marriage education. Most of the texts, however, tended to see the solution to child abuse in policies that bolster the traditional family structure.⁸³

⁷⁷ Rector, R., & Hederman, R. (1999, September 29) *Income inequality: How census data misrepresent income distribution* (Center for Data Analysis Report #99-07). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Labor/CDA99-07.cfm>

⁷⁸ Rector, R. (1998, September 18). *The myth of widespread American poverty* (Executive Summary #1221). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 28, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/BG1221es.cfm>

⁷⁹ Olson, C. L., & Rector, R. (n.d.). *Saving our children: The American Community Renewal Act of 1996*. Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 5, 2002, from <http://www.heritage.org/library/categories/family/ib228.html>

⁸⁰ Fagan, P.F. (1995, October 12). *Behind the Census Bureau's good news on poverty* (Executive Memorandum #43). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 29, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/UrbanIssues/EM431.cfm>

⁸¹ Cato Institute. (1996, September/October). *Fighting poverty without welfare* (Cato Policy Report). Retrieved January 29, 2003, from http://www.cato.org/pubs/policy_report/cpr-18n5-6.html

⁸² Fagan, P. F. (2001, August 2). *CAPTA successes and failures at preventing child abuse and neglect*. Heritage Foundation, Retrieved January 29, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/Test080201.cfm>

⁸³ Fagan, P. F., & Hanks, D. B. (1997, May 15). *The child abuse crisis: The disintegration of marriage, family, and the American community* (Backgrounder #1115). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 29, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/BG1115.cfm>

FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION

Like other challenges facing children, the opposition did not necessarily deny there was a problem with the child welfare system. However, solutions tended to be slightly different than those promoted by child advocacy organizations: providing tax credits for adoption expenses; requiring federally funded family planning services to provide information on the benefits of adoption to all unmarried pregnant teens and women; helping churches to facilitate with the adoption process; privatizing adoption services; removing obstacles to trans-racial adoptions; establishing separate governmental units for termination of the parental rights of convicted, abusing parents; enacting laws requiring child welfare agencies to initiate adoption proceedings for any child who has been abandoned by her/his parents for six months.⁸⁴

Some writers argued that increasing spending was not necessary and instead suggested a different structure for spending current dollars. These arguments posited that the current system gives child welfare bureaucracies incentives to keep even free-to-be-adopted kids in state care. Similarly, these policy proposals tended to argue that there are financial incentives for foster parents to remain as such instead of becoming adoptive ones because they receive state subsidies.⁸⁵ These texts on adoption often focused on the practice of prohibiting adoptions based on race, a subject that rarely came up in messages from child advocates.⁸⁶

Using Spokespeople

Communication scholars and social psychologists have known for years that unexpected advocates often make the most effective spokespeople. The most convincing advocate is often the one people expect to be the least likely to agree with the cause or who appears to have the least self-interest in it.⁸⁷

A report⁸⁸ of focus groups found that when people heard a message touting the importance of community to children they expected the spokesperson to be a children's advocate or maybe a counselor, clergy member, or teacher. However, they found "the most powerful author is a police officer" (p. 53).

⁸⁴ Fagan, P. F. (1996, May 16). *Promoting adoption reform: Congress can give children another chance* (Backgrounder #1080). Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 29, 2003, from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/BG1080.cfm>

⁸⁵ Craig, C. (1995, Summer). *What I need is a mom*. Heritage Foundation. Retrieved January 8, 2002, from <http://www.heritage.org/policyreview/summer95/thcraig.htm>

⁸⁶ Yoest, C. C. (1996, September/October). *A solution waiting to be adopted* (Policy Review, 79). Hoover Institution. Retrieved January 29, 2003, from <http://www.policyreview.org/sept96/homef.html>

⁸⁷ Aronson, E. (1988). *The Social Animal*. New York: Freeman and Company.

⁸⁸ Coalition for America's Children and the Benton Foundation. (1999, May). *Effective language for communicating children's issues*.

