

CHILDCARE SERVICES SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is one of the world's foremost medical research centers, and the federal focal point for medical research in the United States. The NIH, comprised of 27 separate Institutes and Centers, is one of eight health agencies of the Public Health Service which, in turn, is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Office of Research Services (ORS), one of the departments under the Office of the Director, combined a number of wide-ranging contracted services and programs to create the Worksite Enrichment Programs Branch (WEPB), under the Division of Support Services (DSS). The WEPB is dedicated to providing NIH employees with a variety of services that enrich and enhance their quality of work life. As part of an ongoing commitment to providing a quality work environment for its employees as it relates to child care amenities, the NIH sponsors four licensed child care centers. In order to assess the current and future needs of the NIH population for child care services, the Office of Research Services commissioned this statistically valid Child Care Needs Assessment Survey. The survey included 1441 participants whose demographics reliably mirrored those of the entire NIH population with regard to gender, work site and job category. A detailed summary of the findings, analyses of those findings, as well as critical findings and recommendations may be found in the *Executive Report*.

SURVEY PURPOSE

The Office of Research Services understands the importance of child care to the retention and recruitment of talented people who make up the NIH, and the survey instrument was administered to allow the ORS to assess and determine the child care needs of the NIH community. The questions were designed for those employees who have children of child care age, or who anticipated placing children in some form of child care services within the next 12 months, and it measured their service priorities, desired future initiatives and recorded demographic data. The survey project was performed on behalf of the ORS by Performance Dynamics, Inc., in partnership with the University of Central Florida, College of Business Administration, BE2000 Technical Team.

METHODOLOGY

A three-phased approach was undertaken to complete this survey. In the first phase, information gathering, senior consultants reviewed existing NIH public documents pertaining to child care services, conducted small focus group meetings with key stakeholders from the Office of the Director, Office of Research Services, child care staff, users of existing NIH-sponsored services and potential users of these services, which resulted in a pilot survey. In the second phase, pilot survey administration, the initial survey draft was given to select individuals. The data was then collected, analyzed, discussed with the aforementioned stakeholders and then retooled to better meet the needs of the respondents. In the final stage, final survey administration, the agreed upon version was submitted electronically to all NIH employees. Also, the survey was offered in 5 different languages online and 2 different languages on paper.

CRITICAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the study of the needs of the members of the NIH community for child care, specific priorities became apparent.

First, based on the expressed needs of survey participants, it is strongly recommended to increase child care capacity on or near NIH worksites, especially the sites around Bethesda and perhaps around Rockville.

Second, in order to meet the expressed needs of the community, it is suggested that the NIH pursue the creation of a Dependent Care Assistance Plan, which would allow employees and others to elect to designate pre-tax dollars toward an annual child care payment fund.

Third, the NIH may wish to explore options to expand programs that provide direct tuition assistance based on income, especially for specialized researchers or others who are not able to take advantage of a future Dependent Care Assistance Plan.

Fourth, the NIH would benefit from a critical assessment on the value child care services brings to the organization's overall mission – to uncover more knowledge about the prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment of disease and disability. The likely conclusion may be that further development of child care services would specifically target the needs of those individuals whose recruitment and retention are vitally important to achieving the NIH workforce goals.

Fifth, and finally, the NIH should seriously consider streamlining and standardizing its application procedures for child care services across all existing centers. Reengineering the application process would not only maximize the customer service experience of applicants, but also reduce perceived discrimination, which has led to disenchantment with child care service delivery.