



CHILD CARE SOLUTIONS
NAVIGATING THE WAY TO HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE

Growing With
JOY



Annual Report 2014

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*“Find Out
Where Joy
Resides
And Give
It A Voice
Far Beyond
Singing. For
To Miss Joy Is
To Miss All.”*

Robert Louis Stevenson

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

-Rabindranath Tagore



2014, A Year of Growth & Change

Just as individuals continue to grow throughout their lives, so must organizations if they are to remain viable and effective. 2014 was truly a year of growing with joy for Child Care Solutions. We built upon our strengths; developed new skills; hired new employees; and updated our services to more efficiently meet the evolving needs of our community.

Our new Mission and Vision Statements are tangible expressions of our growth with joy. Other more subtle examples include technology upgrades, organizational restructuring, and revised policies and procedures that improve internal communication and customer service. This report joyously illustrates our accomplishments throughout this transformation and highlights the many ways that our agency impacted the quality of child care and early learning systems in 2014.

In 2014 we also witnessed reauthorization of the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for the first time since 1996. NY State is developing strategies for implementing the CCDF designed to improve early child care and education services. We enthusiastically look forward to applying these strategies for the on-going growth of Child Care Solutions services; increased availability of high-quality child care; and to the healthy, joyous development of all children in our community.

Lori A. Boles

Lori A. Boles
Executive Director



Growing With Joy....

The idea of 'growth' is the foundation of this year's Child Care Solutions Annual report. Growth is change. We grow into something new and different; and we hope, better. The agency is fortunate to have been chosen to partner with the Gifford Foundation in their ADVANS program – Advancing and Developing the Value and Assets of Non-profits in Syracuse. The two year capacity building initiative includes an intensive self-assessment and planning process, as well as providing resources to jump start the projects. ADVANS recognizes that a mature organization such as Child Care Solutions, with proper nurturing, can experience new growth and emerge re-invigorated.

We say it's best to "get off to a good start." That beginnings set up the success that follows. Children grow rapidly in so many ways, physically, mentally, and socially. They too, need a good start. And nothing grows without help; without nourishment. Whether for the body or the mind, the nourishment of our children's growth is fundamental to what Child Care Solutions has been about for over 40 years - providing high quality, affordable programs that help children receive care that is safe, healthy, stimulating and fun. By helping to assure that child care in Central New York meets the highest possible standards, the team at Child Care Solutions helps children **grow with joy** into their full potential.

John A. McGraw

John A. McGraw
Board Chair

Management Team

Nora Cortez
Data Manager



Kristi Cusa
Director Of Professional Development



Shannon Gillen
Director Of Operations



Beth Henderson
Director Of Registration



Mike Ransom
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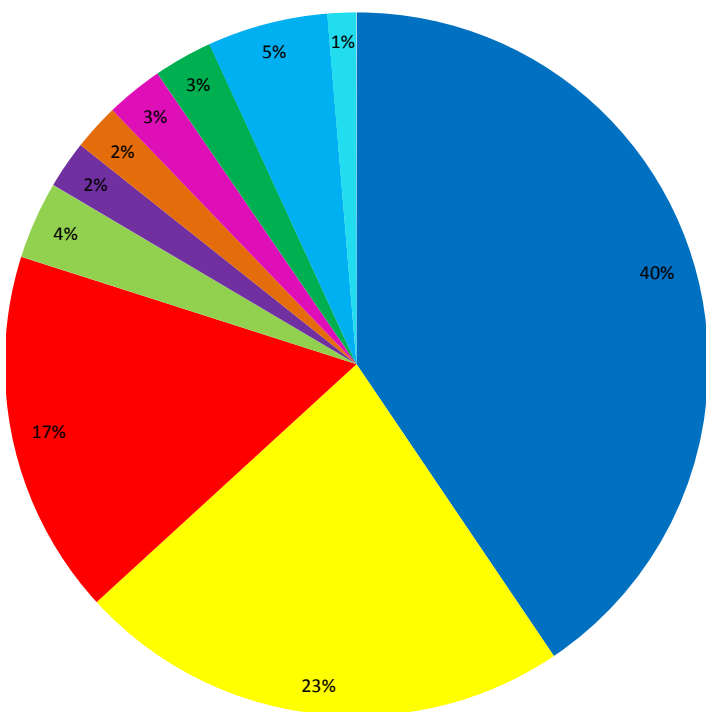
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Fiscal Year 2014 Financial Review

