



## Who cares for the children?

*The authors report findings from a national study comparing congregation-based child care programs with other private and public programs. They found that 25% of child care is being provided by congregations, and that congregations are significantly more likely to be serving middle and upper-middle class children who pay flat rate fees, not low income children whose care is subsidized by government programs. The child care staffs of congregation-based centers are more stable, even though there is no significant difference in the salaries in congregation-based programs from other programs. Child care programs offer an array of family support services for young families, from newsletters to family enrichment programs. Authors: Diana R. Garland, Michael E. Sherr, Jon E. Singletary, Angela Dennison*

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**A**lmost 30 years ago, a research project concluded that congregations are the single largest provider of child (day) care in the United States (Lindner, Mattis, & Rogers, 1982). That research documented the church's continuing involvement in child care beginning with the Industrial Revolution, when out-of-home care for children of working parents emerged (Garland, 1994). With the surge of immigration from Europe more than a century ago, churches and synagogues began providing day nurseries for immigrant children in settlement and neighborhood houses. With the increase in middle class maternal employment in the years after World War II, child care surfaced as the most pervasive concern for American families (Phillips, 1987). Consequently, in 1980, the National Council of Churches of Christ launched the Child Care Project, resulting in the research project conducted by Eileen Lindner and her colleagues (1982). Until that time, no national church agency had even recorded the names or numbers of congregations with child care programs.

Photos by Kevin Tankersley

The Child Care Project reached the startling conclusion that one church in three housed a child care program, and for every child in Sunday School on Sunday, there were nine children in a church-housed child care center Monday through Friday (Lindner, 2001). As Linder has said of the study's findings:

Twenty years ago we had a hunch that the church was playing a role in child care; we came to find out that we [churches] were the McDonalds of the industry. Our share of the market for child care and McDonalds' share of the market for hamburgers were roughly analogous (quoted by Neugebauer, 2005).

Despite the attention that followed the 1982 study and the resources that were developed to help strengthen congregation-based child care (CBCC) programs (e.g., Freeman, 1987), there has been scant research in the past 30 years that explores how child care provided by congregations compares to child care offered by other private and public providers. We know very little about the kinds of services the centers provide, or how the religious core of congregational life shapes (or doesn't shape) the mission and practices of these programs. We do not know whether congregations see child care and family support as a means of living their mission as a community of faith and caring for "the least of these" in their communities – or perhaps simply as a cost-effective way to use otherwise idle educational space during the week. We do not know whether involvement in the lives of children and families through child care services is a revitalizing force in the lives of congregations, or a drain, or what the factors may be that make this kind of involvement in the lives of young families a source for strengthened congregational life.

This article reports a project designed to survey a representative sample of licensed child care centers in the United States to compare and contrast CBCC centers with other

private and public providers. We will explore the populations of children and families these centers serve, the kinds of care they provide for children, other services and supports they provide to families, the sources of programs' financial support, relative costs to families, accreditation, and the educational requirements and stability of their educational staffs. In a companion article (*in the Summer 2008 issue of this journal*), we will explore in more depth the motivations of congregations that provide child care, how CBCC centers relate to the congregations that support them, and how these relationships can become more mutually supportive and effective.

**WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT  
CONGREGATION-BASED CHILD CARE**

Reports since the 1982 study concur that between 20% and 33% of all child care in the

How do weekday  
child care programs  
relate to the  
congregations that  
support them?

United States is being provided by congregations and other religiously affiliated organizations such as 501(c)3 organizations that may have been launched by congregations or networks of congregations (Adams, Rohacek, & Snyder, 2005; Administration for Children and Families, 1999; Chaves, 2004; Cnaan, 1997; Cnaan, Boddie, Handy, Yancey, & Schneider, 2002; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994; Orr & Filback, 2004). Moreover, it appears that the proportion of child care provided by congregations is increasing. According

to research by the Wilson Marketing group, one out of six children in care in 1998 was in a congregation-based center; by 2005, that number had increased to nearly one in four children (Neugebauer, 2005). At the time of the Lindner study, mainline denominations (e.g., Presbyterians and United Methodists) were the most likely to provide child care, but some have observed that increasing numbers of conservative and evangelical congregations are providing child care (Neugebauer, 2005; The Brookings Institute, 2001).

