

*Periodic Report*  
2002-2004



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# County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable for Child Care



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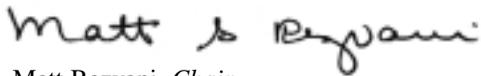
## Message from the Chair

I was deeply honored to be elected Chair of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable) in July 2004. My colleagues on this body are experts in various disciplines related to child development, while my experiences have been in the realm of business. You may wonder how a business person emerges as Chair of a child care policy body. The fact is that we all possess a passion for improving the quality, quantity, and affordability of child care services in the County of Los Angeles (County). My task as Chair of the Roundtable is to focus that shared passion on the business of improving services for young children and their families.

Under the leadership of my predecessor, Esther Torres, the Roundtable developed a set of child care program quality rating instruments. These instruments will be field tested to determine their reliability in early 2005. Our next challenge will be to develop an implementation plan. In addition to addressing the regular rating of child development programs throughout the County, this plan must include technical assistance and resource development components. The Roundtable believes that the long-term goal of improved child care quality can only be achieved if all programs with a commitment to quality services have the support needed to meet and sustain higher program standards.

Economist and Nobel Laureate, James Heckman, has reported that America under-invests in the early years, and suggests that “Redirecting additional funds toward the early years, before the start of traditional schooling, is a sound investment in the productivity and safety of our society.” During the next year, the Roundtable will be researching opportunities to increase investments in the quality and affordability of local child development services.

Sincerely,



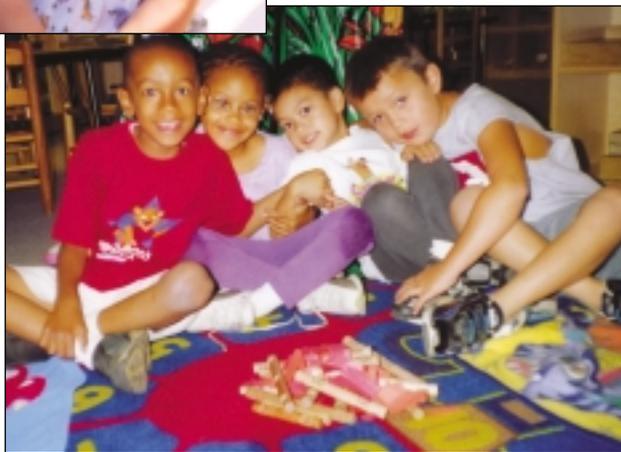
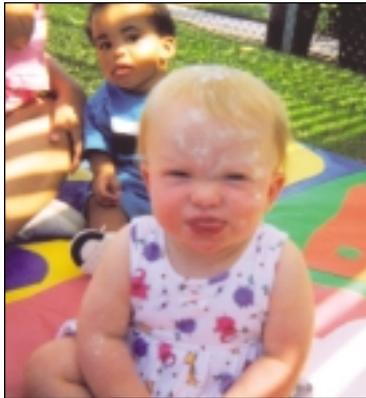
Matt Rezvani, *Chair*

*Policy Round Table for Child Care*

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## Mission Statement

**T**he mission of the Roundtable is to serve as the official County body on all matters relating to child care, working in collaboration with the Child Care Planning Committee and the Children's Planning Council to build and strengthen the child care system and infrastructure in the County by providing policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.



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## Background

**O**n March 21, 2000, the County Board of Supervisors stated, “The County of Los Angeles is in a unique position to provide leadership and to identify solutions to the long-standing issue of access to affordable and quality child care services.” To realize that leadership role, the Board of Supervisors adopted the recommendations presented by the Child Care Futures Committee, a joint effort of the Children’s Planning Council and Child Care Planning Committee, and created the Policy Roundtable for Child Care.

In its report to the Board of Supervisors, the Child Care Futures Committee stressed the need to mobilize County departments, the larger community, and other government sectors for the purpose of building and strengthening the child care system. The Roundtable was seen as the vehicle to bridge and galvanize these disparate sectors. According to the Child Care Futures Committee, the Roundtable would function as a results-oriented, technical team of advisors focusing on the County and its role in strengthening the child care infrastructure. In addition, the Roundtable would be charged to work collaboratively and strategically to develop solutions to the long-standing child care challenges of this County.

