



70 West 36th Street, Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10018
tel: 212-967-0322 fax: 212-967-0792

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL SERVICES RESTRUCTURING ON THE
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING OF THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES
COUNCILMAN LEW FIDLER, CHAIR**

JUNE 9, 2003

Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Wackstein, and I am the Executive Director of United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH). As you know, UNH is the federation of 36 settlement houses and neighborhood centers benefiting 500,000 participants—from infants and youth to adults and seniors—through early childhood services, educational programs, employment assistance, human services, and cultural activities at 335 sites throughout New York City.

Since the first settlement house opened its doors over a hundred years ago, these community-based centers have welcomed residents from all walks of life with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The mission of settlement houses has been and remains to help community members lead independent lives while working to improve the quality of everyday life. There can be no greater proof of our commitment to our communities than our programs providing early care, education and youth services to families and their children.

More than two thirds of our member settlement houses run child care programs. Twenty settlements provide center-based care serving over 3,500 children under five; 9 family child care networks with nearly 300 providers care for 1100 children; 11 Head Start programs serve over 1,000 children; 14 settlement houses run Universal Pre-K programs serving more than 500 four year olds; and 5 settlement houses run nursery school programs. In addition, 3 Comprehensive Child Care programs care for over 1100 children through a highly successful collaborative model based on merged Head Start and child care programs, after school child care and family child care along with provider certification and education courses.

Every settlement also provides youth programs. Nearly 70,000 children and youth participate in programs during and after school hours. About 175 elementary, middle and high schools have their young people attend settlement house after school programs, youth employment and job training activities, college and career counseling, teen programs, recreational activities, computer training, tutoring and homework help, etc. Off site, settlement houses run after school and youth programs in 160 elementary,

middle and high schools; operate 13 Beacon Schools; and 25 TASC programs. Several settlements also run programs to support the healthy development of adolescents, including sexual health education, HIV/AIDS prevention programs and mental health counseling in their community centers as well as in schools.

One common goal for early care, education and youth services is that programs provide comprehensive care for young children and their families. Regarding the Mayor's proposal to consolidate and streamline afterschool programs as part of the FY '04 budget plan and move school age child care out of ACS into DYCD we have four major concerns:

1. **Reduced Funding:** We have difficulty believing that the city can cut \$15 million out of school age child care programs and continue to provide the same level of services for working families and their children. In fact, we are greatly concerned that the plan will jeopardize the quality of the programs currently caring for children or reduce the number of days of service in our communities, or the number of children served.
2. **Length of Care:** School age child care provides coverage between three and six o'clock; school holidays, week long school vacations and the summer. These programs serve working parents year round, especially on the many days when schools are closed.
3. **Location of Care:** School age child care offered in community based settings offers the greatest degree of flexibility for working parents. It is convenient for parents with pre-school children in a child care center to coordinate pick up of school age children at the same center at the end of the day. Also, when school is out, both the pre-school and school age children can attend the same program.
4. **Type of Care:** School age child care provides adequate funding to hire trained professional staff who receive an annual salary with benefits. Staff in most after school programs, especially school-based, experience a high turnover, and they earn approximately \$9 per hour seasonally working without benefits.

One settlement house in lower Manhattan runs an ACS school age child care program for 55 children. These children receive care year round and are picked up from their schools after 3 pm. They are dropped off at the settlement in the summer and when schools are closed for holidays from 8 am – 6 pm. What is special about this program is that staff develop strong bonds with the children in their care. Many know these children since day care and are able to build long and ongoing relationships with them and their families. These providers play a significant role in their lives that is critical for single parent families, immigrant families and those children being raised by their grandparents.

Recommendations

We strongly believe that an inclusive planning process is needed to:

- Create realistic timeframes for planning, transitions and implementation of proven program models of school age child care from ACS to DYCD.
- Avoid program disruptions during the school year.
- Identify the scope of services in the existing school age programs serving over 19,000 children in ACS funded school age child care.
- Identify the scope of services in after school programs currently run by the Department of Education as well as the number of children being served.
- Involve stakeholders – individual providers and consumers -- in designing program models that meet the needs of children and their working families.
- Create programs that continue to offer year round comprehensive care in community based settings.
- Adequately fund new program models to support well trained child development staff.

We remain optimistic that the Administration will work with the City Council, providers and stakeholders to create a system that will provide comprehensive care to our City's children. We look forward to working with you over the next year.

Joining me today are representatives from Hudson Guild, United Community Centers, Boys & Girls Harbor and Lenox Hill Neighborhood House to share their concerns on the restructuring of school age child care.

United Neighborhood Houses is the federation of 36 settlement houses working to improve the lives of New Yorkers by speaking out and working for progressive change in social and public policies. We partner with settlement houses to address critical needs of youth, senior citizens and families, and to create social communities that help people thrive.

Settlement House Members: Boys & Girls Harbor—Casita Maria—Center for Family Life in Sunset Park – Chinese American Planning Council – Citizens Advice Bureau – Claremont Neighborhood Centers – East Side House Settlement – Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center – Educational Alliance – Forest Hills Community House – Goddard Riverside Community Center – Grand Street Settlement – Greenwich House – Hamilton-Madison House – Hartley House – Henry Street Settlement – Hudson Guild – Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House – Kingsbridge Heights Community Center—Lenox Hill Neighborhood House – Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center – Mosholu Montefiore Community – RENA-COA Multi-Service Center – Riverdale Neighborhood House – SCAN New York – LaGuardia Memorial House – School Settlement Association –Seneca Center – Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers – St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center – St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation – Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center – Sunnyside Community Services – Third Street Music School Settlement – Union Settlement Association – United Community Centers – University Settlement Society