

VGM Professional Careers Series

# CAREERS

## IN CHILD CARE



**MARJORIE EBERTS**  
**MARGARET GISLER**

**VGM Professional Careers Series**

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# **CAREERS**

## **I N C H I L D C A R E**

**MARJORIE EBERTS**  
**MARGARET GISLER**

**SECOND EDITION**



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# DEDICATION

To Shari, Anthony, and Larry—the new members of our families.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marjorie Eberts is a professional author who writes in the areas of careers and education. She holds an M.A. in education from Stanford University and an education specialist degree from Butler University. Her expertise in child care has evolved from 10 years of experience as a teacher along with work as a supervisor of a university reading center for children.

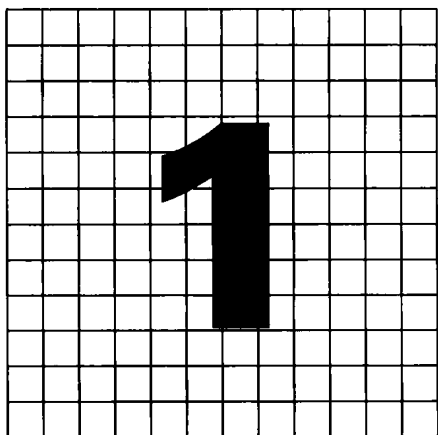
Margaret Gisler is a professional author and an expert in the field of child care. She has taught preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. In addition, she has been a college instructor of reading and a supervisor of a reading clinic for children. For more than six years, Margaret worked with children as a camp counselor, life-guard, fitness instructor, and waterfront director. Her educational background includes an M.A. in education and an education specialist degree from Butler University.

Together, the two authors have written more than 70 books, usually in the field of careers and education. They have published several books for children, including a series of books on phonics and a book that teaches nutrition and shapes to preschoolers. The two authors have also written books that help parents prepare young children for school and help students learn study skills. In addition, they write a nationally syndicated column, "Dear Teacher," which gives advice to parents on how they can help their children succeed in school, and answer parents' questions on-line at [www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com).

As the mothers of six children between them, the authors have gained first-hand experience with many professionals in the child care arena. Through their children they have been involved with teachers, tutors, coaches, camp counselors, pediatricians, pediatric dentists and nurses, private music teachers, counselors, speech therapists, children's librarians, youth ministers, baby-sitters, and child care center owners and workers as well as home-based child care providers.

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## **TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY CAREERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

Today's children are tomorrow's leaders, teachers, doctors, judges, salespeople, astronauts, and computer programmers. A child who is in school today will be president of the United States in the future. Several will be Nobel prize winners. A few will make new discoveries that will impact the lives of everyone, as the automobile and computer did in the twentieth century. The future happiness, health, and welfare of all children depend greatly upon the help they receive from all those who have careers involving their care. This book deals with those careers.

In the twenty-first century, parents will remain their children's main caregivers. They will, however, receive more help than ever before in raising their children. Parents will be directly assisted in caring for their children by child care workers in their own homes, child care centers, and preschools. Teachers from kindergarten through college will help children obtain the formal education essential to surviving in today's world. To keep their children healthy or to help them recover from illnesses or injuries, parents will rely on the professionals who have chosen careers in the health care of children. When their children have serious social or emotional problems, parents will obtain help for them from psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and social workers.

Parents in this new century are looking to professionals not only for help in caring, educating, and keeping their children healthy. They are also involving those who have careers that will lead to the enrichment of their children's lives. Today's parents especially want their children to acquire sports and recreational skills such as soccer, karate, swimming, gymnastics, basketball, and horseback-riding from professionals. They are also seeking to expand their children's creative skills by giving them lessons in the arts and sciences. After school and in the summer, parents are looking for youth organizations that can provide their children with such activities as camping, crafts, and scouting. Parents also expect professionals to

entertain their children in movies and videos and on television, and at birthday parties, restaurants, and amusement parks.

Because parents are seeking so much help in the raising of their children, more careers than ever before are associated with children. In addition, there are careers associated with the creation, manufacture, and sale of products used primarily by children.

## **CAREER OPTIONS**

A career that involves working with children gives many people immense satisfaction. These careers are important because the welfare of children is vital to the success of our democratic society. This book will explore a number of careers involving the care and well-being of children.