The Child Care Futures Committee recommended that the Roundtable membership be composed of representatives from seven organizations, four County departments, and two nominees from each Board office. The Board of Supervisors was encouraged to include, in their nominations, representatives from academia/research, business, community/legal advocacy, philanthropy, and child development.

Appointments to the Roundtable began in the summer of 2000, and the Board of Supervisors made the final appointment in March 2002.



## Roundtable Members

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Matt Rezvani, *Chair*

*bp*

*Representing the Fourth District*

Robert Wiltse, *Vice-Chair*

*Representing and affiliated with the County Department of Children and Family Services*

Renatta Cooper

*Representing the First 5 LA Commission*

Duane Dennis

*Pathways*

*Representing the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles*

Carollee Howes, Ph.D.

*University of California, Los Angeles  
Representing the Third District*

Jan Isenberg

*Representing and affiliated with Los Angeles County Office of Education*

Jacquelyn McCroskey, D.S.W.

*University of Southern California  
Representing the Third District*

Terri Chew Nishimura, MA, OTR/L

*Pediatric Therapy Network  
Representing the Fourth District*

Sheri Lewis

*Representing and affiliated with the County Department of Public Social Services*

Loc Nguyen, Dr.P.H.

*County Department of Children and Family Services  
Representing the Fifth District*

Margarita Ramos

*Representing and affiliated with the County Department of Parks and Recreation*

Arlene Rhine

*California State University Northridge,  
Child Development Center  
Representing the Southern California Association for the Education of Young Children*

Connie Russell

*Elementary Education  
Representing the Fifth District*

Michele P. Sartell

*City of Long Beach, Department of Health and Human Services  
Representing the County Child Care Planning Committee*

Carmen Schroeder

*Representing and affiliated with Los Angeles Unified School District*

Lari Sheehan

*Representing and affiliated with the County Chief Administrative Office*

Adelina A. Sorkin

*Child Advocate and Consultant  
Representing the County Commission for Children and Families*

Esther Torrez

*Community Enhancement Corporation  
Representing the First District*

Ruth Yoon

*Families in Schools  
Representing the First District*

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## Issues Addressed

**D**uring this period, the Roundtable explored a variety of issues and heard from a range of local experts, including:



- A panel discussion on School-Age Child Care was conducted in September 2002, which included: 1) a review of the research by Megan Beckett, Sociologist with the RAND Corporation; 2) a program description by Judith Brandlin, founder and Executive Director of Stone Soup; 3) a program description by Carla Sanger, Executive Director of LA's BEST; and 4) a program description by Sonia Peña, Site Director with YMCA.

### *Resulting Action*

This discussion informed the Roundtable's recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding the budgetary implications of Proposition 49, the After-School Education and Safety Act.

- On February 12, 2003, Eddie Washington, of the Intergovernmental Relations Branch of the County Chief Administrative Office, provided an analysis of the Governor's Proposed Budget for 2003-04.

### *Resulting Action*

This presentation informed subsequent discussions of the proposed State Budget and the Roundtable's recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to oppose efforts to realign the administration of subsidized child care services from State to counties.

- On June 11, 2003, members of the Child Care Planning Committee presented its 10-year Strategic Plan for Child Care and Development Services for the County of Los Angeles (Strategic Plan).

### *Resulting Action*

The Roundtable endorsed the Strategic Plan and agreed to serve as a Principal Partner on two short-term objectives of the Plan.

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- On January 14, 2004, Ben Austin and Michael Trujillo, Initiative Consultants, addressed the Roundtable on an initiative sponsored by the California Teachers Association and Rob Reiner. This initiative, which included financial support for Universal Preschool, was withdrawn from the November 2004 ballot.

***Resulting Action***

The Roundtable continues to engage in discussions related to implementing Universal Preschool on a Statewide basis, and will be one of 20 organizations, Statewide, providing input on an initiative by Rob Reiner proposed for the 2006 ballot.

