

## LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: University and Community Childcare LIAISONS: Lucy Dougherty

**1. Need for Program** Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses.

- UCC's target population for services ranges from Infants of 6 weeks to children 11 years old. Populations currently served include ISU students (54%), staff/faculty (38%), community members (2%) and UCC staff (2%).
- Infant, toddler, and preschool children may enroll full days throughout the year. Kindergarten through fifth grade children may attend before and after school during the academic year. The school-age program is open full days during public school vacations.
- Service is provided for mildly ill children who cannot attend their regularly scheduled child-care programs. This service is available to all members of the ISU/Ames/Story County community. The Comfort Zone service is only provided during the academic year.
- The ASSET priorities addressed pertain to Childcare and Youth Development.

**2. Program Strengths** Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength describe some supporting evidence.

- UCC has maintained accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In October 2016 a 5-year renewal was granted by complying with NAEYC's standards of quality for early learning programs.
- A 5-star rating on the Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS), which has been consistently maintained since 2014.
- UCC has a large candidate pool available for finding part-time help. Those interested are normally perusing education in fields related to child development or childcare.
- UCC is actively looking for staff they can train through the TEACH (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Iowa and has quality measures in place to ensure people can enroll through UCC.

**3. Program Weaknesses** Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.

- Finding Full Time staff has become increasingly difficult. In order to keep services low cost, compensating staff competitive wages in the Ames job market has been difficult.
- The lowest rates available on the sliding fee scale are still challenging for ISU student families to meet for infants, young toddlers, and early school aged children. Additional support in these areas is requested.
- Due to the high demand for affordable childcare services, there is currently a waiting list of 58 children, 91 infants & 67 toddlers. The waiting list does roll over but not all of the families on the waiting list will be served.

**4. Financial Outlook** Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.

- A budget increase has been requested to allow higher cost reduction to ISU student families.
- ISU student families did not see an increase in fees last year but will this year due to budget constraints.
- Other target populations did see an increase in fees last year and will be facing another increase this year.
- Infant and toddler programs are the most expensive to operate and are facing the largest fee increase. These are also the programs with the largest waiting lists.

**5. Internal Management Practices** Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

- The board meetings are very encompassing and provide adequate opportunity for members to discuss issues facing the agency. Committee reports include fundraising, public relations, grant, and general updates. A financial report is also given every meeting.
- A new director was appointed this year.
- The board meets 10 times a year, monthly with two exceptions. The board is composed of 12 members including Ex-Officio members (4), primarily of families who utilize the service. There is 1 community member who does not use the service that sits on the board. Executive positions are elected annually.

**6. Agency Suggestions/Comments** Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

- The new director noted that the ASSET fiscal year is different than the timeline of the UCC budget process, which occasionally makes things difficult.

#### **7. General Assessment:**

UCC is doing an excellent job providing much needed services to in-need families. The staff seemed enthusiastic and very capable. Upcoming budget restrictions are going to impact families at the lowest end of the sliding fee scale, and staffing continues to be an issue because full time, 4-year degree holding professionals, are paid ~\$26,000 annually at the agency as teachers.