\$3,420,396 Total Revenue

CACFP Grant	\$1,386,290
CCR&R Grant	775,557
Child Care Registration Grant	572,351
Infant Toddler	121,614
United Way Allocation	74,904
County Support	72,865
Membership	6,425
Eat Well Play Hard Grant	90,011
Miscellaneous Grants	92,266
Contributions	9,886
Training	189,027
Special Events	17,355
Other Income	11,845



Percentage Of Total Revenue

- CHILD & ADULT FOOD CARE PROGRAM GRANT
- CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL GRANT
- CHILD CARE REGISTRATION GRANT
- INFANT TODDLER
- UNITED WAY ALLOCATION
- COUNTY SUPPORT
- EAT WELL PLAY HARD GRANT
- MISCELLANEOUS GRANTS
- CONTRIBUTIONS/SPECIAL EVENTS/MEMBERSHIP/OTHER
- TRAINING

Mission Statement

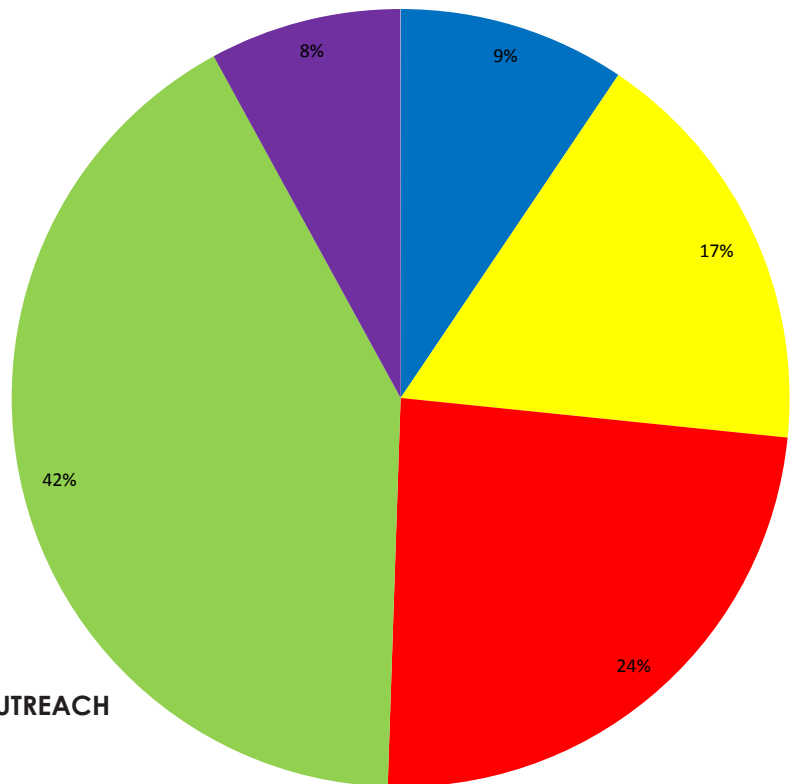


Building excellence in early care and learning systems while advancing equal access for all children in our community.

We accomplish this through education, advocacy, and support for families and early childhood professionals.

\$3,343,313 Total Expenses

Child & Adult Food Care Program	\$1,387,859
Parent Services	\$ 315,842
Child Care Registration	\$ 574,106
Provider Support & Education	\$ 799,378
Management & Other	\$ 244,202
Fundraising	\$ 15,543
Community Outreach	\$ 6,383



Percentage Of Total Expense

- PARENT SERVICES
- CHILD CARE REGISTRATION
- PROVIDER SUPPORT & EDUCATION
- CHILD & ADULT FOOD CARE PROGRAM
- MANAGEMENT/FUNDRAISING/COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Vision Statement

Every child is cared for in a high quality, safe & nurturing environment that cultivates healthy development, early learning and joy.



Regulatory Services

A Day in The Life of Liza Hernandez, Child Care Solution's Registrar...

How many people do you know that say "I LOVE MY JOB!?" That is exactly what you will hear Liza Hernandez, Child Care Solutions Registrar, say. It is the interaction with child care providers, co-workers and most especially children that Liza loves. In her own words, "The day I say 'I can't help,' is the day I will stop." Liza's infectious spirit permeated the office when she began her role as Registrar in 2014. Her smile, presence and "can do" attitude set the perfect example for our entire staff. Eighteen years of teaching experience make her uniquely qualified to help child care providers understand and implement practices that ensure children are in healthy and enriching child care programs. As a native Spanish speaker who is fluent in English, she hit the ground running and immediately became a valuable resource for the child care community.