- The Los Angeles Exploring Children’s Early Learning Settings (LA Excels) study was discussed in March 2004. The RAND Corporation and the University of California at Los Angeles are collaborating on the five-year study funded by the National Institute of Child and Human Development. The study will focus on the early learning settings serving mostly low-income children from immigrant families, including Head Start, publicly-funded agencies, private agencies, non-profit preschools, and licensed family child care.

***Resulting Action***

The Roundtable agreed to assist the LA Excels study, on an as-needed basis. In addition, to help identify study participants, LA Excels was encouraged to utilize CEL, a County centralized eligibility list for low-income families seeking subsidized child care and development services.



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## Collaborations

### *Roundtable members serve on related bodies, including:*

- Duane Dennis represents the Roundtable on the Children’s Planning Council. The Roundtable participated on the School Readiness Indicators Task Force and continues to incorporate school readiness issues into its work.
- Matt Rezvani represents the Roundtable as an ex officio member of the First 5 LA Commission. In addition, a number of Roundtable members served on the Universal Preschool Advisory Committee and task forces sponsored by the Commission.
- Adelina A. Sorkin represents the Roundtable on the New Directions Task Force. As a result of this collaboration, child care issues are figuring more prominently in the work of the Task Force.
- Michele P. Sartell is Chair of the Child Care Planning Committee, and represents the Committee on the Roundtable. The Roundtable has agreed to serve as a Principal Partner to implement two strategies of the Child Care Planning Committee’s Strategic Plan. In addition, Michele P. Sartell also serves on the Education Coordinating Council Work Group.



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## Refining Legislative Capacity

**D**uring this period, the Roundtable contributed policy recommendations to the County's Legislative Platforms, analyzed proposed and final State Budgets for impacts on child care and development services, tracked and reported on the reduced monitoring by the Department of Social Services-Community Care Licensing Division on child care services, and developed a position paper on child care licensing that was shared with the Board of Supervisors and presented by the County's Legislative Advocate at a Legislative hearing.

The Roundtable also advised the Board of Supervisors on specific legislative actions, including recommendations in 2003 to oppose Proposition 49 due to budgetary implications of the initiative, and a proposal to realign child development services from State to County administration. In 2004, upon the recommendation of the Roundtable, the Board of Supervisors adopted a position in support of SB 1343, the Infant Toddler Master Plan by Senator Escutia. The Roundtable also hosted a video conference with legislative staff located in Sacramento and local child care advocates located in Los Angeles, and met with legislators representing the County to discuss child development issues.

## Promote Practices and Policies that Strengthen the Child Care Infrastructure

- The Roundtable negotiated changes in Community Development Commission (CDC) policies related to the operation of licensed family child care homes in public housing.
- On June 22, 2004, the Roundtable testified in support of the County's revised zoning ordinance related to large family child care homes and child care centers.



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## Key Deliverables for 2003-05

**Q**uantify the cost of substantially expanding the subsidized child care system serving infants through school-age children in the County of Los Angeles.

- *If we really want to support families and promote healthy adult-child relationships, then we must create more viable choices for working parents*

(Jack Shonkoff, presentation to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis 2003)

The Roundtable recognizes that the current subsidized child care system is grossly underfunded. As a result, thousands of low-income working families never get any closer to affordable child care services than a waiting list. Those families who are fortunate enough to actually obtain assistance, frequently find that their eligibility terminates before they are able to bear the full cost of quality care. In order to make meaningful recommendations on how to correct this situation, the Roundtable set out to answer the question, “What would it cost to substantially expand the subsidized child care system in the County?”

Members agreed from the onset that they were not interested in an answer where quantity would trump quality, in “doing more, and doing it poorly.” Rather, the Roundtable was interested in calculating the cost of a subsidized child care system where child care providers would be fairly compensated, and program quality would not be undermined by constant teacher turnover. Knowing that this discussion would involve the word “billions,” members agreed that subsidies should be targeted to low- and moderate-income families with working and/or student parents, and the subsidy should decrease as family income increased.

With those conditions in place, the Roundtable estimates that approximately \$3.5 billion in subsidies, and \$1.85 billion in parent fees, would be needed to cover the child care costs of the estimated 614,533 children in families with working parents who have incomes under 150 percent of the State Median Income (SMI).