**FUNDING OF CONGREGATION-BASED CHILD CARE**

No matter what a family’s income level, child care is the third largest expense, after housing and food, for families with children ages three to five (The Brookings Institute, 2001). There are indicators that the fees church-based caregivers charged parents are substantially lower than those found in other child care sectors, but at the same time, CBCC programs are much less likely to accept alternatives to parent fees, such as government subsidies (e.g., Child Care and Development Block Grant vouchers), than other child care programs. Even so, an Urban Institute study of child care in five counties across four states found that more than half of “faith-affiliated” providers care for at least one child receiving a voucher-based subsidy (Adams et al., 2005).

Those CBCC programs that do not participate in government subsidy programs give their reasons as insufficient administrative capabilities, concerns about government intrusion, or not seeing service to low-income children as part of their main mission (Adams et al., 2005). Congregations also may be cautious about accepting government subsidies because cutbacks during times of fiscal stress can force centers to close (Orr & Filback, 2004). Given the demand for their services from families able to pay directly, then, congregations may allow these fiscal considerations to drive their decision to steer away from dependence on subsidies.

**QUALITY OF CARE**

There are concerns about the quality of care provided in congregation-based centers. A comparison study found that congregations actually provided significantly lower quality services than other non-profit and for-profit centers (Morris & Helburn, 2000). The 1979 National Day Care Study found that 87% of teachers in church-housed programs had

college degrees (Orr & Filback, 2004), but a more recent study concluded that only 46% of the teachers in congregation-based centers had a minimum of a college degree, and their teacher/child ratios were higher than other centers (Neugebauer, 2005).

Neugebauer suggests that this low overall quality may actually be due to a broader range of quality in CBCC programs than in other programs. Many congregations are renowned for providing the highest quality available. But at the other end of the spectrum, some congregations actually see child care as a money maker, using center income not to improve the program but rather to supplement the congregation’s budget (Neugebauer, 2005).

An important indicator of quality is professional accreditation. Orr and Filback found that only 5% of CBCC centers in Los Angeles County are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the national gold standard for quality child care (Orr & Filback, 2004).

The quality of child care matters significantly for all children, and it appears to matter most to children in resource-deprived communities. Children who attend higher quality child care centers perform better on measures of both cognitive and social skills. Children considered at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of child care experiences than other children (Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Yazejian, Byler, & Rustici, 1999; Zaslow, Oldham, & Moore, 1998). Congregations are located in all communities, including those in low-income communities where quality child care is most needed and often in short supply. Unfortunately, congregations in resource-deprived communities may not have the resources to provide much-needed child care. Orr and Filback have observed that in Los Angeles County, for example, there are fewer centers of all kinds, including those in congregations, in low-income, multi-ethnic neighborhoods

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where the waiting lists for child care are the longest (2004).

### **RANGE OF FAMILY SERVICES**

In most American families with young children, both parents are in the workforce. They need a supportive community that includes quality care for children as well as other supports, the kind of community that congregations can provide. Child care programs have the potential for being the hub of a whole array of ministries designed to strengthen families (Garland, 1999). Those ministries can include parent and family life education, book and resource lending libraries, mentoring and cross-generational “adoptive” grandparent partnerships, counseling, emergency support, workforce development – the possibilities are limited only by a congregation’s imagination. As limited as the research has been on CBCC, there appears to have been no attempt to determine the extent to which child care in congregations is part of a larger strategy of ministry with young families.

Child care needs to be more than a nice way to use a congregation’s educational building that is otherwise empty much of the week. A vision for ministry often grows out of learning what other congregations in other places are doing. Therefore, assessing what congregations are doing for young families is not an idle research interest. Knowing how other congregations are thinking about and doing ministry with young families can provide fodder for a congregation’s vision. For example, one congregation in Atlanta contacted us upon learning about this project and asked to be included in the study because they were concerned about the future of their child care center and how to connect it more vitally to the life of the congregation. The associate pastor said, “We’ve seen three congregations



that are our neighbors close their childcare centers, and we are wondering how we ought to be thinking about the future of our ministry with young families.”

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The Congregation-based Child Care Study involved both in-depth interviews with child care center directors, teachers, congregational pastors and parents, as well as a national survey of licensed child care providers. Based on findings from the study, this report seeks to answer the following research questions, comparing CBCC programs to other center-based child care programs:

1. What are the demographic characteristics (type of community, ethnicity, income) of families served?
2. What programs of child care (e.g., full day, part-day, after-school) are offered?
3. What percentage of centers is accredited and what other ways do they use to evaluate their quality?
4. What proportion of centers’ funding comes from sources other than family fees?
5. What are the qualifications of and how stable are center staffs?
6. What other family support services do centers offer?