### **Child Care Center Careers**

Fifty-five percent of all children between the ages of 3 and 5 are enrolled in child care centers, making the employment picture for workers at these centers extremely rosy. In fact, it is projected that the employment of preschool workers will grow much faster than the average for all occupations through 2006, according to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor. Most of the 80,000 centers are nonprofit and are run by school districts, community agencies, religious institutions, and other local organizations. Businesses are also starting to operate child care facilities for their employees. Although some for-profit child care centers belong to regional and national chains, most are owned by individuals and families. The major downside to a career working in child care centers is that the pay is generally low and few benefits are offered.

### **Child Care Careers in Your Home**

More than one million people operate in-home child care businesses, giving themselves an opportunity to work with children without leaving their homes. They have established profitable businesses that are less complicated to operate than many other businesses. Of course, it is not possible to set up an in-home child care center without complying with certain governmental regulations, and it is also essential to develop a business plan. In addition, owning a child care business involves such tasks as obtaining insurance, buying supplies, advertising services, and hiring employees. Furthermore, it is essential to be knowledgeable about child development, as a program must be created that will help each child develop socially, emotionally, physically, and mentally.

### **Nanny Career Opportunities**

Mary Poppins is probably the world's most famous nanny. While nannies are not expected to fly through the air as Mary did, they have many of the same duties that she had. They are almost totally responsible for the care of their charges. Nannies plan the days for the children in a family and supervise most of their activities. Nannies typically live with the family, work long hours, and have week-

ends and holidays off. The demand for nannies is far greater than the supply. The job does require training, and most professional nannies have attended nanny school or have a background in early childhood education.

### **Baby-Sitting Career Opportunities**

Baby-sitting is a less formal job than being a nanny. Baby-sitters usually go to a home to help working parents or parents who want a night out or a short vacation together. Baby-sitters may also baby-sit children in their own homes. Baby-sitting is often an intermittent or part-time job. A baby-sitter typically watches the children of just one family. However, two or more families may get together to hire a sitter. Wages are generally paid on an hourly basis. There is a tremendous demand for baby-sitters, especially those who have proved reliable.

### **Education Careers Working with Children**

The teaching profession is the largest in the world. From Aristotle to this year's teacher of the year, the task of teachers has always been to help other people learn. Teaching as a profession has developed largely since the 1800s, when teacher-training schools opened in western Europe. Teachers in preschool and Head Start (see Chapter 2) programs are usually required to have taken several courses in early childhood education. Kindergarten, elementary, middle school, and junior high teachers, however, normally have bachelor's degrees. A career in teaching is an investment in the next generation.

### **Children's Sports and Recreation Careers**

Many of today's children are filling their leisure time with organized sports and recreation activities. They are eager for sports instructors to teach them sports skills or how to become more adept at a sport. Their interests in sports range widely from the traditional, such as tennis, swimming, and basketball, to the less well known, such as archery, karate, and canoeing. Children also seek recreation through some form of play, amusement, and relaxation. Recreation workers help children learn how to use their leisure time effectively. They work at recreation and parks departments, at summer camps, and with civic, social, fraternal, or religious organizations.

### **Children's Health Careers**

Health care professionals have the opportunity to exercise the compassion they feel for children in a meaningful way. They diagnose illnesses, perform medical examinations, and treat children suffering from injury, disease, and mental health problems. At the same time, they advise parents on their children's diet and hygiene and on preventive health measures. Most careers involving the health care of children require special training and licensing. Certain health care careers, such as pediatric cardiologist and child psychiatrist, demand years of postgraduate training and education. Employment of health care professionals is expanding rapidly as more emphasis is placed on preventive medicine and as new technologies emerge.

**Careers Ensuring the Welfare of Children**

Children can be the victims of poverty, family problems, and abuse. Some children join gangs, commit crimes, and do not attend school regularly. Choosing a career in child welfare or juvenile justice is an opportunity to make the world a better place for children who find themselves in unfortunate situations and to rehabilitate those who exhibit antisocial behavior. Such careers require individuals who are mature, objective, and extremely sensitive to children and their problems. Social workers, police officers, juvenile court judges, court referees, and child advocates are concerned with ensuring children's welfare. They find jobs in child welfare departments, police juvenile bureaus, adoption agencies, crisis intervention services, schools, hospitals, clinics, and social service organizations.

