

Department of Family Services

LOB #123:

CHILD CARE SERVICES

Purpose

The School-Age Child Care program helps families succeed and children thrive by providing high quality school age child care before and after school, and during school breaks. A sliding fee scale is available to ensure all families who work or attend school full time or are disabled have access to affordable child care services. SACC staff create a safe and welcoming environment and provide an exceptional program that contributes to the goals and priorities families have for their children such as building self-confidence, developing friendships, having fun, and participating in physical activity. SACC's curriculum of activities supports the Fairfax County Public Schools program of studies, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to expand their interests, develop their talents, and enhance their learning.

Description

Child Care Services is comprised of the School Age Child Care program and the Employee's Child Care Center. SACC and ECCC provide high quality child care services to meet the needs of working families. The centers are licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services.

SACC began caring for children in 1974 and supports approximately 10,000 working families by providing before-school and after-school, holiday, and summer programs to approximately 13,000 children each year. SACC centers are located throughout the County in 138 Fairfax County Public Schools. In addition, SACC is located in one community center and one recreation center. SACC's partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools helps provide families and children with a continuum of educational experiences. SACC staff implements a daily program of activities that supports children's healthy development, and work in partnership with families to provide a successful experience for all children. SACC's quality program practices are linked to positive youth outcomes, such as engagement in learning, positive peer relationships, and self-confidence.

Hallmarks of the program include SACC's educational and innovative programming, and subsidized child care for income eligible families and children with special needs. Fees are collected from parents as payment for child care services. A sliding fee scale is available to ensure that families earning low and moderate incomes have access to quality, affordable school age child care services. Nearly 20 percent of the families served meet the income eligibility to pay for services on the sliding fee scale. Children in kindergarten through sixth grade with special needs are fully included throughout the program. Children and youth ages 5-21 with multiple disabilities are served at SACC centers located at Key and Kilmer middle schools.

ECCC, which opened in 1988, provides quality, affordable early childhood education services to County employees with children six weeks through five years of age. The program ensures that children learn in a safe, caring and nurturing environment and consists of a developmentally appropriate curriculum designed to support children's school readiness. In FY 2015, 107 children were served at ECCC.

Benefits

Child Care Services relates strongly to the vision element of 'Maintaining Safe and Caring Communities'. The SACC program and Employees' Child Care Center provide an invaluable service to working families, and play a significant role in supporting the healthy development of young children. Children benefit from care and educational programming that meets their developmental needs and contributes to the foundation for future learning and success.

SACC utilizes the Assessment of Afterschool Program Practices Tool, developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, to focus on specific elements of program quality that are linked to positive outcomes for the children served. Children and youth who participate in out-of-school time activities that are geared

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to their interests, designed and staffed by school age program professionals, and based on youth development research enjoy greater positive outcomes. The factors identified as most linked to positive benefits include:

- Greater time spent participating in an afterschool program across the elementary school years yields positive results. SACC services are available year round, before and after school and full days during winter, spring and summer for children from kindergarten through grade six. Children and youth with multiple disabilities may participate until age 21.
- When children like their afterschool program they show improvement in their classroom. 98 percent of families who responded to the SACC parent survey indicated their children enjoy SACC.
- The most significant factor leading to positive youth assessment is the quality of interactions with supportive and caring adults. 99 percent of the families who responded to the SACC parent survey responded that SACC staff know and positively respond to their children's needs.

Child Care Services relates strongly to the vision element of 'Maintaining Healthy Economies'. Fairfax County continues to have a high labor force participation rate with 65.6 percent of parents with children under six in the labor force, and 70.5 percent of parents with children 6 to 17 years old in the labor force. Parents benefit when they have access to reliable, affordable quality child care that allows them to work to support their families. SACC is crucial to supporting working parents, nearly 20 percent of who meet the income eligibility to pay for services on a sliding fee scale. The availability of affordable child care services allows parents to attain and maintain self-sufficiency.