Other studies have shown that doctors and nurses, researchers, business leaders, and teachers also are effective as spokespeople, though their effectiveness will clearly depend on what message is being sent.⁸⁹

While one organization made excellent use of police officers to advocate for its cause, almost all others employed expected and potentially self-interested spokespeople. For example, doctors advocated that children need to see doctors more often. Similarly, it was common for professional child advocates to speak on behalf of the organization's agenda. Few organizations in our analysis used unexpected advocates or advocates whose interests might have appeared to be different from those of the child advocate. Organizations may want to consider broadening the types of people they use as spokespeople or authorities in messages they create.

One result of this trend may be that the same expected spokespeople were used as sources in newspapers. As McManus and Dorfman⁹⁰ found in their study of stories about child care, parents were the most frequently cited spokespeople on the issue of childcare, followed by child care providers. Not surprisingly, both argued in favor of more high quality services for children.

⁸⁹ Early Care and Education Collaborative. *What the polling tells us*. Retrieved October 14, 2002, from <http://www.earlycare.org/pollingtellsus2.htm>

⁹⁰ McManus, J., & Dorfman, L. (2002, January). *Silent revolution: How U.S. newspapers portray child care*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group. Based on the percent of sources coded in sections other than the business section in major U.S. and California papers.





A Network of Organizations

In the course of each interview we asked respondents to name other organizations working in the field.⁹¹ We were surprised at the number of those interviewed who could not name a single other organization working in early childhood development or education. Twenty-four percent of the 33 interviewed could not name any other organization.

The Children’s Defense Fund was the organization most often named (identified by nine respondents), followed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (identified by eight). Other organizations (identified by five respondents) were: The National Association of Child Advocates (NACA), National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA), Kids Count Network, and Head Start/Head Start Association. Sixty-one other organizations were named in at least one interview. This suggests to us a need for more communication among organizations with similar goals.

When we looked at the coordination between websites we did find evidence of networking. For example, the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children website (www.taeyc.org) is one of many local chapters of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. It is also affiliated with the Southern Early-Childhood Association (SECA). NAEYC provides links on its site to SECA as well as to other ECD organizations and government agencies/resources.

The Indiana Center on Early Childhood Development also provides links to and annotated lists of early childhood organizations. The site indicates, “This list is compiled from information sent to the Indiana Center on Early Childhood Development from those organizations. Please post your organization’s information through the guest book pages so you may be added” (Indiana Center, 2002).

Our search located 84 studies, 20% of them linked to or co-sponsored by more than one organization. Though this signals some awareness of the work of other groups, this low percentage suggests room for increasing cooperation within the ECD community.

⁹¹ Most respondents were at the directorial level. On a few occasions when after several attempts no other respondent was willing to speak with us, we spoke with the person who answered the phone. The respondents were asked two questions about other organizations in the field: Which other groups would you name as successful or influential in increasing support or awareness about early childhood development? Can you think of any other groups that engage in advocacy about early childhood development or school readiness?





Web-Based Action

We looked at the websites of 38 organizations involved in early childhood education or development. Though collectively there was much information about legislation, few sites contained all of the elements listed below. Just 14 contained information about legislation and instructions (such as an address and sample letter, or a link to a site that can automatically send a letter to a legislator), and only seven enabled a user to sign up for faxed or e-mailed alerts about legislative action. Organizations may be interested in communicating on a regular basis about the most pressing needs for national grass-roots legislative action in order to craft national correspondence in the most effective way.

