

San Diego CARES Program Impact Survey: Family Child Care Homes

Evaluation Report to the YMCA Childcare Resource Service

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INTRODUCTION

This document reports the family child care Provider results of the first year (fiscal year 2001-2002) of the San Diego CARES stipend program, in its effort to improve the quality of care for young children in family child care homes and centers. The findings of this study are being reported in February of the second year, and should be read as a further elaboration of the Participant Satisfaction Survey conducted in June of the first year by the YMCA Childcare Resource Service-CARES Project.

Unlike the center CARES survey, the family child care provider survey focuses on the self-reported impact of CARES on quality and education, and does not provide a baseline turnover rate due to the differences in infrastructure between center care and family child care homes. All family child care homes are considered to be small businesses, privately operated by either a single provider (small family home) or by a provider plus an assistant (large family home). For the purpose of this study, turnover rate has been estimated by using the state data on annual “closings” of family child care facilities, and by the self-reports of providers.

The goals of the CARES program are designed to:

- ▶ Reduce the turnover rate of family child care home and center staff in order to assure quality continuity of care.
- ▶ Advance the professional education of child care providers in order to enrich the learning environment for children 0 to 5 years in child care centers and family child care homes.

The details of the CARES program for San Diego County are attached in Appendix A. The center survey was completed, and reported, in November of 2002

I. THE MEASURES EMPLOYED

Two processes were used in measuring the impact of the CARES program on the goals stated above. An indirect estimate of impact was obtained from the statistics collected by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division. Data on all facility closures are collected and reported annually for centers and family child care homes. While these figures tell only how many facilities have been closed, and the apparent “institutional” reason for closure (licensee initiated, agency initiated, non-payment of license fees, change of location), an environmental change can be inferred in the case of continual closure decline. Several reasons are known to exist, which include temporary closure of a facility to allow for a move to another community. We are suggesting that the creation of the CARES stipend available to all licensed providers may be considered as an environmental change element. The power of the CARES stipend to offset other environmental changes would require further study.

The second measure was obtained by a survey mailed to all family child care home participants in the CARES program between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002. The survey design was adapted from the earlier center survey in order to obtain as much comparability as possible. In comparison with the center survey, the family child care home instrument focused more on self-reporting, out of necessity, as 82% of the facilities are operated by single providers. The survey form was mailed in November of 2002 to the 379 first year family child care CARES participants, with a follow-up mailing to all non-respondents two weeks after the initial request. A copy of the cover letter and survey instrument are included in Appendix B.

II. RESULTS

Facility Closure Decline

The information obtained from Community Care Licensing showed a steady decline in family child care facility closures between 1999 and 2001, as follows:

- ▶ 1999: 1,269
- ▶ 2000: 1,055
- ▶ 2001: 951

However, in 2002 the closures increased to 1,220, thought by reliable informants to represent the softening economy and the substantial loss of jobs which has ensued.

Community Care Licensing reports a total of 4,413 open Family Child Care licenses as of December. 2, 2002 with a total capacity (potential) to serve 39,509 children. The YMCA database shows 3,950 active family homes, of which 173 (4%) are currently on leave for the following reasons:

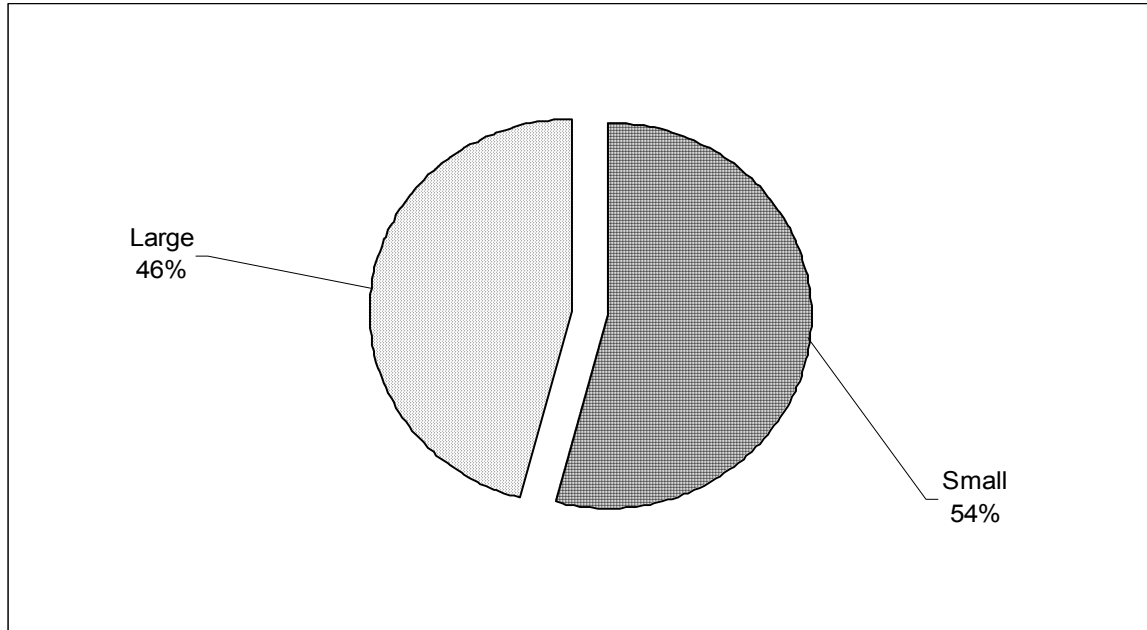
- ▶ care of an ill family member
- ▶ maternity or medical leave
- ▶ extended vacation (visit ill or elderly relative)
- ▶ extended vacation (taking a break from child care)
- ▶ working outside of home: keeping license

Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

The respondents to the family child care survey were distributed across the county, with a clustering of returns from the South Central and South Bay regions, and widespread scattering through the North Inland and North Coastal areas. The map showing returns by zip code address is located in Appendix C.