Registrars at Child Care Solutions wear many hats. The technical role they perform is ensuring family and school-age child care programs are complying with NYS regulations that provide minimum health & safety standards. But on a much broader level they are trying to help create a child care system that fulfills our vision of all children being cared for in high quality, safe & nurturing environments that cultivate healthy development, early learning and joy. As a means to accomplish this, Liza and the other registrars counsel prospective providers about what it really means to be a child care provider. They convey the physical, emotional and intellectual demands of the work. They also prepare prospective child care providers for the business side of operating a successful program. After the initial registration is completed, Liza and her coworkers regularly inspect programs to determine if regulations are being met. They also investigate complaints and concerns.

Life as a registrar is demanding, stressful and rewarding all at the same time. A typical day for Liza can mean completing an inspection at a child care provider's home where she checks on everything from proper supervision to adequate exits, water hazards and working carbon monoxide/smoke detectors. She then completes detailed inspection reports. On any given day, she may provide technical assistance for providers who call with questions on regulations that can be confusing to understand and implement. Liza often works with the professional development team at Child Care Solutions if providers need in-depth training to improve their programs. Unfortunately, not all child care programs provide the kind of care that all children need and deserve, so registrars are put in the unfortunate position of checking on complaints or potentially dangerous situations. These moments are the most difficult as we never want to see any child placed in harms way. Collaborating with child protective services and law enforcement officials is also part of the job to help ensure that the children in child care are kept safe and sound.

Child Care Solutions is so glad to have Liza and all of her fellow registrars on our team. The work they do can not be underestimated when it comes to protecting children and enhancing the child care system in Central New York.

In Fiscal Year 2014 The Regulatory Team at Child Care Solutions:

Registered **34** new family child care programs and 6 new school age programs in Onondaga County giving families more options for the child care they can choose from.

Registered **5** family child care programs through the Microenterprise Grant so the refugee/immigrant community can have access to high quality child care.

Completed **629** inspections of family child care & school age child care programs in Onondaga County to help ensure the safety of our community's children.

Found **161** serious violations in the completed inspections that resulted in either corrections or enforcements occurring.

Completed **74** inspections because of complaints received.

Provided **115** hours of intensive technical assistance to legally exempt providers to improve the quality of unregulated care in our community.

Provided **336** hours of basic technical assistance to legally exempt providers.

“They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.” – Tom Bodett

The Joy of New Beginnings

Yolennis Mella’s Story & The Onondaga Refugee Home-Based Child Care Microenterprise Development Program

Most of us cannot imagine relocating to a foreign country where you are unfamiliar with customs, language, culture, etc. Imagine trying to start a child care business under these circumstances. Imagine being a parent who needs child care so you can work or go to school. These things are difficult under normal circumstances. For the refugee/immigrant population in Central New York, they can be close to impossible. Knowing that there is a tremendous need and demand for child care for these courageous people; Child Care Solutions participated in the Onondaga Refugee Home-Based Child Care Microenterprise Development Program. This program, operated by Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, aims to create a network of child care providers for these community members and allowed us to work with inspiring people like Yolennis Mella.

Yolennis and her husband are originally from Cuba. Knowing that they wanted to live in the United States, her husband, a practicing physician, applied for a visa and entered into the Cuban Immigration Lottery. In 2009 when Yolennis was three months pregnant, his name was chosen from the lottery, and he was able to immigrate to the United States. Unfortunately, he had to leave Yolennis and their unborn baby behind. Eventually, he found residence with his sister in Syracuse and found work in the kitchen at a local hospital. Four years after he left Cuba, on May 31, 2013, Yolennis was able to join him in the United States with their child, and they began their life in Syracuse together.

Like many typical American families, the Mella’s needed dual incomes to support themselves. Yolennis began work as a child care assistant, but owning and operating her own child care business became her goal after she saw a flyer about the Microenterprise Development Program at Catholic Charities.

Working with Catholic Charities & Child Care Solutions staff members Yolennis began the process of becoming a registered family child care provider. She enrolled in our 15 hour Spanish Health & Safety Class where she learned the skills and practices necessary to create a safe child care environment that provides freedom from harm and offers security for children to play, develop and learn. Yolennis and her husband moved into their own home that was appropriate for a family child care program. She completed her orientation, health & safety training, fingerprinting and application. She then began working with our registration team member Liza Hernandez (see previous page) who did her initial inspection, and she opened for business.

