



# Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative

County Plan 2003-2004



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Families and Communities Together (FACT) Collaborative

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Kent East, *Commissioner*

Roy Thomas, *Commissioner*

June 30, 2003

Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative

A project of

### **Families and Communities Together Collaborative**

*...promoting healthy children and youth, strong families and safe communities  
in Huntingdon County*

# Huntingdon County Childcare Initiative

## Introduction

### VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative is that children will be healthy, safe, successful and ready for life.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative is to promote quality, affordable, and accessible child care for all children of Huntingdon County.

It accomplishes its mission by supporting parents and child care providers with the best tools, skills, and resources to create a healthy, safe, and educationally-appropriate child care environment.

### PRIMARY INITIATIVE GOAL

The primary focus of the Initiative is to improve the quality of life of children from birth to 16 years of age through activities in five focal areas of concern: (1) capacity, (2) quality of early care and education, (3) child care provider career development, (4) child care for children with special needs, and (5) public and parent awareness and education.

## I. Status of Child Care in Huntingdon County

The intent of the Initiative in the coming year is to continue to develop and expand knowledge of resources and services available in Huntingdon County to support, promote and expand child care and early education services. The current plan describes information available at the close of the current grant year. A committee of the Initiative will conduct a resource mapping of available services to update the plan and better describe the status of child care within the county. Given the Initiative's current level of functioning, the information below provides a broad, yet incomplete, overview of the county's child care system. In the next grant year, the Initiative intends to develop a more refined and complete understanding of the resources as well as identify additional gaps in the system.

### County Population

Census data for Huntingdon County indicate that the population of the county has increased only slightly (.098%) from 1990 to 2000 to 44,599. The residents of the county reside in largely rural (78%) areas with the remainder living in several small towns

(22%). Employment in the county is fairly stable with unemployment rates ranging from 6 to 12 percent over the past decade. In comparison to the rest of the state, Huntingdon County ranks as one of several counties with high unemployment as employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector continue to decline. Additionally, the county is adversely affected by higher rates of school dropout (25 percent of the adults 25 years and older are without a high school diploma, and 6.3 percent of current high school age youth are no longer in school), low literacy and achievement rates, and high early pregnancy. Given the geographically terrain, transportation to services is a major barrier throughout the county. Additionally, approximately 30% of the population do not have reliable transportation.

### Status of Children

There are approximately 9,895 children from birth to 16 years of age living in the county. A breakdown of age categories is shown in the following table:

**Table 1. Children by age category<sup>1</sup>**

Year	0-5 Months	6-12 Months	13-23 Months	24-35 Months	3-5 Years	6-9 Years	10-12 Years	13-16 Years	TOTAL
1990	235	235	469	499	1,494	1,585	1,594	2,188	8,298
2000	1,460				1,517	2,116	2,378	2,422	9,895

The table below describes the child population of Huntingdon County by gender.

**Table 2. Size and Age Structure of the Child Population under Age 18 by Gender<sup>2</sup>**

Age Group	Total		Males		Females	
	Number	Percent of Population	Number	Percent of Population	Number	Percent of Population
Total population under age 18	9,893	100	5,133	51.9	4,760	48.1
Under 5 years	2,481	25.1	1,302	13.2	1,179	11.9
5 years	485	4.9	247	2.5	238	2.4
6 to 9 years	2,127	21.5	1,103	11.1	1,024	10.4
10 to 14 years	2,878	30.1	1,542	15.6	1,436	14.5
15 to 17 years	1,822	18.4	939	9.5	883	8.9

Of the children in the county in child care services, the following chart describes the current capacity of early care and education in Huntingdon County.

<sup>1</sup> Huntingdon County Child Care Information Services, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> KIDS COUNT Census Data Online (2002).

**Table 3. Early Care and Education Capacity**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>PA Rate (%)</b>	<b>Rural Counties Rate (%)</b>	<b>Huntingdon County Rate (%)</b>
Regulated Child Day Care Capacity (per 100 child under 14 years of age in need) –1998	88.4	56.1	32.2
Children enrolled in Head Start (per 100 eligible children ages 3 – 4 years old) – 2000	50.8	54.6	81.7

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions with respect to child care providers will apply. Child care providers can be broadly classified as being relatives or nonrelatives of children. *Relatives* include mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, and *other relatives* such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. *Non-relatives* include in-home babysitters, neighbors, friends, and other non-relatives providing care either in the child’s or the provider’s home, in addition to *family day care providers* who are non-relatives who care for one or more unrelated children in the provider’s home. An *organized child care facility* is a day care center, nursery school, or preschool. To present a comprehensive view of the regular weekly experiences of children under 15 years old, this report also shows the incidence of children enrolled in school and enrichment activities (such as sports, lessons, clubs, and after- and before school programs), and the time children are in self-care situations<sup>3</sup>.