Figure 1.

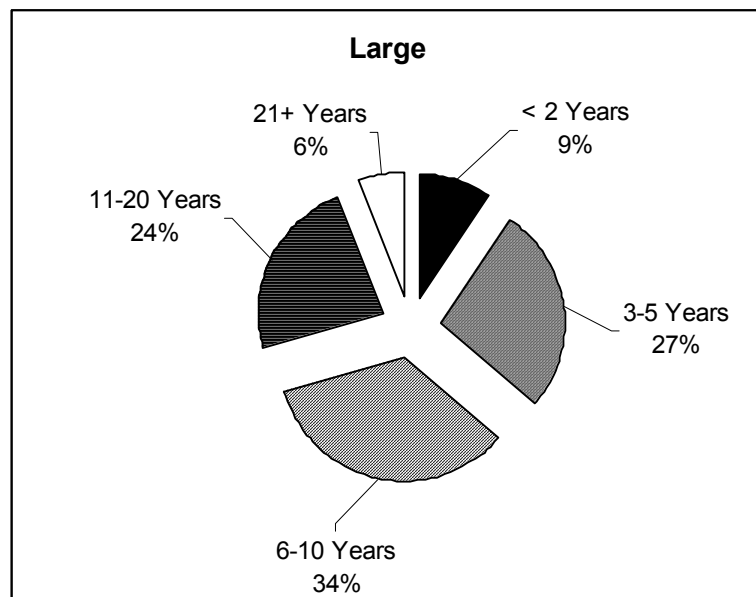
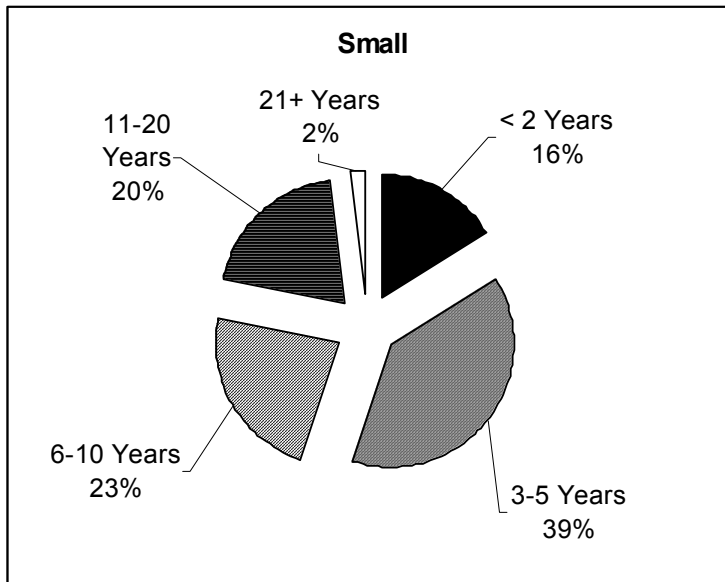
Type of Family Child Care Home Providers Responding



The survey return from family child care participants was 185, a return rate of 49%. Of that total, 100 were received from small family licensees (6 to 8 children), and 85 from large family licensees (12 to 14 children). These responses over-represent large family homes and under-represent the small facilities. One reason for this skewed response was the inclusion of large family child care assistants in the survey returns, potentially doubling the responses from some facilities. Another possible explanation is that family child care providers with a large license have a longer-term commitment to the field, as illustrated by the figure below, not infrequently starting out as small license family child care providers. They are also more likely to see themselves as career professionals and would therefore be more motivated to respond.

Figure 2.