Other questions specifically about CBCC programs’ relationships with their congregations and the role of religion and spirituality in their programming will be addressed in an upcoming article (*Summer*, Vol. 22.2).

METHODOLOGY

The first author conducted in-depth structured interviews in a six-month period in 2006 with 30 key informants in four CECE programs – seven program directors and executive directors: two focus groups of teachers, four pastors, two focus groups of parents and two individual parents. All four centers were located in urban areas: Chicago, New York City, Atlanta and Dallas. They were chosen purposively to represent as much denominational, congregational and cultural diversity as possible in order to maximize the possible differences in congregational centers. They included a large Baptist congregation (attendance = 1000) serving children from middle and upper-middle class families, a small Lutheran inner-city congregation (attendance = 80) serving a diversity of children from all socioeconomic levels, a Baptist congregation (attendance = 300) serving a changing neighborhood that is now predominantly first- and second-generation Mexican-American families, and a large inner-city African-American center loosely connected to two merged Presbyterian congregations that serves predominantly children and families living in poverty.

The interviews addressed the history of each program (who started the program, how and with what mission), why the informant chooses to work or place their children in this program, what the current mission of the program is and how it might have changed over time, what the program does well and not so well, the role of religion and spirituality in the program, demographics of the families served, how the program and the congregation relate to one another, ways the program relates to families of children in care, financial and staff resources and challenges the program faces today. The findings of those interviews are reported elsewhere (Garland & Singletary, forthcoming). Those interviews helped identify significant constructs and variables from

the perspectives of those closest to the issues of early childhood education, enabling the research team to construct a survey instrument using language appropriate to those we would be surveying.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The team constructed a draft survey instrument based on the findings from the interviews. A panel of national child care experts, as well as local child care providers, reviewed the instrument and made suggestions for revisions and additions.

The final survey included 33 items divided into five sections. Questions in sections one through four included items relevant for all child care programs on the topics of denominational affiliation; types of services provided; whether or not programs are licensed and by what entities; program purposes; demographics of children and families served; the role of religion, faith, and spirituality in programming; and staffing. In addition, the survey instrument provided opportunity for those programs connected to congregations to describe that connection.

SAMPLE

We sought to develop a representative sample of licensed child cared programs in the United States numbering at least 330, in order to create a 10:1 ratio of providers for each of the 33 survey items. A 10:1 ratio provides for adequate statistical power for exploratory descriptive analysis (Hair, Tatham, & Anderson, 2005). We selected 10 states to represent the 10 federal regions of the country: Alabama, Georgia, California, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin. We used a random number generator to mail surveys to the administrators of 1,800 child care providers selected from the entire listing of licensed providers in the 10 states. The team mailed the finalized survey in October 2006.

A total of 418 providers returned surveys,

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– almost exclusively  
– on flat-rate fees.



although we subsequently eliminated 30 because they were incomplete. The final sample included surveys of 388 child care programs, a response rate of 21.5%.

### FINDINGS

We used frequency distributions to describe the 388 child care programs, with Chi-square and t-tests to compare CBCC programs with child care programs in private non-sectarian and public (“other”) settings. Table 1 presents these comparisons. More than one-fourth (26%, n=101) of the child care centers were located in congregational facilities. Almost two-thirds of the child care centers were incorporated (64.3%, n=249). Of the 249 centers that were incorporated: 40% (n=99) were for-profit organizations; 37%, (n=92) were private, 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations; 16% (n=41) were part of a congregations’ incorporation; and the remaining centers were either part of an umbrella agency or a franchise of a national child care provider.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF FAMILIES SERVED

The states with the largest number responding were Minnesota (16%, n=62); New Hampshire (14%, n=54); and Texas (12%, n=47). An average of 27 child care programs responded from the remaining states, with North Carolina having the smallest representation (5.5%, n=21). Almost two-thirds of the programs were located in the suburbs,