**Arts and Entertainment Careers with Children**

Artists, dancers, and musicians share their expertise with children as they teach them these arts. Just as many children are attracted to sports, many are also drawn to learning how to play musical instruments, dance, and draw pictures. Children gain pleasure from acquiring skills in the different arts, and they also enjoy being entertained. Clowns and magicians amuse children, and so do actors in children's theaters and on radio and television programs designed for children. Careers in entertaining children are for those who want to bring enjoyment to children while satisfying their own desire to be in front of a camera, microphone, or audience.

**More Careers Working with Children**

Jobs helping and caring for children are found just about anywhere there are children. At a library, children's librarians help children select books. Artists may concentrate their careers on capturing images of children on canvas or in stone. Children's book illustrators bring authors' tales to life. Salespeople in children's shoe stores fit children in the correct shoes, and clerks at toy stores help children choose toys. In churches, youth ministers tend to the spiritual needs of young people. An amazing variety of jobs exists for those who want careers working with children.

**ASSESSING CAREER APTITUDES**

Are you interested in a career that will let you work with children? The following questions can help you assess which career areas relating to the care and well-being of children are most appealing to you.

1. Am I primarily interested in teaching children?
2. Is the health care aspect of caring for children my major interest?
3. Do I want to work directly with children, or would I rather work in a job dealing with their care or well-being?
4. Do I prefer to work with a specific age group, such as newborns, toddlers, preschoolers, or school-age children?
5. Do I prefer working with both children and their families?

6. Would I rather work with one child, a few children, or a group of children?
7. Do I want to work in an office, child care center, home, clinic, or hospital?
8. Do I want to establish my own business?
9. Would I like to supervise other employees?
10. Do I want to work in the private or public sector?
11. Do I want to work for a profit or nonprofit business or organization?
12. Would I prefer to work for a small, medium, or large business?
13. Am I willing to get training or a college degree in order to pursue my career interest?
14. Am I willing to read constantly to keep abreast of what is happening in my career field?
15. Do I truly like children so much that I want to devote my career to their care and well-being?

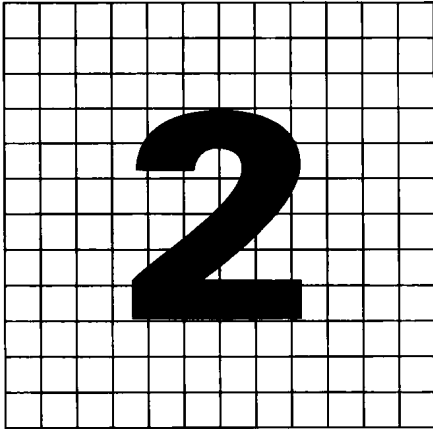
### LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

Children are not spending as much time with their parents as they once did. In the twenty-first century, this time will decrease further as more mothers join the workforce. Parents will rely even more than they do today on other caregivers to nurture, teach, and guide their children. This trend will result in more jobs in almost every area dealing with the care of children. In fact, it is anticipated that employment of workers in child care will increase much faster than the average for all occupations through 2006.

Today, the majority of people in careers associated with the care and well-being of children are women, and it appears that this will not change in the immediate future. In addition, many of the jobs relating directly to the hands-on care of children are poorly paid. Advocacy groups are capturing the attention of the media with their campaigns describing child care workers as underpaid and undervalued. The goal of this work is not only better pay for child care workers, but also greater recognition from the public for their efforts.

### FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT CAREERS IN CHILD CARE

An excellent source of information for most careers related to child care is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor. Consult this book before making vital career decisions. The book gives information about working conditions, employment opportunities, training required, advancement opportunities, earnings, and future job outlook for most types of work. It can be found in libraries, bookstores, and on-line at <http://stats.bls.gov/blshome.htm>.



## **CHILD CARE CENTER CAREERS**

The U.S. labor force has experienced a revolution with the entry of working mothers in dramatic numbers. As recently as 1975, only one-third of women with children worked outside the home. Now, approximately 70 percent of all mothers work. This group includes everyone from the computer programmer working 10-hour days to the part-time worker teaching four hours a week. The major impact of this change in the workforce is the overwhelming demand that now exists for child care workers. And this demand is increasing each year as the number of working mothers continues to rise.

### **THE DEMAND FOR CHILD CARE WORKERS**

The number of married mothers joining the workforce increased rapidly during the 1980s both for mothers of children under 6 and for those of children between 6 and 17. For example, in 1980, 45.1 percent of all married women with children under 6 were employed outside the home, but by 1990, that had shifted to 58.9 percent. And for women whose children were over 6, participation in the workforce rose from 61.7 percent in 1980 to 73.6 percent in the 1990s and the numbers continue to rise.