Number of Years the Facilities Have Been Open



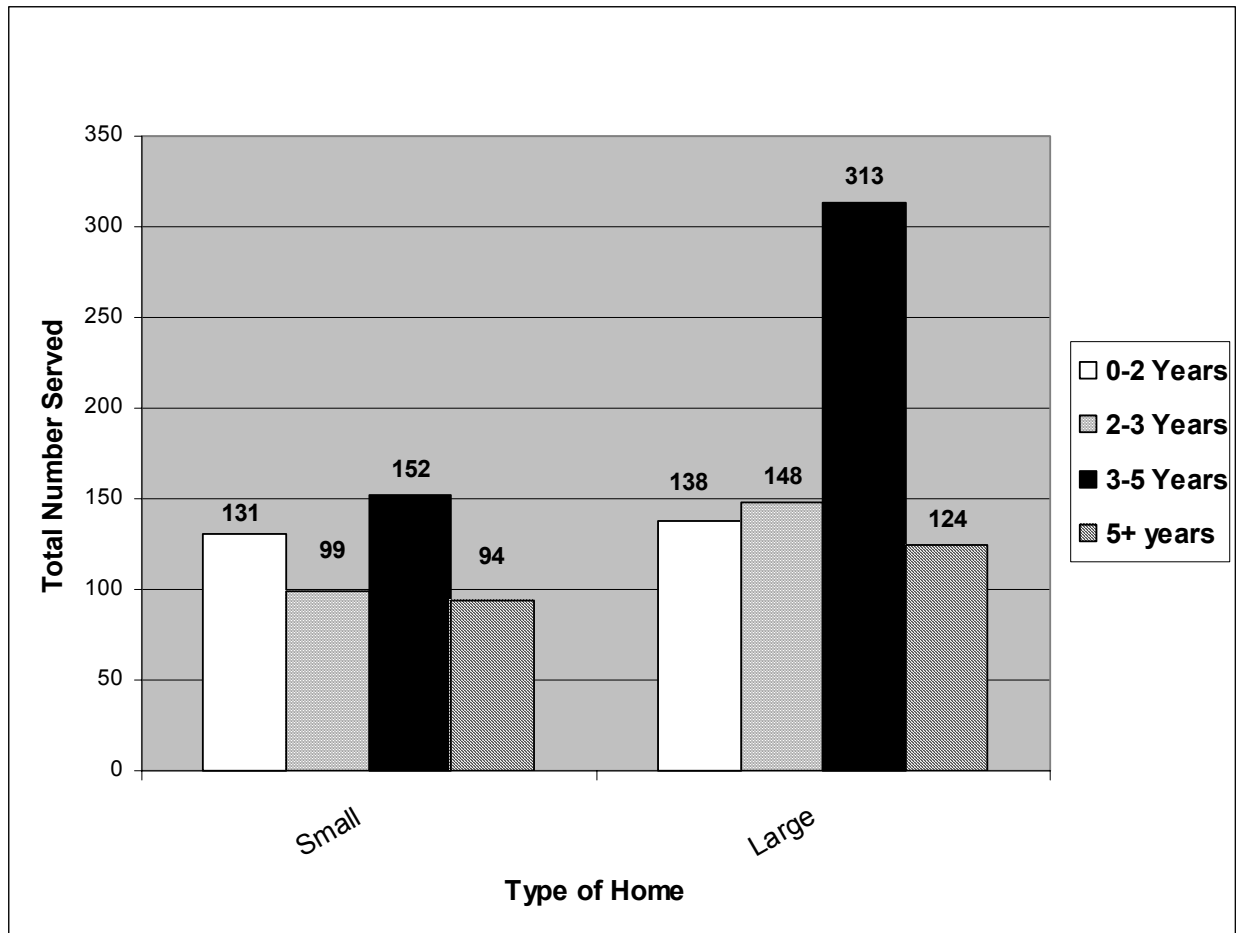
Overall, 57% of the family child care providers have been in operation between six and twenty-one plus years, with 27% providing licensed care for over eleven years. Only seven percent have been providing care for less than two years. Large license family child care providers lead in

longevity, and are significantly less likely to be new facilities. These figures suggest the considerable experience held by family child care providers, and their commitment to the field.

Number of Children Served by Age and Family Child Care License Type

Figure 3.

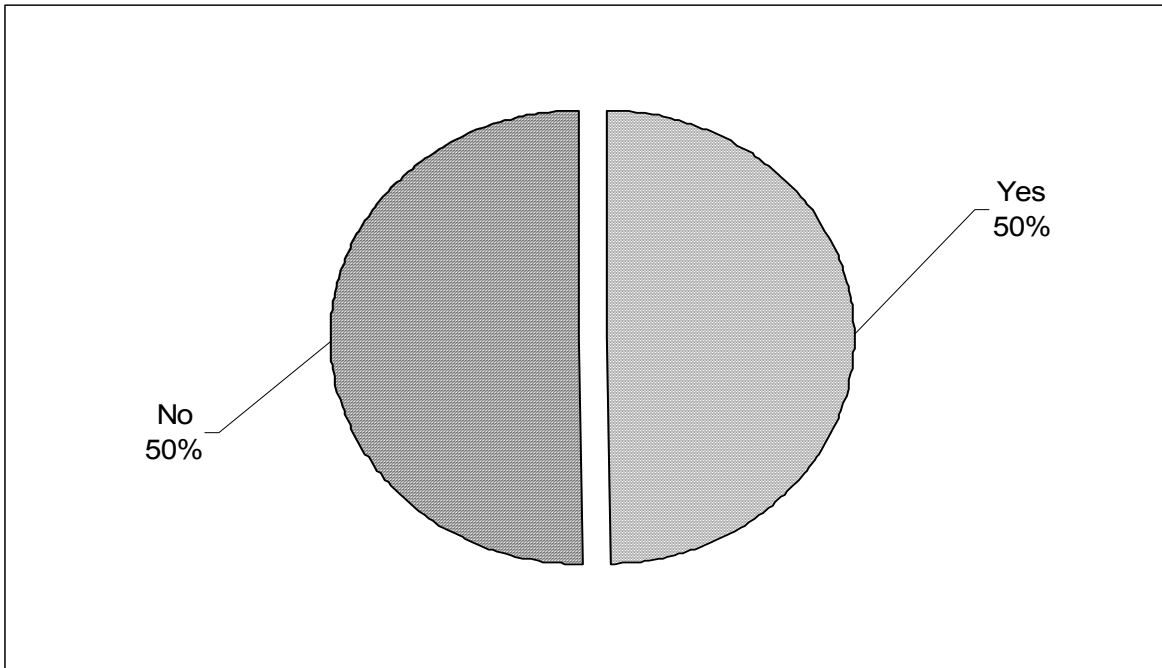
Number and Age Distribution of Children Served, by License Type



A total of 1,199 children were served by the responding family child care providers. Among the respondents, preschoolers were the largest age group of children served, predominantly in the large family child care facilities that often offer preschool-type programs to meet the needs of this age group. Infants and toddlers were served in similar numbers in both settings, but constitute half of the small family child care client population and only 39% of the children in large family child care homes.. Both types of facilities provided school-age care.