The most comprehensive sites contained the following elements:

- **Clearly marked links to legislative information or action.** Some sites buried legislative information or action recommendations, making them difficult to find.
- **Information and status reports on pending state and federal legislation, including their position.** Some sites contained information only on state or only on federal bills. Others only provided links to the federal government site Thomas (<http://thomas.loc.gov>), or state legislature websites, requiring the user to sift through irrelevant information. Some did not provide the sponsoring organization's position on the summarized bills.
- **Highlighting of one or two important items for action.** Some sites provided a great deal of information, making it hard for users to focus on items of the greatest importance.
- **A summary of the organization's legislative agenda and wrap-up at the end of the legislative session.**
- **Sample letters or specific calls to action for users.**
- **Search engine to look up state and federal representatives (and information about them), as well as members of the executive branch.**
- **Addresses, phone numbers, and a feature that allows users to send a letter online to legislators.**
- **A search function that enables a user to look up local media and encouragement to write letters and editorials on specific issues.**
- **An opportunity to be notified by e-mail or fax when grassroots action is needed.**
- **Background information on important legislation.**
- **Information on how to register to vote.**
- **Tips for engaging in effective legislative action (letter writing, in person meetings, etc.).**
- **Working web pages and hyperlinks.** Many web sites that we visited had components and pages that were inaccessible.
- **Pages that are viewable with any browser.**





Conclusion

Our study of messages produced by organizations working in early childhood development found a broad consensus about the top issues. Most organizations are focusing their messages on early education programs, health insurance, and poverty. This consensus suggests that there is common ground for coordinated efforts and message strategies. However, more communication and coordination among organizations could benefit the movement.

In creating messages, organizations need to bolster their arguments with sound evidence - both on the benefits of policies relating to early childhood development and on the perils of the status quo. In addition, early childhood groups should prepare arguments (backed with evidence) that counter those made by groups opposed to early childhood policies. To identify such evidence we recommend better coordination and sharing between organizations of studies, polls, and focus group data.

Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to compile and disseminate accessible, comprehensive literature reviews of studies on some or all of these subjects (early education, health insurance, and poverty). Such reviews should include not only studies documenting current problems and working solutions, but also what we know about people's attitudes and tests of the effects of different message strategies and language on those attitudes. Conducting new studies to gather current evidence is also important. It may also be worthwhile to compile inoculative arguments that can be used by many organizations in their messages.

In addition, organizations should take the following recommendations into consideration when creating messages.

- Reconsider rhetoric that casts these issues in traditional frames, such as mothers as responsible for child care or child care facilities as storage facilities.
- Highlight the collective benefits of early childhood programs.
- Words are important and have different connotations. "Teacher" has a different meaning than "staff." "Daycare" is different from "early education." Organizations need to choose words that will express their agenda in words carrying positive values.
- Statistics are important, but using too many will reduce effectiveness.
- Seek out non-traditional allies. For example, organizations may want to better engage the business community.
- Promote specific policy solutions.
- Employ spokespeople who will have maximum effectiveness. Often this means drawing on unexpected sources who do not have a visible self interest.
- Maximize the utility of the Internet in promoting grass roots action.
- Tailor messages to audiences. Make sure messages answer the question, "Why should I care?"

While there are many elements to a successful public policy campaign, a well-tested message strategy is vital.





Appendix A: List of Organizations⁹²

ORGANIZATION	Address	City	State	ZIP	Phone	Website
Action Alliance for Children	1201 Martin Luther King Jr. Way	Oakland	CA	94612	510-444-7136	www.4children.org/home.htm
Advocates for Children and Youth	8 Market Place, 5th Floor	Baltimore	MD	21202-4034	410-547-9200	www.acy.org
Agenda for Children	P.O. Box 51837	New Orleans	LA	70151	504-586-8509	www.agendaforchildren.org
The Alliance for South Carolina's Children	P.O. Box 11644	Columbia	SC	29211	803-256-4670	www.scchildren.org
American Academy of Pediatrics	141 Northwest Point Boulevard	Elk Grove Village	IL	60007-1098	847-434-4000	www.aap.org
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families	523 S. Louisiana, #700	Little Rock	AR	72201	501-371-9678	www.aradvocates.org
Association for Children of New Jersey	35 Halsey Street	Newark	NJ	07102	973-643-3876	www.acnj.org
Black Children's Institute of Tennessee	301 Starboard Court	Nashville	TN	37217	615-366-5530	www.bcitn.org
California AEYC	4400 Auburn Blvd., Suite 100	Sacramento	CA	95841	916-486-7750	www.caeyc.org
Center for Early Childhood Learning and Development	PO Box 70434	Johnson City	TN	37614-0552	423-439-7555	http://child.etsu.edu
Child and Family Policy Center	1021 Flemming Building, 218 Sixth Avenue	Des Moines	IA	50309	515-280-9027	www.cfpciowa.org
Child Care Action Campaign	330 Seventh Avenue, 14th Floor	New York	NY	10001	212-239-0138	www.childcareaction.org/index.html
Child Welfare League of America	440 First Street NW, Third Floor	Washington	DC	20001-2085	202-638-2952	www.cwla.org

