



# Child Care Aware of New Jersey

New Jersey's Most Trusted Child Care Resource

Child Care Aware of New Jersey News

Winter 2016

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### Bergen County

Bergen County Office for Children

### Burlington County

Burlington County CAP

### Camden County

Department of Children's Services

### Essex County

Programs for Parents, Inc.

### Hudson County

Urban League of Hudson County

### Hunterdon County

NORWESCAP Child & Family Resource Svcs.

### Mercer County

Child Care Connection

### Middlesex County

Community Child Care Solutions, Inc.

### Monmouth County

Child Care Resources

### Morris County

Child & Family Resources

### Ocean County

The Children's Home Society of NJ

### Passaic County

4Cs of Passaic County, Inc.

### Somerset County

Community Child Care Solutions, Inc.

### Sussex County

NORWESCAP Child & Family Resource Svcs.

### Union County

Community Coordinated Child Care

### Warren County

NORWESCAP Child & Family Resource Svcs.

## The Raising of America:

### Changing The Way We Talk About Children and Families

More than 400,000 New Jersey children ages five and under spend at least part of their week in some form of child care because their parents work, making the availability of high quality child care an essential for working families. Unfortunately, finding high quality, affordable child care is not so easy in New Jersey. Recognizing that the early years are a time when public policy interventions and investments in children can have the greatest benefits, Child Care Aware of New Jersey, formerly known as NJACCRRRA, collaborated with their member agencies (see sidebar for list of members) and the EIRC Southern Regional Child Care Resource Center on a campaign to engage policymakers, business and community leaders statewide and raise awareness of the need for increased investments to ensure all children have access to high quality early learning programs.

With funding from The Nicholson Foundation, collaborating partners in each of the 21 counties hosted screenings of

*The Raising of America* documentary, the signature episode of a 4 part series produced by California Newsreel. *The Raising of America* seeks to reframe the way we look at early child development. This hour - long film, developed in response to growing scientific evidence revealing how experiences in the first years of life build the foundation for life-long physical, emotional and cognitive health, explores the web of relations and policies that affect parents and caregivers and shape so much of early child health and development and consequently, life-course outcomes. The film moves between the science of human development and the stories of real families and communities struggling to provide the rich environments all children need to thrive, while too often hindered by social conditions and inequities. The screenings were followed by community conversations, featuring a panel of early childhood experts, to assess their reaction to the documentary and discuss how

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## NJACCRRRA Is Now Child Care Aware of New Jersey New name, same great mission!



In February, 2016 NJACCRRRA officially changed their name to Child Care Aware of New Jersey to align with our national organization, Child Care Aware of America. As a member of the nation's leading voice for child care, Child Care Aware of New Jersey is part of the national agenda to elevate safety and learning standards for the more than 11 million children in America in child care and ensure the highest quality child care is affordable and accessible to all families.

these issues play out locally and what is needed to better support families and children in their respective counties. After the screening, partnering agencies developed a strategy to continue the conversation to address the needs and interests identified at the screenings.

As of December 2015, over 1,000 persons, including legislators, county and local government representatives, community leaders, parents, business leaders, and early care and education stakeholders attended one of the 42 *The Raising of America* screenings held statewide. The film, described by participants as "depressing," "daunting," "distressing," "heartbreaking," and "eye-opening," generated lively discussions concerning the challenges NJ parents face, ways we can better support families and improve access to high quality early care and education, and what we can do to help policymakers and funders understand the importance of and invest in the early years.

### **Challenges For New Jersey Families**

The number one challenge faced by New Jersey families identified in nearly every screening was the lack of availability of affordable quality child care, closely followed by economic issues such as poverty, low wages, and a lack of basic needs. Participants frequently stated that parents in their county are forced to work two jobs just to make ends meet resulting in less time to spend with their families. Stress was also raised as an increasing problem impacting both parents and their children. As one attendee reflected, "Today's families are time starved. They are all on a tread mill and can't get off. Money and the lack of it rules their lives."

The need to start early and provide parents with supportive services such as home visiting and parent education and support programs was frequently mentioned as a way to support families. Other critical supports identified included transportation, housing, and access to jobs.

