

Quality Enhancement Grants in Action Visit Children's Learning Center 6/22/09

Nancy Teboda, Executive Director, Children's Learning Center (CLC), has seen a lot of changes in child care over her years in the field. "We have learned to be more efficient with our space" she noted and has implemented design elements to improve the environment and the quality of the center. "We would not be able to accomplish these improvements without the support of the DeKalb County Community Foundation. We are very grateful" stated Teboda. In the fall of 2008, CLC received a Community Needs grant to replace infant, toddler and preschool changing tables. The new tables are safer for both the children and staff by providing deep wells on the changing surface and providing steps for the preschool children to utilize so staff don't have to lift mobile children. CLC also received a fall 2008 Quality Enhancement Grant. These grants are available through the CommunityWorks initiative at the DCCF; a partnership between DCCF and the Grand Victoria Foundation.

CommunityWorks focuses on three specific areas; workforce development, land use and child care. An impact plan committee developed recommended strategic responses in each of the issue areas. One strategic response for childcare is to support improvement in the quality, availability and affordability of child care programs in DeKalb County. Quality Enhancement Grants are made available to nonprofit child care centers that are applying for accreditation and/or the Quality Rating System through the State of Illinois.

The Quality Counts: Quality Rating System (QRS) assists Illinois child care programs in providing quality care for children and their families. For child care centers eligibility for QRS means the program has achieved specific quality indicators. QRS participation can be used as a marketing tool, showing parents/guardians that the program is recognized by the State of Illinois for commitment to providing higher quality care and translates to increased reimbursements from the state based on the star rating. CLC received grant funds to purchase four highchairs and install a skylight in the toddler room. The high chairs are padded and have foot rests to improve comfort when children are placed in them. The skylight allows natural light into an area that did not previously have access to a natural light source. These improvements are directly related to the QRS assessment and enhance the environment of the center. CLC is waiting to hear from the State the results of the QRS assessment and their star rating. "Our next step is accreditation" said Teboda "We want parents and the community to understand the importance of quality child care."