Figure 4.

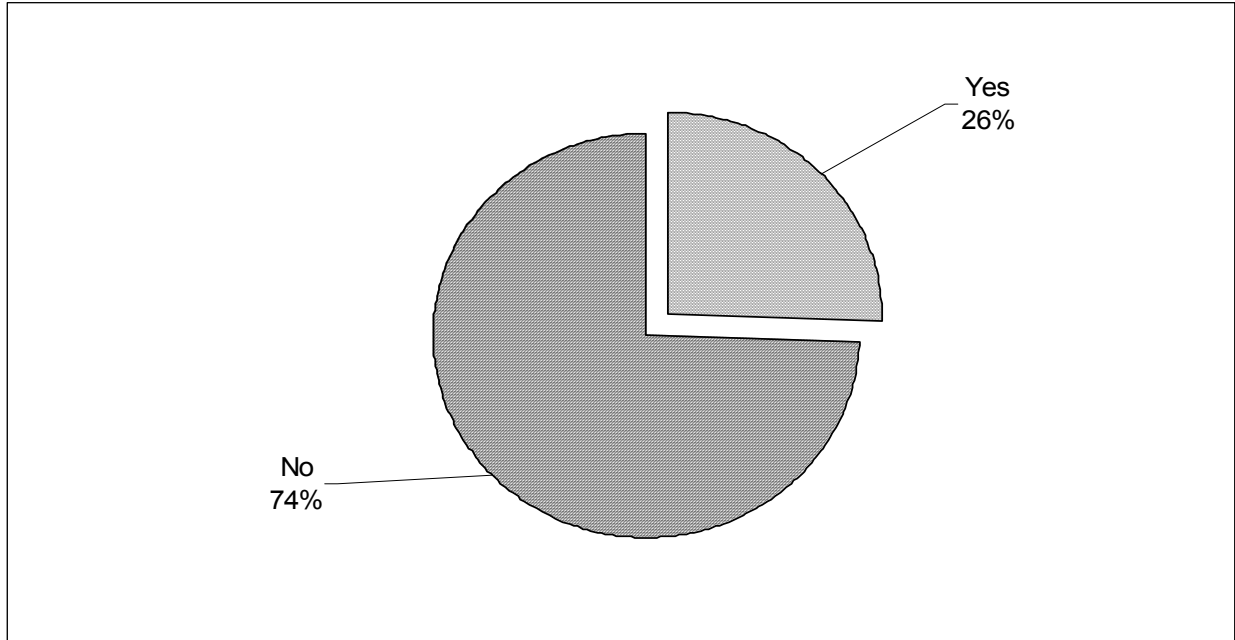
CARES Impact on Decision to Retain Family Child Care Service



Respondents were equally divided on the impact of the CARES program on the decision to retain their family child care service. The data from this question, “Did the CARES program affect your decision to remain a family child care provider,” was accepted as a proxy measure of retention for family child care providers, and is considered to be a highly significant finding.

Figure 5.

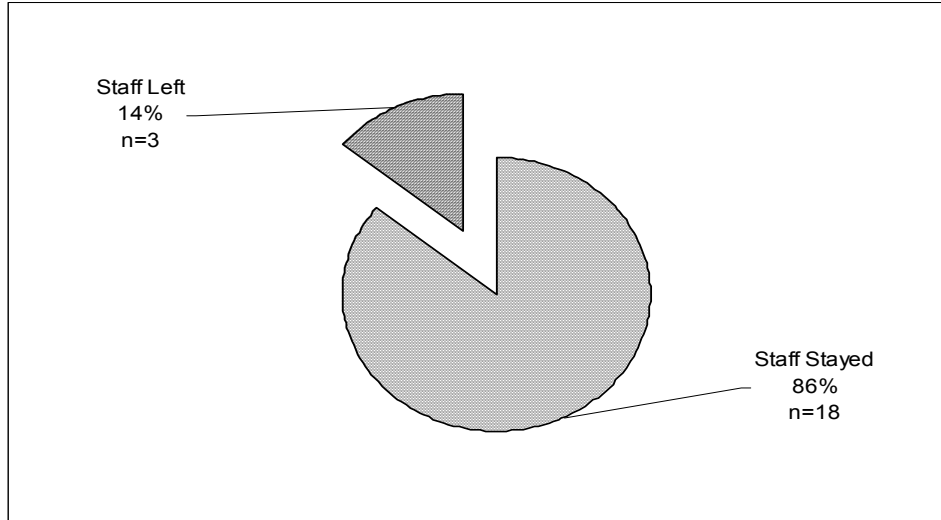
Large Family Child Care Facilities: Assistants Participating in CARES



Twenty-six percent of the seventy-eight large family homes that responded to this question said that their assistant(s) was enrolled in CARES, representing a total of 21 assistants. Adult assistants must be 18 years or older, but may be family members or unrelated adults. All assistants must pass finger-print regulations. The stipend would be seen by facility owners as an incentive for the retention of good assistants, and as income augmentation for the owner.