Completing the registration process for family child care programs can be difficult for English speakers. For non-English speakers, it can be overwhelming. Yolennis tackled this process with determination and perseverance. She sought out help from interpreters to ensure that she completed forms perfectly. She did research on her own; reading books and using the internet to learn about developmentally appropriate practice. She provides an example of what it means to have a goal and go for it. The staff of Child Care Solutions is so happy to be working with her so she can provide the high-quality child care that we know all children need and deserve.



Parent Services

A Day in The Life of Tonia Thornton, Child Care Solution's Parent Services Specialist...

As a Parent Services Referral Specialist, Tonia Thornton has the privilege of working with a diverse population of people that seek our assistance and support in finding child care. She has helped multiple Central New York families with different income levels, family structures, and philosophies, find the high-quality care they need and their children deserve. Her role is to listen actively, gather all kinds of information and then work "The Magic," as she likes to call it. Tonia walks parents step by step through the very important process of searching for and selecting high-quality child care programs. Because each family's needs & wants are different Tonia provides individualized support and customized referrals to help parents find "the right match." Important issues that often complicate the search for care such as transportation, hours of employment and family dynamics are always taken into consideration.

Because Tonia (and the entire parent services team) is committed to being resources for CNY families, her services go way beyond providing referrals. Everyday she helps parents understand financial assistance options; informal care processes, early childhood development, NYS child care regulations, and more. She is extremely knowledgeable about other human services organizations in our community that assist families and frequently refers parents to them.

Tonia also works at our JOBS Plus contracted collaboration with Onondaga County. Her role is to provide referrals, education, support, knowledge and resources to the JOBS clients who often fall into the low to NO income category. Clients at JOBS Plus often experience barriers to employment. Finding affordable, high-quality child care is one such barrier. Tonia and her colleagues provide lists of affordable child care options for clients. But more importantly they educate job seekers about high-quality indicators and why they are important in the lives of their children. When job seekers overcome this barrier, it is easier to find and keep jobs and children experience continuity of care and consistent relationships that are critical to early childhood success. Tonia fully embraces the challenges that come from having limited resources.

She approaches her work from a strength-based approach; assisting clients to find affordable, reliable child care and other services to overcome the barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. It is an emotional process for many of the clients and Tonia takes it in stride as she provides a high level of service all parents utilizing Child Care Solutions receive.

Tonia's philosophy is simple...She believes parenting is either effective or ineffective not good or bad. All parents LOVE their children, and it does not matter to her what their situation is and why they need child care. What matters to her is that they walk away with a firm or at least clearer understanding of what their options are and what the next step is.



*“The birth of a child is a joy to the parent and the world.”
 – Lailah Gifty Akita*

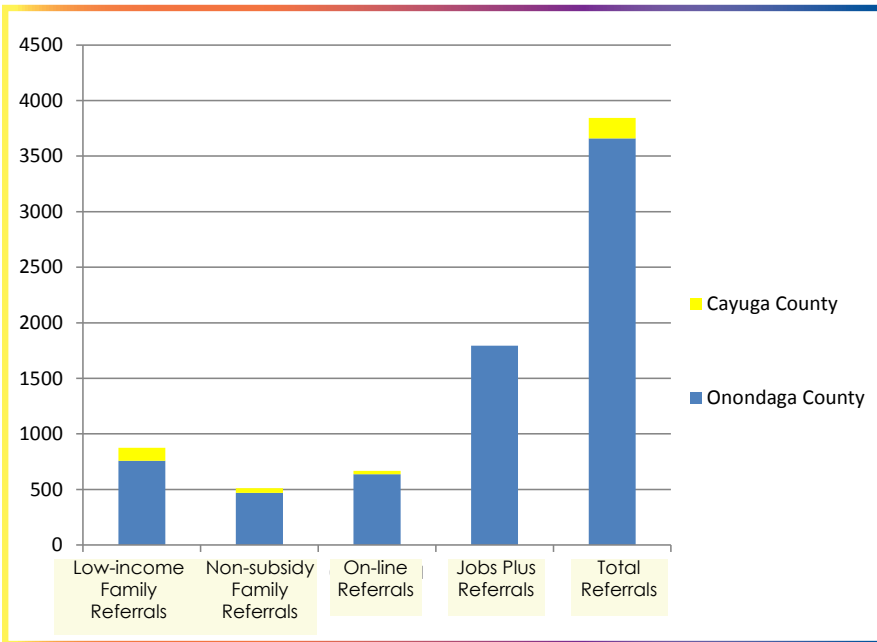
The Joy Of Finding High Quality Care

Whether a parent of an infant, toddler or school age child; choosing child care is one of the most important and often times difficult decisions parents will make. While we wish we could say that high quality care is easy to find and easy to afford; the truth is, the child care system is complicated, confusing and costly. When parents are making this choice they have to be informed consumers and comparison shoppers.

