

# **How Does Iowa Child Care Compare with Missouri's?**

## **A Report from the Midwest Child Care Research Consortium**

Susan Hegland, Lesia Oesterreich, Carla Peterson  
Department of Human Development & Family Studies  
Iowa State University

### **How does the quality of child care in Iowa compare to that in other Midwestern states?**

- The quality of full-day, full-year child care in Iowa, particularly in family child care and infant-toddler center care, is significantly worse than the quality of care in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.
- Shared Visions, the state-funded Iowa preschool program for low income children was significantly higher in quality than full-time child care in Iowa or the Midwest. Shared Visions programs are required to meet national accreditation standards, standards met by only 2.9% of child care programs in the Midwest.

### **Why is the quality of child care important?**

- Child care quality is related to children's health, safety, and development in areas such as self-control, communication, literacy, problem solving, and social skills—all skills essential for success in school and as citizens.
- Parents looking for work in Iowa want their children in safe, nurturing child care.

### **What factors were associated with quality?**

- States with higher regulation standards had higher child care quality.
- Across the four states, higher quality care was generally found where caregivers had:
  - \* formal contractual links with Head Start or Early Head Start
  - \* more formal education
  - \* completed higher levels of training
  - \* received training provided by the director or other staff
  - \* higher income
  - \* employee benefits (e.g., health insurance)
  - \* participated in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
  - \* were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children
  - \* belonged to professional organizations
- Lower quality care was generally provided by caregivers who saw:
  - \*child care as work to do until you can find a better job.
  - \*child care is a job for a paycheck
  - \*child care is work to do while your children are young.

### **How does Iowa compare with other states in factors related to quality?**

- Caregivers in Iowa earn significantly lower wages (averaging \$12,000 per year) than caregivers in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.
- Iowa provides less child care regulation and enforcement than do Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.
- Iowa has fewer state-wide training and professional development initiatives to improve quality in child care than do Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

For additional information, contact Susan Hegland, shegland@iastate.edu , 515 294-4616