**Table 1 – Comparison of CBCC and Other Programs**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>CBCC Programs %(n) N=101</i>	<i>Other CC Programs %(n) N=287</i>
<b>LOCATION</b>		
Major metropolitan/inner city	13.9(14)	16.0(45)
Suburban	30.9(31)**	14.9(42)
Small city or town	29.7(30)	47.5(134)**
Rural farming	5.0(5)	7.4(21)
Rural non-farming	6.9(7)	7.1(20)
<b>FAMILY INCOME</b> <i>(average number per program)</i>		
Under \$20,000	7	31*
\$20,001-40,000	13	24
\$40,001-80,000	29	25
More than \$80,000	19*	12
<b>AVERAGE COSTS FOR PROGRAM</b>		
<i>(per week, per program)</i>	\$178*	\$123
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b> <i>(avg. % per program)<sup>1</sup></i>		
White (not Hispanic)	70	92
African-American	9	18
Hispanic/Latino	12	13
Other race/ethnic groups	7	8
<b>LANGUAGE</b> <i>(avg. % per program)</i>		
English	88	88
Spanish	7	10
French	1	0
Other	5	2
<b>LICENSED</b>		
NAEYC ACCREDITED	100 (101)	100(287)
INCORPORATED	11 (11)	18 (50)
	70(67)	62(170)
<b>SOURCES OF INCOME</b> <i>(avg. % per program)</i>		
Flat-rate fee from families	85**	62
Sliding-scale fee from families	2	4
Income support from congregation	2	0
Government grants, subsidies, vouchers or contracts	6	30**
Private/corporate foundations, fundraisers, scholarships	5	4
<b>DIRECTOR REQUIREMENTS</b>		
College degree in child/family studies or related area	67(68)	65(183)
Experience in early childhood education	90(91)	90(253)
Training in administration	61(62)	64(181)
<b>TEACHER REQUIREMENTS</b>		
None	0	<1(2)
High school degree or equivalent	44(44)	52(146)
Associate’s degree in child development	42(42)	37(104)
College degree related to child dev.	40(40)	25(70)
Require continuing ed for directors	92(92)	94(258)
Require continuing ed for teachers	93(93)	94(258)
<b>LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT</b>		
<i>(lead teachers per program)</i>		
0 - 1 year	1(1)	2(6)
1 - 3 years	13(13)	26(73)*
4 - 6 years	33(33)	31(87)
More than 6 years	57(57)*	43(121)
<b>SALARIES OF TEACHERS</b>		
Higher	19(19)	36(102)
Comparable	52(52)	42(119)
Lower	14(14)	8(23)
Don’t know	15(15)	13(36)

Note: \* = p<.05; \*\* = p<.01

<sup>1</sup> The survey asks respondents to estimate the percentage of families from each ethnic group. Responses do not add up to 100%.

a small city or a town (61%, n=238). More than one-fifth of the programs were located in major metropolitan areas (21%, n=81); with the remaining programs located in rural farming (12%, n=47) and rural non-farming (6%, n=22) communities.

Based on aggregate estimates of percentages of ethnic groups and percentages of languages, a large majority of people served by the child care programs were White and spoke English (85%). Fifteen percent of the programs served African-American families and 12% served Hispanic/Latino families. Nearly 10% (9.2%) of the families spoke Spanish in the home.

Aggregate estimates of family income indicate a wide distribution. Administrators estimated that 25 of the children in their programs come from families whose income levels are below \$20,000 per year; 20 children come from families earning between \$20,001 and \$40,000 per year; and another 25 children come from families earning between \$40,001 and \$80,000 per year. An average of 14 children in each program comes from families earning more than \$80,000 per year.

Both CBCC and other programs primarily serve White children from English-speaking homes. Though CBCC programs tended to serve fewer African-American families than other programs, the difference was not significant. The two settings were different on a few key variables, however. Though a fairly diverse distribution of locations was evident, CBCC programs were more likely to be located in suburban areas and other programs were more likely to be located in small cities or towns. Furthermore, CBCC programs serve significantly more children in higher income

families (\$80,000 per year) and significantly fewer in families with incomes of less than \$20,000 per year. The average fee per child in CBCC programs was also significantly higher than the average fee in other programs.

**PROGRAMS OFFERED**

Child care centers offer a variety of programs ranging from full-day infant care to parents' day out. The largest programs offered, based on the aggregate number of children in

each program, were full-day preschool (n=28), part-day preschool (n=19) and after-school programs (n=32 ). As expected, administrators estimated lower numbers of children in emergency drop-off, evening care, and special needs programs (all less than one child per

program). There also were relatively lower numbers of infants (5 per program) and toddlers (7 per program) in full-day programs. Average fees ranged from as high as \$182.00 per week for full-day care for school-age children to as low as \$30.00 per day for emergency drop off. As expected, the fees for all full-day programs were higher than fees for part-day programs.