It is our goal at Child Care Solutions to help parents find high quality child care. The members of our Parent Services Team are experts in the Central New York Child Care System. They are here to provide referrals, answer questions and counsel parents on the types of child care that may work best for their family. They provide descriptions of the type of care available, the average costs, and a step by step plan to help guide families through the process. They also explain what high quality child care really looks like and why it is important to children’s healthy development.

In 2014 our Parent Services Team provided nearly 4,000 referrals & consultations in Onondaga & Cayuga Counties. Parents found the care that best meets their children’s need whether in a family child care program or a child care center. There is not a one size fits all answer when it comes to child care. Child Care Solutions is here to help parents attain peace of mind by finding the right care for their individual circumstance.

Fiscal Year 2014 Parent Referrals & Consultations by County



Onondaga County	Number of Programs	Capacity of Programs
Day Care Center	79	6395
Family Child Care	209	1640
Group Family	121	1856
School Age	63	4530

Cayuga County	Number of Programs	Capacity of Programs
Day Care Center	14	690
Family Child Care	37	292
Group Family	13	200
School Age	15	904



Professional Development

A Day In The Life Of A Professional Development Specialist

A day in the life of a Professional Development Specialist at Child Care Solutions can be kind of like a box of Cracker Jacks – sweet, satisfying, and full of surprises.

On any given day, a Professional Development Specialist can find themselves involved in any number of tasks or projects. Sometimes it's the designing and implementation of training material. These trainings are taught to early childhood providers who are seeking increased knowledge and skill in a particular area of program development, early childhood development, or enhancement of their professional skills, such as interpersonal communication between parent and provider, responsive caregiving, or behavior guidance.

Professional Development Specialists spend much of their time "in the field" visiting early childhood programs to do technical assistance for the provider or program. This aspect of the job can be very rewarding as it gives the Professional Development Specialist an opportunity to work individually with providers in their homes or in the classroom. Sitting and talking to a provider who is struggling with organizing the paperwork required to successfully operate her childcare program, and giving her guidance and techniques to better manage this aspect of her job is a crucial part of this job, and one of the most rewarding.

Aside from delivering training and technical assistance to area providers, the Professional Development Specialist spends a good portion of his or her day answering emails and returning telephone calls to providers who need assistance with programming, behavior, development or business challenges. Sometimes the call is from a concerned provider who

is experiencing the effects of having a toddler who is going through a biting stage. The provider is seeking guidance on how to talk to the parent later that day regarding the biting and how to implement a plan with the parent to address this behavior. This over-the-phone technical assistance is something that takes place frequently, but often an aspect of the job that goes by virtually unnoticed.



And then there are the surprises. Whether it's an invitation by a provider to attend an event she planned using ideas from a recent training you taught, or a call from a provider asking for your help in re-designing the infant play space at their child care program to better meet the needs of her rapidly growing group of infants, or an email from a provider thanking you for assisting her with filling out paperwork needed for an upcoming class she's planning on taking; these are the little "surprises" that show up each day in the life of a Professional Development Specialist.

In Fiscal Year 2014
The Professional
Development Team

358 Total Professional
Development trainings .
With a total attendance of
5,158*

97 Onsite trainings
for Child Care Centers
throughout Onondaga
& Cayuga Counties
increasing center
staff's knowledge
of developmentally
appropriate practices in
child care settings.

7 Classes in Spanish for
43
students in order to
increase the quality of care
for our Spanish speaking
population.

124 hours of training
specifically for caregivers
of infants & toddlers
in order to help them
understand and nurture the
development of children
during these critical years.

1 Child Development
Associate Series (CDA).

24 child care providers
completed the CDA.
These providers increased
their knowledge of early
childhood care & learning
principles by working
towards this national
credential.

**Number denotes total
attendance at all trainings,
some providers attended
multiple trainings.*

The joy of life consists in the exercise of one's energies, continual growth, constant change, the enjoyment of every new experience.