### **What Policies Are Needed ?**

To help improve the affordability and availability of high quality child care, participants recommended: establishing tax credits; encouraging businesses to help subsidize child care for their employees and adopt more family friendly policies; raising the child care subsidy reimbursement rate; and making changes to current subsidy eligibility requirements to enable more families to participate, given NJ's high cost of living.

Participants also called for stronger policies to improve early childhood workforce training and minimum education requirements, while also stressing that child care practitioners should be adequately compensated for these increased requirements. As one participant stated, "Child care providers are tasked with the immensely important job of brain development and need to be educated, skilled and compensated properly."

Improved policies around paid family leave was another popular issue identified at the screenings. Participants felt that many families can't afford to take family leave and others said parents fear their job would be put in jeopardy if they took an extended leave. Some pointed out the obstacles employers face, such as having to hire temporary labor without compensation, stating more should be done to support businesses in making family leave a viable option.

### **How Can We Engage Policymakers?**

Participants in all 21 counties agreed that everyone needs to do a better job at advocating on behalf of families and raising awareness of their needs. This includes engaging families in advocacy efforts. "It is important that legislators hear from the people who vote for them - constituents, explained one participant, "By writing letters, calling, emailing and working with the media, constituents can make their opinions known. Those opinions can influence the decisions elected officials and others make every day." Another participant pointed out that we also need to do more to make families/parents comfortable with advocating for themselves. Participants in several counties felt that in order to make legislators more aware of the challenges families face we need to show them *The Raising of America* documentary and organize activities to "bring to life" what families are experiencing.

Nearly three-quarters of the participants completing a feedback survey indicated they would utilize information from the screening to advocate for a change in policy or funding for children and families. To learn more about *The Raising of America* NJ campaign visit [www.ccanj.org](http://www.ccanj.org), search #RaisingofAmericaNJ or contact your local CCR&R. For additional resources on the national campaign visit [www.raisingofamerica.org](http://www.raisingofamerica.org).

### **Early Childhood In America: Do These Numbers Add Up?**

- Rank of U.S. among 45 rich nations for quality, affordability and availability of childcare: 22nd, 16th, 31st
- Number of months of paid parental leave in Hungary, Germany and France by law: 24, 14, 10
- Number of months of paid parental leave in the U.S. under federal law: 0
- Percentage of new mothers in the U.S. who return to work by the time their infants are 3 months old, some because they want to, most because they have to: 40%
- Portion of five-year-olds in the U.S. not ready to learn when entering kindergarten: 40%
- Rank of U.S. high school graduation rate among rich nations in 1970 and 2014: 1st, 23rd

Retrieved From [www.raisingofamerica.org](http://www.raisingofamerica.org) March 4, 2016

### Supporting Families Is Good Business!

At all of *The Raising of America* screenings, participants shared stories of how New Jersey families are struggling to balance family and work while providing their children with quality care. One solution frequently discussed was to encourage businesses to take a more active role in helping to improve NJ's current early learning system, stating that families are more productive in the workplace when they have available, affordable, quality child care and family friendly work environments.

Numerous studies have shown that supportive work-life policies and practices is good business, finding savings in recruitment areas, less job turnover, lower absenteeism, and increased productivity. At the Somerset County *The Raising of America* event, Timothy Trodden from Ethicon, part of the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, discussed why his company adopted stronger family friendly practices for families. "J & J felt they had made significant investments in their staff to develop and train them to their specific tasks," explained Trodden. "They determined the cost factor to train new staff and realized it was a better business model to give more leave and allow parents more time to bond and make arrangements for their return." J&J also offers on-site child care centers for their employees in most locations.

The county child care resource and referral agencies can assist organizations in addressing child care related employee work and family issues. In addition to sharing information about local early childhood programs, CCR&Rs can link families to other needed support services and assist businesses in developing child care programs. CCR&Rs can provide the following services:

- Child care referrals for employees;
- Information on and access to child care subsidy programs;
- Consumer education for parents on how to select quality child care;
- Training on a wide variety of Work & Family issues; &
- Technical Assistance to aid in the development and implementation of a child care program.