Child Care Services relates to the vision element of 'Exercising Corporate Stewardship'. The SACC program ensures efficient revenue collection, working with the families the program serves while ensuring that financial systems are in place.

Mandates

SACC centers and the Employee Child Care Center are licensed programs that must meet the standards promulgated by the State Board of Social Services according to the Code of Virginia Title 63.2. The Virginia Department of Social Services enforces these standards. Centers must meet requirements for personnel, background checks, professional development and orientation, center programming and health and safety.

Trends and Challenges

The high number of working parents in Fairfax County creates a great need for SACC services. The waiting list for SACC fluctuates across the County and in some neighborhoods families may not have access to SACC services. While nearly 70 percent of SACC centers have fewer than 25 children waiting for services, 12 SACC centers have large waiting lists with over 100 children waiting for care. Strategies for meeting the needs of families for school age child care include providing technical assistance to private sector community groups interested in providing school age child care services, and working in partnership with the Fairfax County Public Schools and the Department of Neighborhood and Community services to provide SACC services in County facilities with transportation support provided.

Adjustments have been made to the sliding fee scale to improve affordability and support participation of families earning low to moderate incomes. Enrollment will be monitored to determine if the changes to the fee scale have resulted in greater participation for families eligible for the sliding fee scale.

Recent efficiencies have been implemented by utilizing a varied staffing structure with additional benefit eligible positions. This staffing model is being closely monitored to ensure ongoing program quality and consistency of service as SACC staff turnover rates have increased from 10 percent to 16 percent during the past three years.

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Demand for ECCC services currently exceeds capacity and the Office for Children expects such demand to remain steady. The Center is fully enrolled and maintains a waiting list for services. Care at the ECCC is in demand among County employees because of the educational quality of the program, a sliding-fee scale for families with low to moderate incomes, and the convenient on-site/near-site location.

Resources

| Category | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Adopted |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| LOB #123: Child Care Services | | | |
| FUNDING | | | |
| <u>Expenditures:</u> | | | |
| Compensation | \$29,350,497 | \$28,854,394 | \$30,080,687 |
| Operating Expenses | 6,108,075 | 6,457,186 | 6,368,213 |
| Total Expenditures | \$35,458,572 | \$35,311,580 | \$36,448,900 |
| General Fund Revenue | \$37,689,220 | \$38,674,585 | \$39,556,099 |
| Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund | (\$2,230,648) | (\$3,363,005) | (\$3,107,199) |
| POSITIONS | | | |
| Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) | | | |
| <u>Positions:</u> | | | |
| Regular | 616 / 582.46 | 572 / 547.14 | 572 / 547.14 |
| Total Positions | 616 / 582.46 | 572 / 547.14 | 572 / 547.14 |

Metrics

| Metric Indicator | FY 2013 Actual | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Estimate | FY 2017 Estimate |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Number of children served by SACC | 13,515 | 13,314 | 13,087 | 13,400 | 13,400 |
| Number of meals/snacks served | 1,563,068 | 1,503,641 | 1,453,165 | 1,482,228 | 1,482,228 |
| Percent of survey respondents satisfied with service received from SACC | 98% | 97% | 98% | 98% | 98% |
| Percent of survey respondents who agree that SACC supports their child's positive interactions with other children | 98% | 98% | 99% | 99% | 99% |

In FY 2015, SACC served 227 fewer children than in FY 2014, which can be attributed to a normal fluctuation in enrollment throughout the course of the year. The estimate shown for FY 2016 is the result of implementing strategies to serve more children in the program. Metric #2 shows the number of snacks/meals served by SACC to the children in care. Snacks and meals meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program. Regarding metric #4, positive relationships with peers contribute to a range of youth outcomes such as healthy development, greater resiliency to stress and adversity, higher aspirations, and academic achievement (source – National Institute for Out-of-School Time, Wellesley Centers for Women).