The Joy of Play

Providing diverse and unique training opportunities for child care providers is a critical component of improving the quality of care available to Central New York families. Our professional development team offers workshops, on-site trainings, one-on-one coaching and our annual training conference held in October of each year. Our 2014 conference brought together over 100 participants who experienced the joy of unstructured play with Rusty Keeler (pictured right), author of *Natural Playscapes* and internationally acclaimed playground designer. Rusty kicked off the conference with a keynote address that challenged attendees to think outside of the box (or into the cardboard box) when it comes to playgrounds and the concept of play for children. He encouraged participants to utilize natural elements, "loose parts" and unstructured play environments and encouraged child care providers to set their business apart by incorporating natural playscapes. Rusty also challenged participants to think about risk taking for children and the idea that we may be overprotecting and over sanitizing childhood play.

Participants then got a chance to play like children and get their hands dirty. Using elements found outside Rusty led the child care providers in creating fairy huts to help them reconnect to the natural world all while thinking of how they can incorporate inexpensive outdoor play into their programs.

Using natural materials gathered by Child Care Solutions staff members, students let their imaginations run wild as they constructed works of art out of twigs, bark, flowers and more. While the process of building the fairy huts was great fun the real take away from the workshop was multi-faceted. Participants experienced first hand that:

- *Creative play does not have to cost a lot of money to implement yet it can be rich in experience.*
- *Outdoor play renews the spirit and unleashes imagination and a sense of wonder.*
- *Outdoor play is filled with endless possibilities that constantly change based on seasons, days, and the rhythms of nature.*
- *Getting your hands dirty and messy is fun!*
- *Adults need time to reconnect to nature as well.*

The success of this conference was due in large part to our dedicated staff and community sponsors listed on page 15.



Creating Healthy Habits

Many children in child care settings require medicine to be administered to them regularly or on an as needed basis. The **Medication Administration Training (MAT)** at Child Care Solutions is a skills based training that helps providers administer medication safely. Our MAT Trainers conducted

23

Medication Administration Training Sessions where

140

child care providers were trained on ways to give both over-the-counter and prescription medication. They also learned about the proper handling, storage and safe disposal of medication, permission and instruction requirements, preparation and administration techniques, asthma emergency care and special situations

Sometimes emergencies happen in child care settings. NYS requires all regulated child care providers to be trained in **First Aid & CPR**. Child Care Solutions trainers held

27

American Red Cross CPR/First Aid Training Sessions in which

215

child care providers received the necessary certification to administer CPR and first aid to the children in their care.

The **"Eat Well Play Hard with Day Care Homes" (EWPHDCH)** program is available to family day care providers in Central NY. This program encourages young children and their caregivers to adapt healthy and active lifestyles. The Child Care Solutions Nutritionist provides in-depth training and consultation to programs who want to improve the health habits for the children in their care.

In Fiscal Year 2014 The Eat Well Play Hard Nutritionist Trained

60

Providers on the importance of consuming fruits, vegetables, and low-fat milk and dairy products, along with decreasing the amount of time spent at computer screens or watching TV.

10 Health & Safety Training courses were held for 66

people who were starting family child care businesses on topics like safe and secure play-spaces, preparing for situations such as fires and medical emergencies, responsibilities as a mandated reporter of child abuse, infection control techniques, conducting daily health checks, and keeping accurate health histories.

The Child & Adult Care Food Care Program (CACFP) Team at Child Care Solutions processed

2491

Claims for child care providers. The healthy & nutritious snacks & meals that were served help shape a lifetime of healthy eating habits for children in their care. They also trained

185

Providers on topics like record keeping, financial management, food guidelines, menu planning & more ensuring that the program is being used effectively & efficiently.



"The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend." - Benjamin Disraeli

The Joy of Good Food

Stretching food dollars to provide healthy meals is a lesson in budgeting for most families. Imagine the cost of feeding ten children healthy meals in your child care program five days a week. That is exactly what Andrea & Rob Cuddy do everyday with the help of the [CHILD AND ADULT FOOD CARE PROGRAM \(CACFP\)](#).

CACFP is a federal program that reimburses registered, licensed, and legally exempt child care providers for serving meals and snacks that meet the USDA guidelines to the children in their care. It is designed to help meet the nutritional needs necessary for physical, intellectual, and emotional development and establish healthy eating habits for life. Providers who participate are required to complete daily menus that are monitored to ensure federal guidelines are being met. Members of the Child Care Solutions CACFP team also observe meal times and help providers comply with the program requirements.