Separated, divorced, and single mothers of young children have always worked outside the home in greater numbers than married mothers. While their participation in the labor force increased during the 1980s, the increase was not as dramatic as it was with married mothers. In the 1990s, approximately 60 percent of separated mothers and 70 percent of divorced mothers with children under 6 were working mothers. The percentages increased greatly for those whose children were over 6. About 75 percent of separated mothers and 86 percent of divorced mothers with older children were in the workforce. As more and more mothers join the workforce, more child care workers are needed.

The increased number of working mothers is the number-one reason why demand for child care workers has skyrocketed. Furthermore, as their children

move through school, there will be a need for more child care workers for supervision of before- and after-school activities and during vacations and holidays from school.

The other reason is the very high turnover rate among child care workers. According to *The National Child Care Staffing Study, 1988–1997*, the average turnover of all staff at child care centers in 1997 was 31 percent. More than 27 percent of assistants and 39 percent of teachers left their jobs. The explanation for this turnover is quite simple: it's the money, or rather the lack of it. The wages for child care workers, including the highest-paid staff members, are abysmally low. The same study also indicated that in 1997 the highest-paid child care teachers at centers earned barely half as much as nearly 74 percent of professional workers.

## **CAREER OPTIONS FOR CHILD CARE WORKERS**

As the number of working mothers has increased, a need for a variety of child care arrangements has emerged. This, of course, has created many career choices that center on the care of children. Although approximately 20 percent of all families rely on relatives for satisfactory child care arrangements, the rest must look for help beyond their immediate family circle. The two most popular choices are child care centers and family child care homes. This chapter explores the different types of child care centers and the job opportunities they offer. Careers in family child care homes will be investigated in Chapter 3.

## **HISTORY OF CHILD CARE CENTERS**

Before the Industrial Revolution, children were typically cared for in their homes by their families or by caregivers hired to assist family members. In the mid-1700s, factories sprouted up all over England and Scotland, and large numbers of women left their homes to work in them. This change was due largely to the invention of two machines, the spinning jenny and the water frame, which took the manufacture of textiles out of homes and into factories. Women were not able to leave their young children at home nor have the children at their sides in the factories while they were working. To solve this problem, factory owners established rooms for their workers' children and hired untrained adults, boys, and girls to supervise the children. These were the first child care centers. The establishment of child care centers in the United States occurred almost 100 years later, when manufacturing became a major industry and women first joined the workforce.

Besides pioneering child care centers, Great Britain also introduced nursery schools a short time later to improve upon the care children were receiving at factory child care facilities. Robert Owen, a mill owner and social reformer, set up the first program to teach and supervise the children of factory workers and hired people with some teaching qualifications.

During World War II, women were needed to work in the factories. The U.S. government responded by passing the Lanham Act, which provided funds to set up child care centers in defense plants. At the end of the war, these centers were

shut down, and many women left the workforce. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, women began returning to the workforce and the need for child care centers grew. Today, more than 80,000 centers serve 55 percent of children ages 3 to 5.

In the mid-1960s, the federal government began to play a more prominent role in the care and development of young children. The Head Start program was launched to help prepare the children of poor families for school. Activities were designed to stimulate the social, emotional, mental, and physical growth of young children. Many parents of children in this program work in centers as aides or as volunteers. The Head Start program continues today. Also, the federal government began to provide some child care services for mothers receiving welfare payments who were enrolled in job training programs.

Many proposals for federally sponsored child care programs have been introduced since the 1960s. A comprehensive proposal, the Child Development Act, was passed in Congress in 1971 but was vetoed by President Nixon. This legislation would have expanded Head Start and provided preschool education for all children who needed this help before enrolling in school. Every year child care bills are introduced in Congress; however, no comprehensive national child care plan has yet emerged. Some states have begun to offer prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds in their most disadvantaged school districts. And others are considering legislation requiring all schools to offer programs for 3- and 4-year-olds. A wide variety of child care programs are subsidized by federal, state, and local governments, and more will appear in the future to meet the demand for quality child care. At all levels of government, regulations have been issued that set standards for providing quality child care. One of the most common regulations is the establishment of ratios for how many children of a certain age can be cared for by one child care worker.

