

2007 University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Combined Research and Extension Plan of Work

Families, Youth, and Communities

V(B). Program Knowledge Area(s)

1. Program Knowledge Areas and Percentage

- 802 100% Human Development and Family Well-Being

V(C). Planned Program (Situation and Scope)

1. Situation and priorities

There are approximately 269 childcare centers, including Head Start centers and family day care homes, in Southeast Arkansas. Of these, 110 centers are located in Jefferson County. Students in the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's Administration and Supervision of Childcare Centers class visited a total of twenty centers and family homes during the Fall of 2003, and assessed center quality using the rating scales. This informal observation by the students reported scores of one, indicating poor quality, to an average score of four on a likert-type seven-point scale for the family homes and center-based programs. A score of one indicates poor or inadequate quality, a score of three, minimal or mediocre quality, a score of five, indicates good quality and a score of seven suggests excellent quality. No published research has been found that assesses predictors of quality programs in Arkansas, Jefferson County or Southeast Arkansas. This research project will assess the quality practices in childcare centers and family day care homes in Jefferson County and Southeast Arkansas and increase the awareness of what research suggests that quality programs look like. Currently, there are no centers or family day care homes in Jefferson County that are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and only four were found in Southeast Arkansas. Accreditation status is another indicator of a quality center or family day care home (Accreditation Criteria and Procedures of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998).

V(D). Planned Program (Assumptions and Goals)

1. Assumptions made for the Program

Early childhood staff will be motivated to change to meet the standards and accreditation as set forth by NAEYC. Early childhood and family home daycare directors, teachers, parents, researchers, and stakeholders will form coalitions to address problems. Early childhood and family home daycare centers' staff will be hired with necessary skills and abilities.

2. Ultimate goal(s) of this Program

The ultimate goal(s) of this program will be as follows: to identify predictors of quality in early childhood programs in Southeast Arkansas; to assess the quality of the 269 early childhood programs in Southeast Arkansas; to identify quality practices present in early childhood programs in Southeast Arkansas; to enhance the quality of early childhood programs by disseminating study findings to early childhood programs and agencies in Southeast Arkansas and at professional meetings; and to determine the feasibility of obtaining accreditation and quality approval for early childhood programs and day care family homes in Southeast Arkansas by the National Accrediting body of The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Arkansas Quality Approval System. The Arkansas Child Care Approval System has a quality approval rating for early childhood programs. Presently, there are 23 centers that have Quality Approval Rating in Southeast Arkansas and one center in Jefferson County where approximately 110 centers are located. Therefore, it is also the desire of this program to increase the number of centers and family homes that have the Quality Approval status. Childcare centers, which can verify accreditation through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of NAEYC, will be considered approved for the purposes of these regulations. NAEYC certification is good for the three (3) year certification period. Verification of accreditation status must be provided to the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education each year upon renewal in order to maintain approved status. Family day care homes, which can verify accreditation through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), will be considered approved for the purposes of these regulations. NAFCC certification is good for the three (3) year certification period. Verification of accreditation status must be provided to the Division each year upon renewal in order to maintain approved status (Arkansas Childcare Approval System, Arkansas Department of Human Services, 1997).

V(F). Planned Program (Activity)

1. Activity for the Program

Once data are collected from licensed early childhood program directors on their perception of quality, an on site two-hour observation using the environmental rating scales will be conducted at each center responding to the survey and agreeing to participate further in the study. It is expected that at least 50% of the childcare facilities will participate in the full study. The rating scales are used to measure quality in childcare centers and are based on a one-to seven-point scale, on a continuum of one for poor quality and seven for excellent quality. The reported rating scores given by the teachers, directors, and parents will be compared to the environmental rating scale score to determine consistency between perceptions reported on the survey and actual scores obtained during the observation. Informational meetings concerning accreditation and the Arkansas Quality

Approval System process will be introduced to center directors during the observational visit. Examples of outputs may include: processes of research studies, dissemination of research results, writing and publishing articles, conducting educational workshops, attending conferences, providing training for early childhood and head start staff, and partnering with headstart centers to keep the participating childcare centers in this program informed.