The Cuddy's are perfect examples of putting CACFP to work for the children in their child care program. Breakfast, lunch, and two snacks are served everyday. Breakfast contains milk, fruit/vegetable & a grain/bread. Lunch is the same but also contains a meat or meat alternative. Snacks also meet required guidelines. The program also allows them to provide infant formula for a baby in their care, allowing the baby's single working mother to stretch her food budget at home. Knowing that the children in their program are eating two healthy meals and two healthy snacks a day is what Andrea loves most about participating in CACFP. She knows they could not serve the amount, variety and quality of food without it.

Menus are planned three months in advance which helps Andrea & Rob to organize, grocery shop and budget. They purchase in-season fruit & vegetables and also grow a small vegetable garden that supplements groceries in the summer. Once a week there is "try a new food day," where the children are encouraged to add variety to their diets. The children eat together family style around the dining room table where sometimes Andrea's favorite food to serve, homemade macaroni & cheese is gobbled up.

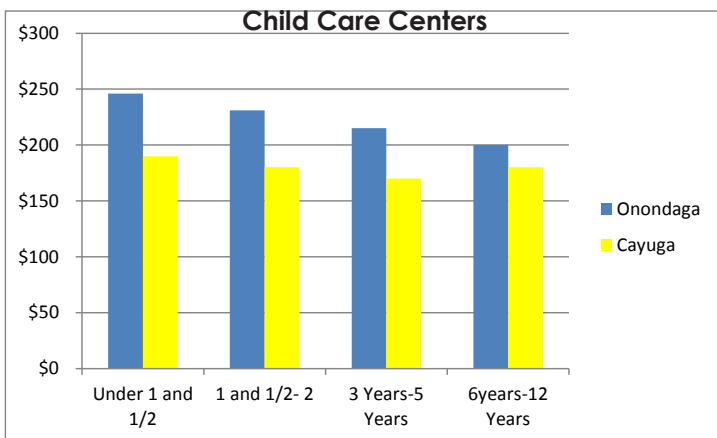
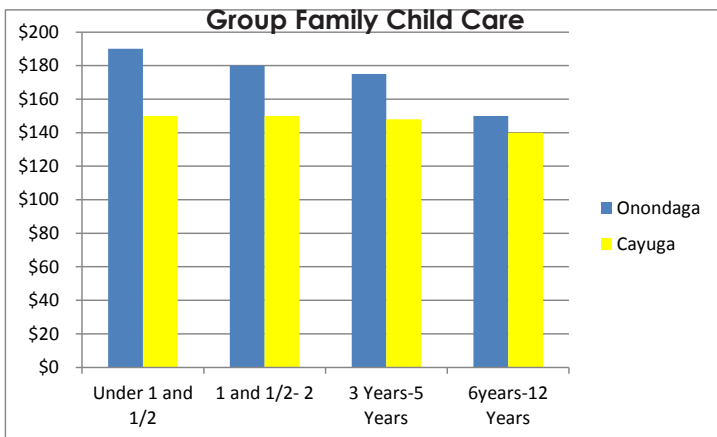
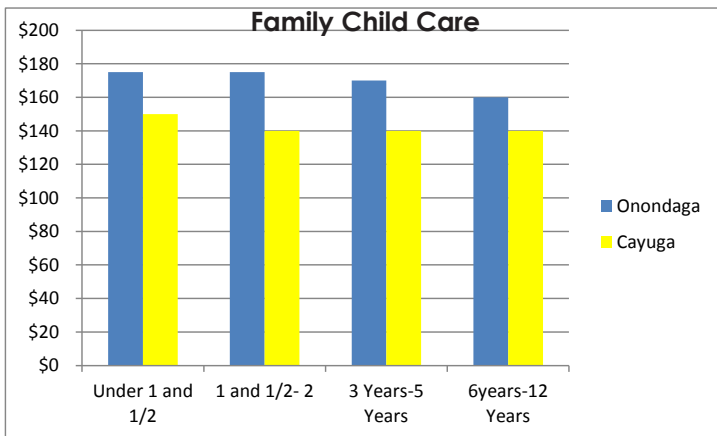
Initially the Cuddy's were reluctant to enroll in CACFP as they had heard rumors that participating was difficult, time-consuming and a paperwork intensive process that wasn't worth their while. Then one day they received a postcard from Child Care Solutions that detailed the benefits of the program, and they went for it. Since then they have been utilizing recipes, food suggestions, accommodating food allergies and also providing vegetarian meals when families request it. They have eliminated most of the paperwork by utilizing the Minute Menu software system where foods, attendance and claims are recorded easily. They even use the minute menu phone app to accomplish a lot of the recording requirements.