Figure 6.

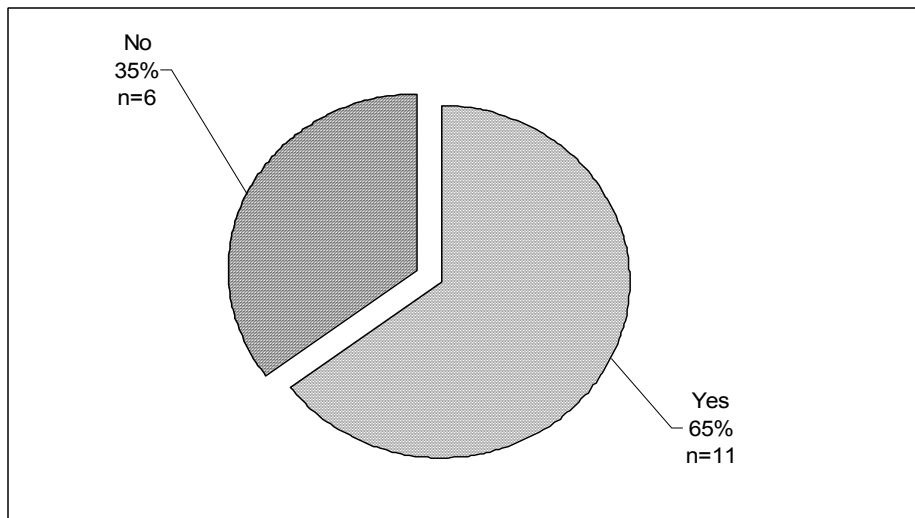
Large Family Child Care Home Assistant Impact: Staff Turnover



Large family child care home providers reported that only 14% of their staff left during the year. Data for previous years was not obtained. These respondents were further asked if the CARES program was a significant factor for those who stayed. Figure 7 below shows the overwhelming response in support of the CARES program impact on decision to remain employed in the same facility.

Figure 7.

Impact of CARES on Decision to Stay: Assistants



Noticeable Program Impact of CARES on Family Child Care Homes

The data resulting from this question were analyzed separately for both small and large family child care facilities. The results were almost identical: 80 to 82% of family child care respondents claimed a noticeable effect of the CARES initiative on their program.

Figure 8.