⁹² We requested interviews and data from all of the organizations included in this database, though not all complied with our requests. The websites (when available) of all of these organizations were searched for relevant data. This list is by no means exhaustive. For reasons of anonymity the names of organizations that we interviewed and from which we pulled data are not identified.

ORGANIZATION	Address	City	State	ZIP	Phone	Website
Children at Risk	2600 Southwest Freeway, #810	Houston	TX	77098	713-869-7740	www.childrenatrisk.org
Children First for Oregon	P.O. Box 14914	Portland	OR	97293	503-236-9754	www.childrenfirstfororegon.org
Children Now	1212 Broadway, 5th Floor	Oakland	CA	94612	510-763-2444	www.childrennow.org
Children's Action Alliance	4001 North Third Street, Suite 160	Phoenix	AZ	85012	602-266-0707	www.azchildren.org/caa/welcome.asp
Children's Advocacy Alliance	2245 N. Green Valley	Henderson	NV	89014	702-450-7450	
Children's Advocacy Institute	University of San Diego Law School, 5998 Alcalá Park	San Diego	CA	92110	619-260-4806	www.acusd.edu/childreissues
Children's Alliance of New Hampshire	Two Greenwood Avenue	Concord	NH	03301	603-225-2264	www.childrennh.org
Children's Defense Fund	25 E Street NW	Washington	DC	20001	202-628-8787	www.childrensdefense.org
Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Inc.	105 East 22nd Street, 7th Floor	New York	NY	10010	212-673-1800	www.kfny.org
Citizens for Missouri's Children	2717 Sutton Ave.	St. Louis	MO	63143	1-888-287-5437	www.mokids.org
Civitas Initiative	1327 West Washington Boulevard, Suite 3D	Chicago	IL	60607	312-226-6700	www.civitasinitiative.com
Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth	2601 Mission Street, #400	San Francisco	CA	94110	415-642-1048	www.colemanadvocates.org
Colorado Children's Campaign	1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 125	Denver	CO	80203	303-839-1580	www.coloradokids.org
Connecticut Association for Human Services	110 Bartholomew Avenue, Suite 4030	Hartford	CT	06106-2201	860-951-2212	www.cahs.org
Connecticut Voices for Children	33 Whitney Avenue	New Haven	CT	06510	203-498-4240	www.ctkidslink.org
DC Action for Children	1616 P Street NW, Suite 420	Washington	DC	20036	202-234-9404	www.dckids.org
Families and Work Institute	267 Fifth Ave., Floor 2	New York	NY	10016	212-465-2044	www.familiesandwork.org