Andrea & Rob utilize CACFP to the full benefit of the children they care for everyday. Their Child Care Solutions Provider Services Specialist, Ana Sojo, says she loves working with them because "they always try and do the right thing for the kids in their care."



Working For Access & Affordability

Average Weekly Cost of Child Care For CNY Families



A sturdy foundation is essential in the construction of any home or building. Likewise, most people would agree that a strong foundation is critical to each person's success in school, work and life. Child care and early education are key bricks in this foundation, yet collectively our nation, state and local community has long ignored the fractured child care system that exists in our country.

Reliable child care is a necessity for parents who must work outside the home to support their families. Every child deserves to be cared for in a high quality, safe and nurturing environment that cultivates healthy development, early learning and joy. Children's physical, emotional and cognitive development is impacted by the quality of the care they receive, but good child care is expensive and often unaffordable. For many families, paying for child care represents a family's largest monthly expense after housing. Child Care Aware of America's 2014 report on Parents and the High Cost of Child Care ranked New York the least affordable state in the nation for child care.

Child Care Solutions supports investment in child care and early education to meet the challenge of providing a strong foundation for our children's future success in school and the workforce. In 2014 we advocated for increased CCDBG funding and expansion of the WDI Child Care Subsidy. These initiatives help improve affordability and access to safe, nurturing, high quality early care and learning programs. We supported expansion of Universal Pre-K in NYS. We also urged business and political leaders to work together and treat child care as an economic and social priority for the sake of our community's future and the sake of every child in Central New York.

Contact Child Care Solutions to learn more about advocating for high quality child care in Central New York.



“To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with.” – Mark Twain

The Joy of Improving

Child Care Solutions is committed to improving our practices to better serve our community! Below are just a few of the areas that we worked hard to improve in 2014.

IMPROVED DATA ANALYSIS: Child Care Solutions was the recipient of a Performance Management Grant from the Central NY Community Foundation. The grant allows us to examine the impact of the technical assistance we provide to child care programs in the field of literacy programming. Collecting, analyzing and reporting data is critical to successful programming for non-profits. The grant enables us to learn and improve upon these processes so we can be a more efficient, cost effective, impactful non-profit for the Central NY Community. In addition we are participating in a learning community to share our experiences with other non-profits and eventually the wider Central New York region.

IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY: The methods that parents and child care providers search for and interact with information have changed dramatically over the past decade. Long gone are the days when Child Care Solutions could offer provider referrals via a rolodex system. Thanks to support from the Gifford Foundation and their “Enhancing Communications and Performance through Improved Technology” grant, a legislative member item grant and a donation from Gorges Development, Child Care Solutions developed a new website and customer relationship management (CRM) system to enhance our interactions with customers. The new CRM system increases our understanding of customer needs and trends. It is improving our communication and customer service capabilities, allowing us to build better relationships with community members. Our new website allows parents to easily search for child care and available services. Providers can now sign up for events, enroll in training, receive information and donate online. These technology upgrades have allowed us to streamline many of the administrative duties that we perform so we can focus more energy on program and service delivery.

IMPROVED CAPACITY: In addition to the technology grant, Child Care Solutions was selected to participate in Gifford's intensive capacity building initiative project ADVANS: Advancing and Developing the Value of Assets of Non profits in Syracuse. Members of our management team and board worked with consultant, Katie Doucette to assess our organizational systems with a critical lens using a model developed by Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens, author of *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity*. The project unearthed opportunities that will allow Child Care Solutions to grow and remain a vital force in the early care and learning system in Central New York.

IMPROVED MISSION & VISION: In an effort to better brand our organization, members of our staff and board were compelled to think about why it is they work and volunteer for Child Care Solutions and formulate enhanced mission and vision statements. The end results inspire us everyday to build an outstanding early care and learning systems in Central New York.

- **Mission:** *Building excellence in early care and learning systems while advancing equal access for all children in our community. We accomplish this through education, advocacy, and support for families and early childhood professionals.*
- **Vision:** *Every child is cared for in a high quality, safe & nurturing environment that cultivates healthy development, early learning and joy.*

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