Noticeable Impact on Family Child Care Homes

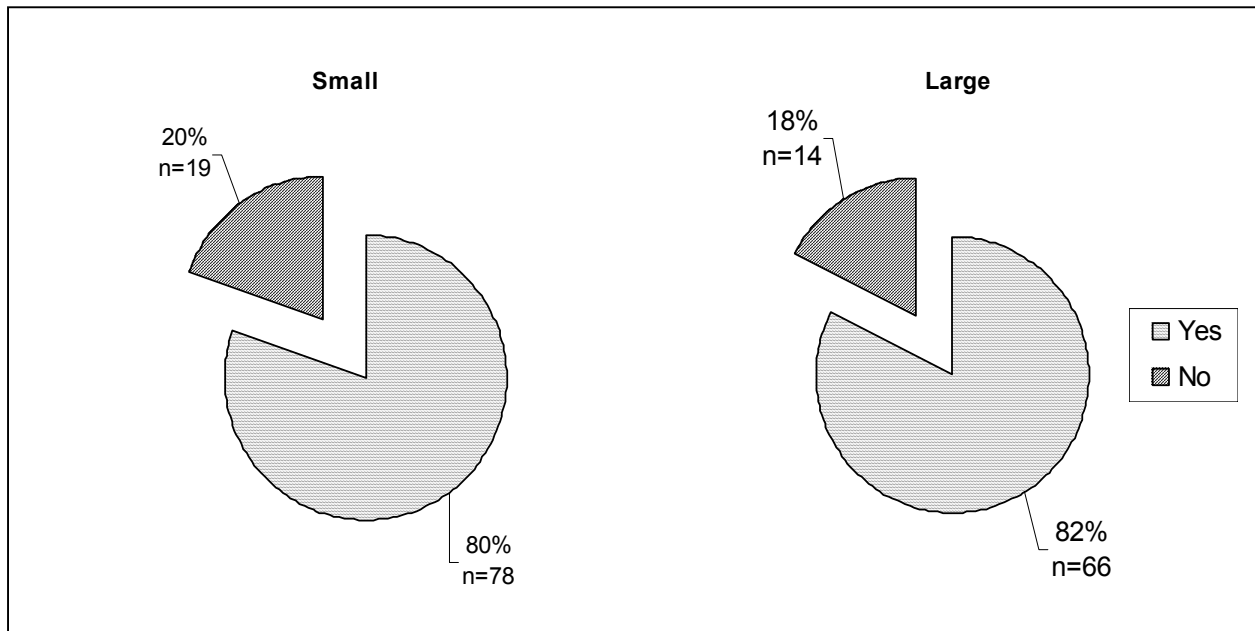
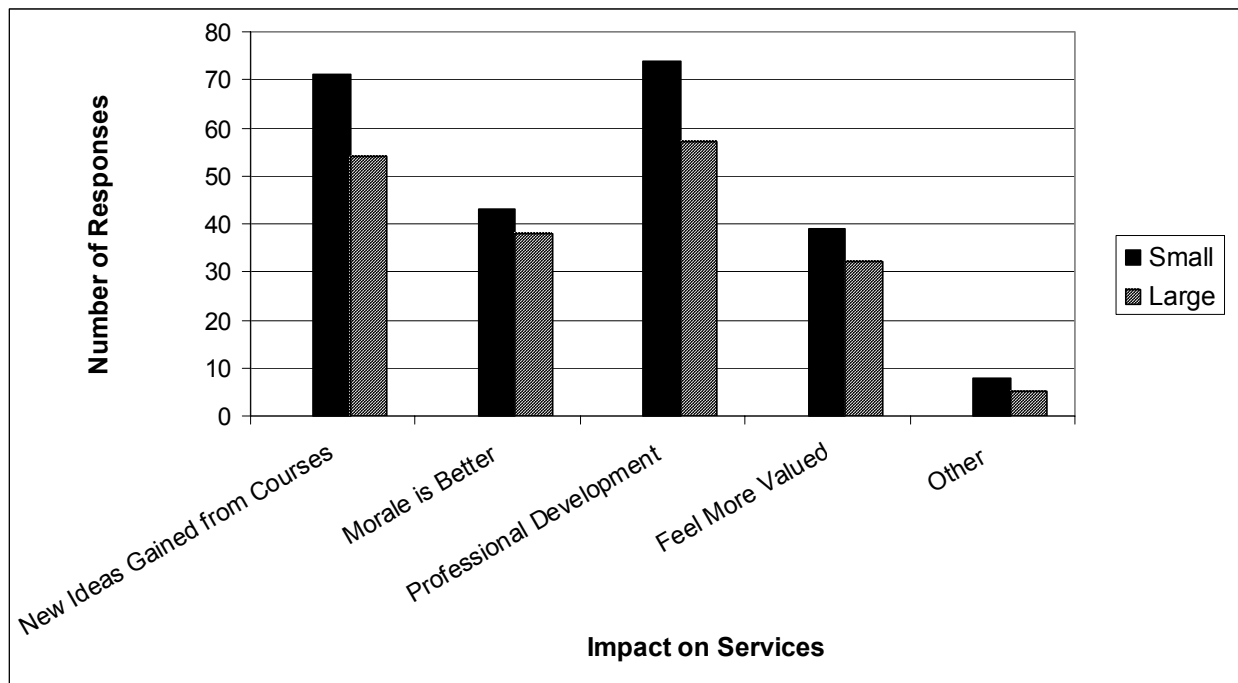


Figure 9.

CARES Quality Impact by Family Child Care Facility Type



For the providers who responded, new knowledge gained from courses taken and a greater sense of professionalism were the most important qualitative gains emanating from their CARES participation. Better morale and an increased feeling of being valued by the community for their dedicated work with children were the next most significant impacts. Those who reported “other” effects claimed they could share knowledge gained with families, received help in managing parent and child problems, obtained assistance with expenses, and enhancement of their program through funds to purchase materials and equipment.

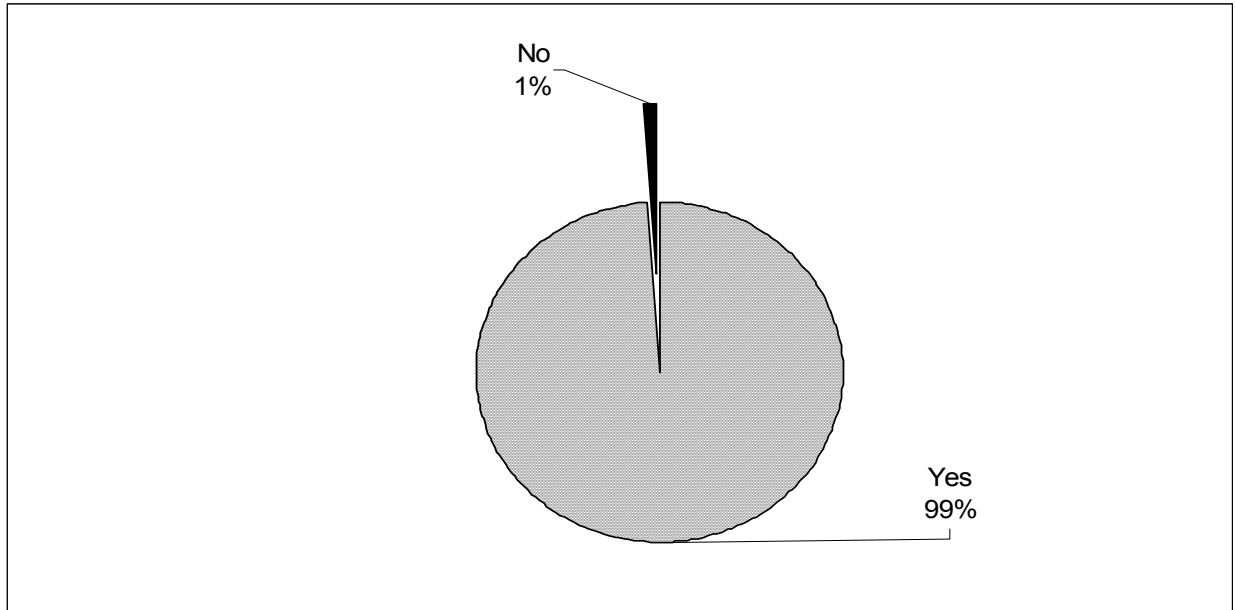
Reason for Claiming No Impact

The small number of respondents who claimed no impact on their program were asked to specify the reason. Table 2 below displays these reasons.