**ACCREDITATION AND EVALUATION**

All child care centers were licensed by their respective states because the sample was drawn from lists of state-licensed programs. However, only 27.5% (n=98) of the centers were accredited by an additional outside party and only 16% (n=63) by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). There was no significant difference in the proportion of CBCC and other programs that are accredited.

Instead of accreditation, child care center administrators said that they use other meth-



ods to determine success of their programs, including parent satisfaction (97%, n=377), ability to retain quality teachers and child care workers (81.7%, n=317), the need for a waiting list (71.4%, n=277), and assessing children's later success in elementary school, high school and adulthood (64.2%, n=249).

### **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Aggregate estimates of income sources indicated that child care centers received a majority of their income from flat-rate fees from families (68%). Government subsidies, vouchers, grants and contracts also accounted for significant portions of income (23%). Sliding scale fees, support from congregations, fundraisers, corporate grants, foundation grants and gifts for scholarships accounted for minimal sources of income. CBCC programs rely significantly more – almost exclusively – on flat-rate fees, whereas other programs also receive a substantial portion (30%) of their revenue from government subsidies, vouchers, grants or contracts.

### **STAFFING**

The Centers in our study required directors to have the following qualifications: 64.9% (n=252) required a college degree in child and family studies or related area, 63.4% (n=246) required training in administration, and 90% (n=349) required experience in early childhood education. In contrast, 28.9% (n=98) of the centers required teachers to have a four-year college degree related to child development, 38.5% (n=148) required teachers to have an associate's degree in child development, and one-half (n=194) required teachers to have only a high school degree or equivalent. Three centers allowed teachers to work without any educational requirement. More than 90% of the child care centers required directors (n=355) and teachers (n=352) to earn continuing education credit. There was no significant difference in administrator and teacher educational requirements between CBCC and other programs

Regarding teacher compensation, 44% (n=173) of centers described their salaries as comparable with other child care centers

in their communities and (31.3%, n=121) described their salaries as higher than other centers. Ten percent (10.1%, n=39) described their salaries as lower than other centers. There were no statistical differences in salaries between CBCC and other programs.

The length of employment for lead teachers at the child care centers appears rather stable. Almost one-half (46.6%, n=180) of the centers reported that their lead teachers have been in their current position for more than six years; almost another one-third (31.3%, n=121) reported lead teachers employed from four to six years; less than one-fourth (22.7%, n=88) reported lead teachers employed from one to three years. Only seven centers reported having lead teachers who have been at their centers for less than one year.

Despite no significant difference in salaries, CBCC programs had significantly more stable staffs, with a significantly larger percentage of teachers working for more than six years, compared to other programs with a significantly larger percentage of teachers working one to three years.

### **OTHER SERVICES PROVIDED TO FAMILIES AND TO THE COMMUNITY**

These centers provide a variety of services for children's families. Table 2 presents a list of services offered to families in descending order of frequency. A majority of centers provided families with a newsletter. Other common services included opportunities for parents to have lunch with their children, referral services, after-school programming, recreational events, drop-in care and babysitting. More than 20% of the centers offered family/individual counseling and parents' night out. A few centers offered programs for marriage/family enrichment and divorce recovery and access to webcams so parents could view their children at the centers online.

There appear to be few differences in the proportion of CBCC programs and others that offered these other services to families, with a few exceptions. CBCC programs were less likely to offer after-school care for older children (39%) and drop-in care for children who are not in the full-day program (26%) com-



**Table 2 – Services Centers Provide Families**

<i>Services</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Sample</i>	<i>Total Sample N (388)</i>	<i>CBCC N(101)</i>	<i>Public N(287)</i>
Newsletter or other print resources	86.1	334	90	244
Parents can come have lunch with children	67.5	262	55	207
Referral services to other community services	63.1	245	65	180
After-school program for older children	52.8	205	39	166
Recreational events	47.7	185	52	133
Drop-in care for children who are not in the full program	43.6	169	26	143
Babysitting by center staff	40.2	156	35	121
Summer day camp	39.9	155	40	115
Resource library	35.8	139	35	104
Employment at the center for parents	35.6	138	27	111
Parent networks	35.3	137	31	106
Emergency resources	34.5	134	32	102
Parent education programs	29.4	114	39	75
Family or individual counseling	23.2	90	21	69
Parents' night out	21.6	84	23	61
Literacy and/or job training programs	8.5	33	8	25
Sick-child care for working parents	7.7	30	5	25
Marriage/Family enrichment programs	5.7	22	8	14
Divorce recovery programs	2.8	11	5	6
Web cam access so parents can view center from their computer	2.3	9	2	7