ORGANIZATION	Address	City	State	ZIP	Phone	Website
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids	2000 P Street NW, Suite 240	Washington	DC	20036	202-776-0027	www.fightcrime.org
Georgians for Children	300 W. Wieuca Rd., NW, Suite 216	Atlanta	GA	30342	404-843-0017	www.georgians.com
Hawaii Kids Watch	1427 Dillingham Blvd, #301	Honolulu	HI	96817	808-845-0701	www.hawaiikidswatch.org
Head Start	330 C Street, SW	Washington	DC	20447	202-205-8572	www2.acf.dhhs.gov/ programs/hsb
High/Scope	600 N. River St.	Ypsilanti	MI	48198-2898	734-485-2000	www.highscope.org
I am Your Child	1325 6th Avenue, 30th Floor	New York	NY	10019	212-636-5030	www.iamyourchild.org/ toc.html
Idaho Kids Count	1607 West Jefferson Street	Boise	ID	83702	208-388-1014	www.idahokidscount.org
Indiana Center on Early Childhood Development	Ball State University TC 210	Muncie	IN	46306	765-285-7369	www.inchildren.org/ index.html
The Indiana Youth Institute	603 E. Washington Street, Suite 800	Indianapolis	IN	46204-2692	317-396-2700	www.iyi.org/index1.html
Johnson & Johnson Pediatric Institute L.L.C.	P.O. Box 140097	St. Louis	MO	63114-9907	877-565-5465	www.jnpjpediatricinstitute.com/ home.htm
Kansas Action for Children	3360 SW Harrison Avenue	Topeka	KS	66611	785-232-0550	www.kac.org
Kentucky Youth Advocates	2034 Frankfort Avenue	Louisville	KY	40206	502-895-8167	www.kyouth.org
Kids Count	The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 701 St. Paul St.	Baltimore	MD	21202	410-547-6600	www.aecf.org/kidscount
Kids Count in Delaware	298 K Graham Hall, University of Delaware	Newark	DE	19716-7350	302-831-4966	www.dekidscount.org
Kids in Common	1046 West Taylor, #100	San Jose	CA	95126	408-882-0900	www.kidsincommon.org
Maine Children's Alliance	303 State Street	Augusta	ME	04330	207-623-1868	www.mekids.org
Maryland Association Resources for Families and Youth	1517 South Ritchie Highway, Suite 102	Arnold	MD	21012	410-974-4901	www.marfy.myassociation.com
Massachusetts Citizens for Children	14 Beacon Street, Suite 706	Boston	MA	02108	617-742-8555	www.masskids.org
Michigan's Children	428 West Lenawee	Lansing	MI	48933-2240	517-485-3500	www.michiganschildren.org

ORGANIZATION	Address	City	State	ZIP	Phone	Website
Mississippi Forum on Children and Families	737 North President	Jackson	MS	39202	601-355-4911	www.mfcf.org
Montana Council for Families	P.O. Box 7533	Missoula	MT	59802	406-728-9449	
NACCRRRA - National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies	1319 F. Street, NW, Suite 500	Washington	DC	20004-1106	202-393-5501	www.naccrra.net/index.htm
NAEYC - National Association for the Education of Young Children	1509 16th Street, NW	Washington	DC	20036	202-232-8777	www.naeyc.org
National Association of Child Advocates	1522 K Street, NW, Suite 600	Washington	DC	20005-1202	202-289-0777	www.childadvocacy.org
NAFCC - National Association for Family Child Care	5202 Pinemont Drive	Salt Lake City	UT	84123	801-269-9338	www.nafcc.org
National Black Child Development Institute	1101 15th Street N.W., Suite 900	Washington	DC	20005	202-833-2220	www.nbcdi.org
National Center for Children in Poverty	Columbia University School of Public Health, 154 Haven Avenue	New York	NY	10032-1180	212-304-7100	http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp
NCEDL - National Center for Early Development & Learning	UNC-CH CB #8185	Chapel Hill	NC	27599	919-962-2211	www.ncedl.org
National Head Start Association	1651 Prince Street	Alexandria	VA	22314	703-739-0875	www.nhsa.org
National Institute on Children, Youth and Families	627 Upland Road	Louisville	KY	40206-2836	502-451-2929	www.nicyf.org
National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education	Office of Educational Research and Development, 555 New Jersey Ave, NW	Washington	DC	20208	202- 219-1935	www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI
New Mexico Voices for Children	P.O. Box 26666	Albuquerque	NM	87125-6666	505-244-9505	www.nmadvocates.org
North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children	3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 200	Raleigh	NC	27609	919-510-5034	www.ncaeyc.org
North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute	311 E. Edenton Street	Raleigh	NC	27601	919-834-6623	www.ncchild.org
The North Carolina Partnership for Children	1100 Wake Forest Road	Raleigh	NC	27604-1278	919-821-7999	www.smartstart-nc.org
North Dakota Kids Count	North Dakota State University P.O. Box 5636	Fargo	ND	58105	701-231-7980	www.ndkidscount.org

