



CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SCHOOL READINESS CONNECTIONS PILOT PROJECT OVERVIEW

July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2011

School Readiness Connections was an initiative passed by the 2007 Legislature and administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program through June, 2011. The goal of School Readiness Connections (SRC) was to provide incentives for selected providers to promote the skills and abilities that children served by the Child Care Assistance Program need to succeed in school.

- The existing CCAP administrative infrastructure was used to determine eligibility, authorize care and make payments. Families did not have to apply separately; providers billed and were paid using the same systems and procedures used for other CCAP families.
- Approximately 235 children per month, ages 0-5, were served.
- SRC costs were an average of \$2870 per child for one full time year of SRC services; this is the amount above the regular average CCAP costs per child. The higher costs were attributed to higher maximum reimbursement rates and more continuous care paid for some children when their parents schedule fluctuated.
- Providers were originally selected based on program description, licensing compliance, caregiver/staff qualifications, educational environment, and ability to provide supports to low income families and children. The criteria were consistent with characteristics developed for the pilot Parent Aware child care quality rating system (which was still being developed when SRC started).
- In the third year of the initiative, programs were additionally required to achieve 3 or 4 star ratings under Parent Aware and every program did achieve those ratings by the spring of 2011.
- Funds were limited during the pilot. Of the 41 programs that applied, 14 programs were selected. These included 9 licensed centers and 5 licensed homes. Programs were located in metro and non-metro areas of the state. Six of the selected providers were either Head Start grantees or in Head Start partnerships and one program was NAEYC Accredited. All of the providers offered full day, year round services.

What are some key features of SRC?

- Eligible children continued to attend the SRC provider even when the parent's job or school schedule changed as long as the family maintained CCAP eligibility. Children benefited from continuity of care and the family benefited from additional services provided.

- Children were required to attend an average of 25 hours per week at the SRC provider, which was a unique requirement of this initiative.
- Providers agreed to participate in a child assessment process, using the Work Sampling© tools and methods. They overwhelmingly supported use of Work Sampling. DHS provided training and materials; the data collected from the observations was used in the evaluation.
- Additional funds provided by SRC were used by the participating providers in the following ways:
 - Promoting family partnerships
 - Improving teaching materials and strategies
 - Teacher training and education
 - Monitor and assess children’s learning
 - Providing referrals, including referrals to preschool screening
- Families were highly satisfied with their children’s experiences and the quality of the SRC providers.
- Though SRC was not continued due to Minnesota’s budget crisis, the results and recommendations for future policy changes were used in the RTT application and will guide discussion regarding policies that support quality.

For additional detail about SRC:

Full Evaluation-

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_147885.pdf

Evaluation Brief -

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_147886.pdf

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