

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

County Child Care Health Consultant Coordinators Position Statement

The New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NJAEYC) is the state's largest professional association for early childhood education and care. Membership exceeds 4000 with representation from community child care programs, state funded preschools, public schools, higher education, the medical field, parents, and others concerned about the healthy development of children from birth to age eight.

NJAEYC has learned that the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies have been notified of great reductions in funding for the county Child Care Health Consultant Coordinator (CCHCC) positions for this contract year with reductions continuing in future contracts. Currently there is one CCHCC in each county. Many child care programs throughout the state have benefited and continue to benefit from the work of the CCHCC which has ultimately impacted thousands of NJ's young children and their families over the past ten years.

The training and technical assistance in health and safety provided by the CCHCC to child care programs has greatly impacted the quality of child care. CCHCC's provide education on a plethora of topics including medication administration, asthma, obesity prevention, nutrition, CPR and First Aid, SIDS prevention, dental care, immunization requirements, special needs, and abuse and neglect. Training is also provided to the state funded (formerly known as "Abbott") school nurses and community health nurses in every county. Without state funding, programs would not be able to access services since their budgets are already stressed by low reimbursement rates and inability of families to pay true cost of care. Thus, programs would not be able to provide families with critical information relative to the health needs of their children or cost-saving prevention strategies. Consequently, families would rely more heavily upon social services provided by the state which will stress the system even further and, ultimately, deprive countless young children with necessary services.

CCHCC staff regularly conduct health and safety audits of child care programs and provide current and timely technical assistance and resources to program administrators on how to respond to health-related outbreaks such as H1N1, and other communicable diseases. This service allows programs to meet criteria established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for program quality. In order for programs to earn accreditation through NAEYC, they must have access to this support. Accreditation is a concrete confirmation that programs meet specific, research-based criteria for high quality. No criterion of accreditation can or should be compromised. NJ's goal is for all young children to have access to quality programs in order to ensure success in school. To that end, the CCHCC program cannot be eliminated or shortchanged in any way.

NJAEYC implores the state to reconsider its plan to cut funding to the Child Care Health Consultant Coordinator. In this climate of economic stress to families, child health and safety cannot be at risk. Allowing programs serving young children and families to continue to have access to the CCHCC will ensure that families are informed and children are protected in quality early learning environments.