Table 1.
Reason for Claiming No Impact

| Reason | Responses |
|---|------------------|
| Stipend not received yet | 11 |
| Already providing top notch services | 1 |
| Unclear information: took the wrong classes | 1 |
| Already accredited: class level too low | 3 |
| Already in school | 2 |
| Still obtaining credits required | 1 |
| Only have one assistant | 1 |
| Don't need money to enjoy my work | 1 |
| Don't participate/moving | 1 |
| Can't take classes, re: scheduling | 1 |
| Total: | 23 |

Figure 10.
Recommend to Continue CARES



Respondents to the survey registered unanimous support for the continuation of the CARES program and included those who answered “no impact” in the previous question. This response is exactly the same as the center survey. It can be definitively stated that the participating child care provider community is totally in support of the CARES program continuation.

Suggestions for Improvement of the CARES program were solicited and are listed below:

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Colleges:

- ▶ More evening and week-end classes needed
- ▶ Expand variety of courses offered
- ▶ Offer more classes in Spanish
- ▶ Offer online courses
- ▶ Less homework
- ▶ Expand number of offerings in North County

Participant Services:

- ▶ Better communication and information available
- ▶ More user-friendly application process
- ▶ Better marketing of program
- ▶ Process the stipend faster
- ▶ More timely mailing of paperwork

Future Considerations:

- ▶ Shorten the time required to meet eligibility
- ▶ Add beginning computer to the child development matrix
- ▶ Use previously credited child development classes
- ▶ Change requirements for 3 children under 12 years
- ▶ Make a connection between family child care support groups and the CARES program
- ▶ Permit experienced providers to attend workshops instead of classes
- ▶ Provide more funding to pay for classes
- ▶ Credits should be able to apply to public school elementary requirements
- ▶ Increase stipend amount to \$2,500
- ▶ Convene informal meetings of providers to discuss child care issues
- ▶ Reduce red tape/stringent policies
- ▶ Qualifications should be changed to training, not college
- ▶ Reduce number of children required for eligibility
- ▶ Reward providers for continuous care and parent satisfaction
- ▶ Reward those who already have an AA degree
- ▶ Stipend should be paid after each 6 units completed

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the CARES program is twofold:

- ▶ To reduce the staff turnover rate in licensed child care centers and family child care homes.
- ▶ To increase the professional education of staff and providers of early care and education services.

The first year experience of the San Diego CARES project began in July 1, 2001 and entailed extensive start-up processes in order to inform the more than 4000 currently licensed child care providers and facilities of the new opportunities. Of the two populations, center staff and family child care providers, the latter were the most difficult to reach as many operate in an isolated mode in which they share little or no contact with other providers. In spite of this outreach barrier, 369 family child care providers participated in the Year 1 of the CARES program from all parts of the county.

The evaluation survey for family child care providers was mailed in November of 2002, after all eligible stipends had been distributed. A total of 185 responses were received, a return rate of 49%. The results were even more striking than the center survey on the impact CARES has had on maintaining the stability of the family child care workforce, and on supporting the continuing education of that population. Fifty percent of all respondents stated that CARES influenced their decision to remain a family child care provider, while 82% of those operating large family child care homes and 80% of small family homes agreed that their participation in the CARES program had produced a noticeable effect on their program. The following effects were documented:

- ▶ New ideas gained from courses
- ▶ Enhanced professional development
- ▶ Morale is better
- ▶ Feel more valued by community
- ▶ Better equipped to assist families

By September of the Year 2 (2002-2003), over 800 applications had been received to participate in the second year. All respondents were in support of continuing the CARES program, and made a number of suggestions for its improvement. These suggestions will be referred to the San Diego Child Care and Development Planning council's Prop 10 School Readiness committee which has acted as the advisory body for CARES.

The CARES program, after only one year of implementation, has had a profound effect on family child care providers, and demonstrates their commitment to the field. Every indication supports continuation of the stipend program.

CARES Program: Requirements and Eligibility



SAN DIEGO CARES PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

I. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A. Licensed Child Care Center Staff*

1. Currently have 6 units in child development college coursework **completed**
2. Worked in the same child care center for the 9 months previous to the date application was submitted
3. Currently work a minimum 20 hours per week in a classroom with children ages 0-5 at one site
4. Currently work directly with at least three children 0-5 at one site
5. Job titles that qualify: Assistant Teacher, Teacher Aide, Teacher, Head Teacher, One-Site Director or other position that requires working directly with children at one site

B. Licensed Family Child Care Staff

1. Currently have 6 units in child development college coursework **completed**
 – OR –
 Currently have completed 96 documented training hours related to child care and education to be approved by YMCA Childcare Resource Service staff
 – OR –
 Combination of both units and training hours to equal 96 hours (1 college unit = 15 hours)
2. Worked in same family child care home for 9 months previous to the date application was submitted
3. Currently work a minimum 20 hours per week with children ages 0-5 at one site
4. Currently work with at least three children 0-5 at one site

* Licensed State-Funded Child Care Center Staff see section C on next page.