To learn more, contact your local CCR&R or visit the business page of [ccanj.org](http://ccanj.org).

### Tell Us Your Story

Have you or someone you know had trouble finding or paying for child care? Have you missed days at work because of the lack of child care? If so, please "Tell Us Your Story" by visiting our website at [www.ccanj.org](http://www.ccanj.org). Your story can help policymakers understand that they need to work to improve the quality of child care and make child care more affordable.

### THIS YEAR, PLEDGE TO GET INVOLVED!

- Visit the Child Care Aware of New Jersey (CCANJ) website ([www.ccanj.org](http://www.ccanj.org)) frequently to learn about current child care issues and how you can get involved.
- While on our website, sign up to receive Parent Voices New Jersey e-alerts.
- Become a friend and follower of CCANJ on Facebook and Twitter.
- Send regular messages via email, regular mail, or by phone to elected officials regarding concerns over the quality and affordability of child care in New Jersey.
- Visit with representatives to discuss child care issues and concerns.
- Testify before legislative and budget committees.
- Write letters to the editor on issues related to child care to get more people informed and involved.
- Share a testimonial about great programs, child care providers, or business people making a difference for our youngest children.
- Encourage others to get involved too!

### New Child C.A.R.E. Act Introduced

Senator Casey (D-PA) and Representatives Crowley (D-NY-14) and Frankel (D-FL-22) recently introduced *The Child Care Access to Resources for Early-learning Act (Child C.A.R.E. Act)*, designed to ensure that all low-income families have access to high quality child care by 2021. This bill is an exciting step toward expanding access to affordable, high-quality child care. If passed, the Child C.A.R.E. Act will:

- Expand mandatory funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to ensure all families with children under the age of four who are living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level can access high quality child care;
- Ensure that CCDBG provider payment rates are set at a level high enough to support quality child care and fair wages for child care workers; and
- Assist child care providers in improving the quality of their programs, by strengthening the skills and competencies of the workforce.

Visit our website and sign-up for e-news to receive alerts on this and other important child care news and legislation.

### Coming Soon . . .

- State of Child Care in New Jersey- Updated for 2015 - online release Spring 2016
- The High Price of Child Care - Fall 2016



Child Care Aware of New Jersey promotes a universally accessible, affordable, and high-quality system of early care and education that is responsive to parental choice.



**Kim Perrelli, President  
Child Care Aware of NJ**

## A Message From Your President

Greetings from Child Care Aware of NJ! We are pleased to announce that we have changed our business name! This exciting change is driven by the new direction of our state association. In the coming months, we will continue to roll out our new brand with a campaign that centers on the importance of the services provided by the NJ Child Care Resource and Referral infrastructure. This issue of CCANJ news highlights the outcomes of our statewide screenings of *"The Raising of America,"* a documentary that reveals the increased stressors placed on many young families and the impact it has on their infants and young children, "literally altering the wiring of their developing brains with potential lifelong consequences for their socio-emotional and intellectual development and physical health." The statistics are staggering and the research is clear. There is a critical need for greater investments in quality care and supports for families to provide all children with the best possible foundation for learning, care and healthy development.

Child Care Aware of NJ remains committed to positive change and equitable outcomes for children. We are working hard to ensure high quality services are delivered through our local child care resource and referral agencies throughout NJ. In partnership with the NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, local CCR&Rs support eligible families with child care financial assistance and provide child care referrals and comprehensive consumer education for families. Local CCR&Rs support the child care workforce through classroom training, on-site teacher development, and active participation in important statewide quality initiatives such as Grow NJ Kids, NJ's child care quality rating system. In this rapidly evolving early learning system, CCANJ remains devoted to moving the needle on child care and advancing the work of our local CCR&Rs.

There is a lot more to come! Join us! We hope you will consider the many ways you can get involved in making positive change for NJ's children, families, and those employed in the field of child care; the professionals that have the most important job in the world: caring for our youngest citizens!



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**Quality Child Care  
for All Children in  
New Jersey**