During the 1980s, business and industry became aware that working mothers with young children had more absences from work and left their jobs more often due to the responsibility of caring for their children. The problems were greatest with the mothers of preschool children. In response, employers devised child care options to help their working mothers. A few have developed both on-site and off-site child care centers. In some cases, a group of employers have joined together to provide child care for their employees. An employer may also establish a referral service to help families find child care. Many employers offer vouchers for child care or include some form of child care in their benefits packages. With research showing that employer-sponsored day care programs improve morale and cut personnel costs, more companies have started some type of child care program. This trend is expected to continue, and to accelerate, in the future.

## **TYPES OF CHILD CARE CENTERS**

While all child care centers are organized to care for young children, there is diversity in the ownership of these centers. Most centers are operated by nonprofit organizations. Although people hear a lot about national child care chains, most of the for-profit child care centers are locally owned. The ownership composition of child care centers is shown in Figure 2.1.

There are advantages in having so many different types of child care centers. Not only do parents have a choice, but child care workers also can choose the work environment that is most appealing to them.

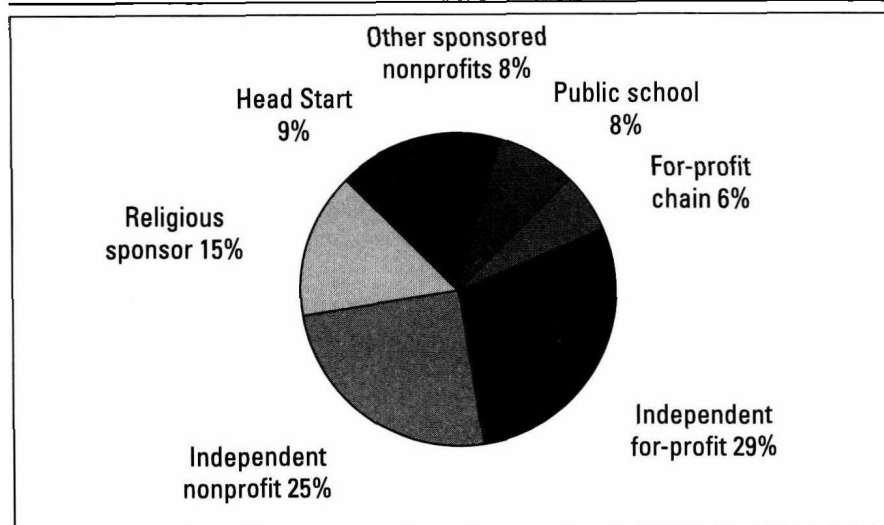
### Nonprofit Child Care Centers

Two-thirds of all child care centers are nonprofit centers. They are operated by religious organizations, YMCA groups, public schools, parent associations, local organizations, recreation and park districts, and government services. These centers vary immensely in their size and the services offered. A center may have just one room with a teacher and an assistant teacher or several rooms and more than 20 staff members. It may be licensed for 20 children or more than 100. Nevertheless, nonprofit child care centers generate the greatest number of positions for child care workers.

Step One School, in Berkeley, California, is an excellent example of a nonprofit child care center. The center is a nonprofit public benefit corporation governed by a board of directors. The staff consists of codirectors and 19 teachers, of whom 60 percent work a part-time schedule of five to six hours. The teachers are salaried and are also paid overtime for meetings and conferences. The school has an innovative benefits program that lets staff apply benefits dollars to the specific benefit programs they want. This saves both the center and the employees money.

The school is easily accessible by public transportation. The building, formerly a K-3 public school, is situated on a prime site with views of San Francisco Bay. It contains five sunny and airy classrooms and a kitchen. The fenced yard provides a safe area for climbing, sand play, bike riding, and just sitting on the grass. A shrub-covered hill has trails for hiking and exploration and space for gardening.

**Figure 2.1 Ownership of Child Care Centers**



Source: A profile of child care settings

The goal at Step One is to guide the development of a well-rounded child—one who knows and trusts himself or herself, who can get along with others, and who can recognize and follow his or her interests as well as create new ones. Both the indoor and outdoor environments are carefully designed by the staff to set the stage for play, which is the work of the child.

The children learn through experimenting, playing independently, building, and engaging in games and art projects they find attractive and interesting. Through their play and social interactions, the children discover more about the world they live in, build concepts, and learn to express their feelings in appropriate ways.