ORGANIZATION	Address	City	State	ZIP	Phone	Website
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy	420 NW 13th Street, Suite 101	Oklahoma City	OK	73103	405-236-5437	www.oica.org
Partnership for Children	4510 Belleview, Suite 200	Kansas City	MO	64111	816-531-9200	www.pfc.org
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children	20 North Market Square, Suite 300	Harrisburg	PA	17101-1632	717-236-5680	www.papartnerships.org
Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth	7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 6th Floor	Philadelphia	PA	19103	215-563-5848	www.pccy.org
Rhode Island Kids Count	1 Union Station	Providence	RI	02903-1758	401-351-9400	www.rikidscount.org/rikc
South Dakota Coalition for Children	808 N. West Avenue, P.O. Box 2246	Sioux Falls	SD	57101-2246	605-367-9667	www.sdccchildren.org
South Dakota Kids Count	Business Research Bureau, Univ. of South Dakota, 414 East Clark Street	Vermillion	SD	57069-2390	605-677-5287	www.usd.edu/brbinfo
Southern Early Childhood Association	PO Box 55930	Little Rock	AK	72215-5930	1-800-305-7322	www.southernearlychildhood.org/index.html
Statewide Youth Advocacy, Inc.	17 Elk Street, 5th Floor	Albany	NY	12207-1002	518-436-8525	www.syany.org
Success INC	301 North Wilmington St.	Raleigh	NC	27601-2825	919-807-3300	www.ncpublicschools.org/success
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth	Andrew Johnson Tower, Ninth Fl. 710 James Robertson Pkwy.	Nashville	TN	37243-0800	615-741-2633	www.state.tn.us/tccy
Texans Care for Children	814 San Jacinto Blvd., #301	Austin	TX	78701	512-473-2274	www.texanscareforchildren.org
Texas Association for the Education of Young Children	1106 Clayton Lane Suite 200E	Austin	TX	78723	512-451-2392	www.texasaeyc.org
The Action Alliance for Virginia's Children and Youth	701 East Franklin Street, Suite 807	Richmond	VA	23219	804-649-0184	www.vakids.org
The Children's Campaign, Inc.	P.O. Box 1718	Tallahassee	FL	32302	850-425-2600	www.iamforkids.org/campaign/index.html
The Children's Alliance	2017 E. Spruce St.	Seattle	WA	98122	206-324-0340	www.childrensalliance.org
Utah Children	757 East South Temple, Suite 250	Salt Lake City	UT	84103	801-364-1182	www.utahchildren.net
Vermont Children's Forum	P.O. Box 261	Montpelier	VT	05601	802-229-6377	www.childrensforum.org

ORGANIZATION	Address	City	State	ZIP	Phone	Website
A Vision for Children Center	217 Howard Street	San Antonio	TX	78212	210-737-0742	www.anybabycansa.org
Voices for Alabama's Children	P.O. Box 4576	Montgomery	AL	36103-4576	800-444-KIDS	www.alavoices.org
Voices for Children - Nebraska	7521 Main Street, Suite 103	Omaha	NE	68127	402-597-3100	www.voicesforchildren.com
Voices for Illinois Children	208 South LaSalle, Suite 1490	Chicago	IL	60604-1103	312-456-0600	www.voices4kids.org
West Virginia Kids Count Fund	1031 Quarrier Street, Suite 313	Charleston	WV	25301	304-345-2101	www.wkidscountfund.org
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families	16 North Carroll Street, Suite 600	Madison	WI	53703	608-284-0580	www.wccf.org
Wyoming Children's Action Alliance	2712 Thomes Avenue	Cheyenne	WY	82001	307-635-2272	www.wykids.com
Zero to Three	National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, 2000 M Street, NW, Suite 200	Washington	DC	20036	202-638-1144	www.zerotothree.org



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