– Continue on next page –

A. Licensed State-Funded Child Care Center Staff

(Center must have a contract with the State Department of Education, Child Development Division CDE/CDD)

1. Currently have 6 units in child development college coursework **completed**
2. Worked in same center for the 9 months previous to the date application was submitted
3. Currently work a minimum of 15 hours per week with children ages 0-13 at one site
4. Currently work directly with at least three children ages 0-13 at one site

II. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

After you submit your application to YMCA Childcare Resource Service (CRS)/San Diego CARES Project and satisfy all Entry Requirements, you will receive a notice stating that your application is complete. You will then need to satisfy the following program requirements in order to receive a stipend.

1. Enroll in a college and take six (6) units of coursework as shown on the Child Development Permit Matrix. For assistance with understanding the matrix or what classes you should take, see a Child Development Department instructor at your college.
– **OR** –
Obtain 20 professional development hours if you hold a Child Development Permit at the Master Teacher Level or higher
2. Receive a grade of "C" or better for the six units you complete on the Permit Matrix*
3. Continue to work in the same child care center or family child care program for an additional 9 months from the date your CARES application was approved by CRS
4. Continue to work a minimum of
Twenty (20) hours per week with at least three children ages 0-5 (Prop 10 funding)
– **OR** –
Fifteen (15) hours per week with at least three children ages 0-13 (AB 212 funding—available only for CDE/CDD funded programs)

**State funded (CDD) school-age center based staff qualify under AB212 (part of San Diego CARES) for up to \$3,000 when completing 12 units.*

III. TO RECEIVE A STIPEND

1. All entry and program requirements must be met
2. All documentation must be complete and on file at YMCA Childcare Resource Service
3. Stipend checks will be mailed out to recipients

Cover Letter and Survey



SAN DIEGO CARES BASELINE PROGRAM IMPACT SURVEY

Dear Family Child Care Home Provider:

You, or one of your assistants applied and were accepted to the CARES stipend program during the past fiscal year (July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002). The CARES program provided a stipend of \$1500 to qualifying family child care home providers for completion of each six units of child development related education and nine months of continued employment in the same facility..

It is critically important that we know how or if this stipend program has made a difference to your services. As you may know, the funds for the CARES program are being provided by the San Diego County Children and Families Commission (Prop 10) to whom we will report the results.

We are asking for your help in evaluating whether or not the results that were intended when CARES was created have in fact occurred:

- To reduce the turnover rate in child care facilities
- To promote the educational preparation of child care professionals

Please complete the enclosed brief survey form and return it to us no later than December 23, 2002 in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. The findings from this study will be reported in summary form: no individuals or programs will be quoted or singled out.

For any questions you may have, please call Dr. Betty Bassoff at 619-668-0436.

GENERAL INFORMATION.

1. TYPE OF CENTER: (please circle one)
 - a) Small (maximum of 8 children)
 - b) Large (maximum of 14 children)
2. Your location by zip code: _____
3. The year your facility opened: _____
4. The number of children you currently serve in all classrooms of your center by the following age groups:
 - a) Birth to 23 months _____
 - b) 2 yrs. to 2 yrs. 11 months _____
 - c) 3 yrs. to 5 yrs. _____
 - d) School-age _____

STAFFING IMPACTS.

5. Did the CARES program affect your decision to remain a family child care home provider?
 - a) Yes _____
 - b) No _____
6. *If you are a large family child care home provider*, did any of your assistants enroll in the CARES program during the past year (between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002)?
 - a) Yes _____
 - b) No _____ *[If "No" skip to question #10]*
7. *If yes*, how many? _____
8. Did they remain in your program for the full 9 months as required?
 - a) Yes _____
 - b) No _____ *[If "No" skip to question #10]*
9. *If yes*, was CARES an important reason for them to stay? a) Yes _____ b) No _____
10. *If your assistant(s) left your family home*, please check the reason(s) below:
 - ___ a) Better pay
 - ___ b) Better benefits
 - ___ c) More work hours
 - ___ d) Took a job in another field
 - ___ e) Involuntarily separated (asked to leave)
 - ___ f) Moved
 - ___ g) Maternity
 - ___ h) Transferred to another unit of the agency
 - ___ i) Retired
 - ___ j) No reason given
 - ___ k) Other (please specify): _____

PROGRAM IMPACTS.

11. Has the CARES stipend program had a noticeable effect on your service?
a) Yes _____ b) No _____ [If "No" skip to question #13]

12. *If yes*, in what way(s) has it affected your service? (please circle all that apply)
a) Less turnover of my assistants
b) New ideas gained from courses
c) Better morale (mine and/or assistants)
d) Professional development is now an important goal
e) I (and/or staff) feel more valued by the community
f) Other (please specify): _____

13. *If no*, why? _____

14. Would you recommend that the CARES stipend program continue? a) Yes _____ b) No _____

15. Finally, what suggestions do you have for improvement of the CARES program?

Person completing form, in the event we need to contact you for clarification.
_____ () _____
Name/Title Phone #

Again, thank you for your help. Remember, mail this back to us promptly.

Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Distribution of Survey Respondents by Zip Code