The school offers four programs: a program for 2-year-olds, a nursery school program, a kindergarten program, and an afternoon program that extends care for children in the morning program. The teachers for each of the programs work together to develop an overall schedule of activities that meets the needs of the children. The curriculum is planned each week at classroom team meetings in which the events and progress of the last week are evaluated and new projects are developed collectively.

Step One has an open admissions policy that accepts children on a first-come, first-served basis, with adjustments for age and sex. The school is committed to having a diverse population of families and actively recruits in the community to achieve this. Step One also has an active scholarship program.

### **For-Profit Child Care Centers**

Approximately 35 percent of all child care centers are for-profit. Most are independent rather than being part of a local or national chain. Teachers and assistant teachers usually receive hourly wages. The general rule regarding benefits is the smaller the center, the fewer the benefits.

Kid Time, in Walnut Creek, California, is a good example of a small, for-profit child care center. The school is principally owned by Stephen Wilson, who teaches at the center and who founded it along with his father. As is typical of small centers, the director also teaches. All together, four full-time teachers and an assistant teacher care for approximately 35 to 40 children each day. As the enrollment climbs during the year, more staff is hired to keep the teacher/child ratio within state requirements. The director of Kid Time is salaried, while the teachers receive hourly wages. Some medical benefits are available for the staff. The center provides five sick/personal days, one week of vacation after one year of employment, and paid holidays.

The school is open all year except for eight major holidays. Hours are from 7:00 A.M. to 6:30 P.M., which are standard operating hours for many child care centers. Classes are offered for toddlers, preschoolers, and prekindergartners. More than half of the children stay all day. The morning program is basically preschool in nature, and some preschool work is also done in the afternoon.

Kid Time is located in an old home that has been expanded to accommodate the center. The atmosphere is intentionally very homelike to help the young children make a smooth transition between home and center. There is a large room for classes, another room for conducting group activities, and a kitchen, bathroom, and utility/art room.

## **For-Profit Child Care Chains**

Only 6 percent of all child care centers are operated by chains. Nationally, there are two giants: KinderCare, with over 1,000 centers, and La Petite Academy, with more than 730 academies. These chains have standardized curriculums, policies, and operating rules. They offer considerably more amenities and services than the smaller child care centers, but their tuition is usually higher. For child care workers, employment with national chains usually means the opportunity to have some benefits, such as medical, dental, and life insurance, and 401(k). Smaller neighborhood centers typically will not be able to offer these benefits.

In recent years, the chains have been expanding into new areas by opening centers in places close to parents' workplaces. In addition, centers that cater to children ages 6 and up have been started. They offer only before- and after-school care, including taking children to school and picking them up after.

## **Employer-Sponsored Child Care Centers**

Although employers are definitely concerned with the issue of child care, few companies actually offer it on-site. One of the best-known facilities is the Hacienda Child Development Center, located in its own building in the Hacienda Business Park in Pleasanton, California. The center has received international recognition for its innovative design, which features large windows and spacious outdoor play areas. Such amenities as a partially covered outdoor play area, air-conditioning, and radiant heating provide for the children's comfort and necessities, even in extreme weather.

The Hacienda Child Development Center offers the services that most working parents require. It is open from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. five days a week and operates year-round on a business calendar. Employees working in the Hacienda Business Park receive a discount, as do employers who become corporate associates or corporate members of the Early Learning Institute (ELI), which operates the center. ELI operates its own centers as well as private centers under management contracts.

The professional staff receive a salary based upon their education and experience. Permanent, full-time staff receive health, dental, and vision insurance, retirement plans, flexible pretax spending accounts, child care subsidies, a credit union, paid holidays, seniority sabbaticals, sick and vacation days, and paid time off for program observations, jury duty, and bereavement. In all programs, the center exceeds the minimum staffing ratios required by state law. The infant program maintains a maximum 3 to 1 ratio rather than the required 4 to 1 ratio, while the toddler program maintains a maximum 4 to 1 ratio. The 2-year-old and preschool programs maintain maximum 8 to 1 and 10 to 1 ratios, respectively, rather than the state 12 to 1 requirement.

The center offers care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergartners, and first and second graders. The infant and toddler programs are based on ELI's innovative HeadsUp! approach, which makes use of play and learning games to help lay the necessary foundations of all future learning. The preschool program is a modified Montessori curriculum incorporating art, music, and imaginative play into the traditional emphasis on practical life, sensorial, language, mathematics,