pared to other programs (58% and 59%, respectively). CBCC programs were more likely to offer parent education programs (39%) and marriage enrichment (8%) than were other programs (26% and 5%, respectively).

Some child care centers also offered services for other child care providers in the community. Approximately 40% (n=155) of the centers offered apprenticeship opportunities and training for teachers and child care staff in the community, (27%, n= 105) offered facilitation and support for networking for other providers, (14%, n=55) offered enrichment programs, and (3.6%, n=14) offered respite care for other child care providers in the community.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study, that about one-fourth of child care centers are located in congregations, are congruent with the findings of other researchers (Adams et al., 2005; Administration for Children and Families, 1999; Chaves, 2004; Cnaan, 1997; Cnaan et al., 2002; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994;

Orr & Filback, 2004). Congregations continue to be significant providers of child care, particularly for families in suburbs, small cities and towns. It appears that few are located in metropolitan inner cities (14%), however. The small percentage of child care programs – both CBCC and others – located in inner cities (14% to 16%) may indicate that there is a dearth of center-based child care in neighborhoods where there may be significant need.

Moreover, contrary to other research (The Brookings Institute, 2001), this study found that CBCC programs actually charge significantly more than other programs. Because they almost all charge flat per-child fees and do not accept government funding, their services are limited to those families who can afford to pay an average of \$175 per week (2007) for child care. It is not clear which came first, whether congregations have chosen to serve in middle- and upper-middle income communities and therefore are not confronted with the need to accept government subsidies, or whether they have de-

cided not to take government funding and consequently serve higher income families because poor families cannot afford their services. Although all children deserve quality child care, it appears that those who need it most are least likely to receive care in a congregational setting.

Despite comparable salaries, the staffs of CBCC programs are significantly more stable than staffs in other programs. Apparently, there is something about CBCC programs that encourages staff to stay on for years. In the interviews prior to the survey, several staff members commented that they had chosen to work in a congregation because the faith content of the program fit their own religious commitments. As one teacher said, "It is a personal call; it is not just for money. I am happy here." Several commented that the CECE program "feels like family, with warm, supportive co-worker relationships." Many teachers talked about loving the children and strong, mutually supportive relationships with parents, and they believed they are making a difference in parents' lives and the lives of their children (Garland & Singletary, forthcoming). Whether the same is true in other programs is not clear, but what is clear is that congregations seem to provide satisfying work opportunities for early childhood educators. They have more the feel of a community than a business.

Clearly some centers have recognized their potential for providing broad support for families, with most providing print resources such as newsletters and educational resources, opportunities for parents to join their children for lunch, connections to other community services, and after-school care for older siblings. More than one-third offer fam-



ily recreational events, drop-in care, in-home child care after hours by center staff, summer day camp, a resource library, employment for parents in the center itself, parent networks and emergency support services. Some offer family counseling and parents' night out, and a few even offer care for sick children, family enrichment programs and divorce recovery programs. These centers appear to be developing their potential for being a community for families, not just day care for children.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research with congregations is notoriously difficult. This study, although descriptive in design, has significant flaws. Although a return rate of 21.5% is reasonable and we had enough statistical power to analyze the data, it still leaves the question of whether those who responded are representative of the entire population of child care centers in these 10 states. The length of the survey and the decision to guarantee anonymity, however, prevented us from conducting follow-up telephone interviews to assess whether or not the current sample was different from centers that did not complete the survey. In addition, although survey respondents were guaranteed anonymity, we cannot discount the human tendency to skew assessment toward strengths rather than limitations.

#### SUMMARY

Congregations continue to be major providers of child care in this country, but they appear to be serving predominantly middle- and upper-middle class children. If low income children are in child care, it is not likely to be in a congregation.

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## Expectation

Look ahead. You are not expected to complete the task.  
Neither are you permitted to lay it down.

Source: The Talmud