Early Childhood Child Care Training Award

Innovative Program: The demand for quality childcare continues to rise as children are spending more time outside the family environment. Continued trends such as the rise in labor force participation of mothers with young children, have increased the demand for non-parental child care. Having a well trained child care workforce is necessary to provide the care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively. The ABC Child Care Provider Conference was organized by Wharton and Fort Bend County Extension agents for Family and Consumer Sciences in 1992 to provide training to early childhood child care providers. In 2003, Matagorda County and Wharton County Junior College Early Childhood Education joined the ABC Child Care Provider Conference followed by Brazoria and Waller Counties in 2008 and First Baptist Child Development Center in Wharton in 2009. Child care providers are required by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to receive service credit hours in order to maintain licensing. Directors need 20 hours per year while staff needs 15 hours per year. Those working in child care settings face many barriers including budgetary restraints, limited travel funds and access to training when trying to obtain their required hours. The primary goals of the ABC Child Care Provider Conference are to provide early childhood child care workers with quality educational opportunities that will enhance their skill levels at a reasonable cost and to provide a significant portion of their annually required continuing education hours.

Partnerships/Collaborative Efforts: The collaborative effort between counties in the Gulf Coast Region was formed to meet the specialized needs of early childhood child care providers. The ABC Child Care Provider Conference is a multi county, multi district conference
encompassing Matagorda, Brazoria, Wharton, and Fort Bend Counties. (Waller County no longer participates.) The conference has evolved from the original bi-county group to its current collaborative effort between districts, counties and non Extension collaborators. Collaborators included Extension Agents – Family and Consumer Sciences and Cooperative Extension Program – Family and Consumer Science Agents from four counties, Extension Specialists, Wharton County Junior College and local child care facilities such as First Baptist Child Development Center in Wharton. Continuing education units (CEUs) are offered through Wharton County Junior College. The collaborative efforts have Texas AgriLife Extension in the forefront of education in service training for early childhood child care providers.

**Accomplishments:** In 2009 and 2010, the ABC Child Care Provider Conference reached 392 child care providers providing care to more than 5000 children enrolled in 72 centers or family day homes. The ABC Child Care Provider Conference provides 7 of the required 15 continuing education credit hours each year. The credit hours of training allowed providers and directors to maintain their licensing. The ABC Child Care Provider Conference provides for the pooling of limited resources and increases the level of educational resources available. An evaluation tool, namely a statewide post conference survey is utilized. Feedback from this tool is used in planning future conferences. On site evaluation of 155 participants for the 2009 conference shows that 98% of participants acquired new knowledge and intends to use the information now and in the future. Ninety five percent said the training would help them be a more effective child care provider and will lead to improvements in the quality of care offered. Ninety five percent reported that the conference will help meet continuing education requirements and that the topics presented were relevant to daily work. Ninety four percent thought the training was cost effective and 93% plan to attend another Extension conference. On site evaluation of 175
participants for the 2010 conference shows that 97% acquired new knowledge and plans to use the information now and in the future. Nearly 97% said the training would help them be a more effective child care provider and will lead to improvements in the quality of care offered. Ninety four percent reported that the conference helped to meet continuing education requirement, and that the topics presented were relevant to daily work. Ninety four percent thought the training was cost effective and plan to attend another Texas AgriLife Extension conference. While difficult to measure, thousands of children and their families are indirectly impacted emotionally, physically, socially and mentally by this educational programming.

**Unique Teaching Methods:** The ABC Child Care Provider Conference Planning Committee worked diligently to plan a program that would meet the needs of early childhood child care providers. The evaluation tool asked for future topics or issues. This information is used in planning the next year’s conference. The planning committee works to find the best qualified speakers to match suggested topics and emerging issues in childcare. The morning typically consists of lecture style presentations for the large group with directors in separate sessions with hands on workshops and interactive sessions utilized as the teaching method for the afternoon sessions. At the 2010 conference, employees from an attending center presented scenarios to highlight effective parent communication strategies. Some examples of sessions presented include “Autism Spectrum Disorder” (Discipline and Guidance), “Child Abuse” (Health and Safety), “Sun Prevention” (Health and Safety), “Age Appropriate Learning Centers” specific to infants, toddlers and preschool (Age Appropriate Curriculum), “Junior Master Gardeners” (Age Appropriate Curriculum), and “Managing Staff” (Management), “Licensing Trends” (Management). Topics in previous years have included “Brain Development” (Brain Development), “Color Me Healthy” (Health and Safety), “Passenger Safety” (Health and Safety),

Program Impact and Cost Reduced: This program has had a significant impact on child care providers and the children they care for. One major impact was providers being able to maintain employment and meet accreditation requirements through continuing education. Secondly, through the application of research based information, the quality of care for more than 5000 children has improved especially in the major areas of health and safety, child growth and development, discipline and guidance, age appropriate curriculum, understanding early childhood brain development, teacher child interaction and management concerns. Additional program benefits include quality training at an affordable cost scheduled around the day to day demands put upon child care providers.

Future Plans: The ABC Child Care Provider Conference committee will continue to offer child care providers continuing education opportunities on relevant topics to at an affordable cost. These providers have a huge impact on the self confidence and future school performance of the children they care for.