For more information on the Roundtable’s approach to estimating the need and cost of expanding the subsidized child care system, go to: [www.lacountychildcare.org](http://www.lacountychildcare.org).

During the coming year, the Roundtable will be working with community stakeholders to develop strategies to address facility needs, and to also maximize service and facility resources available to the child care community.

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**R**esearch and recommend a quality rating and certification system for use in the County, which reliably addresses the variations in child development program quality, communicates the quality of specific programs to consumers and the public, and assists programs in improving their services.

Over the past decade, the County’s child care and development service sector absorbed two new and substantial funding streams: 1) the Child Care and Development Block Grant; and 2) CalWORKs Child Care. In both cases, authorizing legislation directed the majority of these funds to child care voucher programs. Efforts were undertaken to quickly expand the supply of child care to meet the needs of low-income working families. Ten years later, these funding streams have been incorporated into the child care service infrastructure, and the supply of licensed child care has increased somewhat.

During this same period, the impact of high-quality child care services was documented through a variety of studies, including the Chicago Parent-Child Centers; and the Children of the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Go to School. This research has shown that the effects of high-quality child care are significant, lasting at least through kindergarten, and in most cases, through second grade.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, other research has revealed that only a small portion of care available to families in Los Angeles, and throughout the country, is of high quality. The benefits associated with high-quality child care are not realized by children participating in programs of mediocre or poor quality.

The ongoing shortfall of available care has generated a tension between investing in “more slots” or “improved quality.” In addition, the supply gap has fueled an attitude that “some care is better than no care,” and a hesitation to exclude any but the most obviously unsafe settings. As the understanding of quality child care and its impact on children deepens, the Roundtable believes that it is appropriate to differentiate high-quality child care services from mediocre- and poor-quality services, and assist the full-range of child care providers in upgrading their services to young children. A carefully-designed quality rating system has the potential to:

- Provide parents with clear, concise information on the quality of individual child care settings;
- Distinguish programs that are meeting higher program standards;

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<sup>1</sup> Peisener-Feinberg, Ellen, et al, *Summary of The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School*, National Center for Early Development and Learning, July 1999.

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- Create an incentive for programs to achieve and maintain higher program standards; and
  - Build a case for linking reimbursement rates to program quality.

In conjunction with various community stakeholders, the Roundtable developed program quality rating instruments to be used with licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. These instruments have been proven to address program elements that contribute to child care program quality and positive child outcomes. The following items will be the core to the rating process:

- History of compliance with licensing regulations;
- Teacher/Child relationships;
- Teacher/Child ratios;
- Group sizes;
- Scores on the Adult Involvement Scale;
- Learning environment;
- Scores on appropriate Environmental Rating Scale(s);
- Administrator education and compensation;
- Teaching staff education, compensation, and retention;
- Working conditions; and
- Family and community connections.



With support from the First 5 LA Commission, the reliability of the quality rating instruments will be tested in early 2005. The instruments can be reviewed at: [www.lacountychildcare.org](http://www.lacountychildcare.org).

The Roundtable recognizes that the impact of any child care program rating system, on the overall quality of care, will be determined by the technical assistance and resources available to help programs meet and sustain the new standards. The Roundtable also understands that the rating process must be cost-effective to administer, and clearly understood by the child care provider community. During the coming year, the Roundtable will refine the rating instruments and focus on implementation issues.

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## Funding

**A**ll Roundtable members serve without compensation. The Office of Child Care, within the Service Integration Branch of the County Chief Administrative Office, provides staff support to the Roundtable.

## Meeting Schedule and Contact Information

**R**egular meetings of the Roundtable are scheduled for the second Wednesday of the month, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The Roundtable generally meets in conference room 743 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, in Los Angeles. The public is welcome to attend all meetings, but should contact the Office of Child Care to confirm meeting location.

The Office of Child Care can be reached at:

- Address: 222 South Hill Street, 5th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012
- Telephone: (213) 974-4103
- Fax: (213) 217-5106
- Web Site: [www.lacountychildcare.org](http://www.lacountychildcare.org)
- E-mail: [kmalaska@cao.co.la.ca.us](mailto:kmalaska@cao.co.la.ca.us)



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