The chart below describes the types of settings and percentage of children receiving subsidized child care in Huntingdon County. Neighbor/relative child care is the predominate type of child care service provided in the county and at a disproportionately higher rate in comparison to contiguous counties. U.S. Census Bureau (2000) statistics indicate that 312 (46.6 percent) grandparents living in a household with one or more of their own grandchildren under 18 years of age are responsible for the care of a grandchild.

**Table 4. Children in State Subsidized Child Care Setting – Contiguous County Comparison Rates<sup>4</sup>**

<b>County</b>	<b>Licensed and Registered Care</b>			<b>Unregulated</b>
	Centers (%)	Group Day Care Homes (%)	Family Day Care Homes (%)	Relative & Neighbor Care (%)
<b>HUNTINGDON</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>33.3</b>
Bedford	70.5	10.5	6.8	12.1
Blair	81.7	2.8	4.6	10.9
Mifflin	63	8.2	10	18.7
Franklin	48.4	3.8	25.1	11.7
Fulton	47.4	0	26.3	26.3

From available data, the table below describes the current average monthly number of unduplicated recipients of child care services, the number less than 200

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2000).

<sup>4</sup> Child Care Information Services (2002)

percent of the federal poverty income guidelines (FPIG), days of service and attendance, and daily cost by provider type.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 5. Child Care Utilization Report for Huntingdon County.**

<b>Type of Service</b>	Unduplicated Service Recipient	<200% FPIG	Service Days (Average)	Attendance Days (Average)	Daily Cost (Average)
Center-based Services	113	100	124.4	102.6	\$22.69
Family Day Care Services	94	81	155	127.4	\$13.24
Group Home	35	33	120.3	91.1	\$19.72
Unregulated	130	114	136.2	119.2	\$09.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>135.9</b>	<b>113.6</b>	<b>\$15.04</b>

In general, most residents of Huntingdon County define themselves relative to their school district. In keeping with this perspective, the table below describes the current availability of subsidized child care throughout the county by school district, the type of child care service and number of children.

**Table 6. Current Availability of Subsidized Child Care by School District<sup>6</sup>**

<b>School District</b>	Center-based		Group Day Care Home		Family Day Care Home		Relative/Neighbor Care	
	Providers (#)	Children (#)	Providers (#)	Children (#)	Providers (#)	Children (#)	Providers (#)	Children (#)
Huntingdon Area SD	3	40			6	20	8	15
Juniata Valley SD			1	7	2	7	3	5
Mount Union Area SD					7	30	15	32
Southern Huntingdon County SD					1	2	5	9
Tussey Mountain SD							2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>64</b>

## Health Status

The following charts provide an overview of the general health status of children (birth – 19 years old) in Huntingdon County<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Sample information obtained from Huntingdon County Child Care Information Services, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Information provided by Huntingdon County Child Care Information Services, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> State of the Child in Pennsylvania (2002), KIDS COUNT Census Data Online (2002).

**Table 7. Health Status Comparative Table**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>PA Rate (%)</b>	<b>Rural Counties Rate (%)</b>	<b>Huntingdon County (%)</b>
Low Birth Weight (per 100 births) – 1990	7.2	5.7	5.5
Low Birth Weight (per 100 births) – 1999	7.9	7.1	6.6
Lack of Early Prenatal Care (1990)	20.4	20.4	15.2
Lack of Early Prenatal Care (1999)	14.8	14.3	9.8
Births to Single Teens (1996)	9.4	8.5	12.8
Births to Single Teens (1999)	9.2	8.5	10.6
Infant Mortality (per 100 births) – 1990	9.5	8.3	9.5
Infant Mortality (per 100 births) –1999	7.1	7.7	4.0
Child Deaths Ages 1-19 (per 100,000)	36.3	42.8	27.3
Children enrolled in Medicaid (per 100 children under age 19) 2001	24.5	24.9	29.4
Children enrolled in CHIP (per 100 children under age 19) 2001	2.3	4.3	4.5

In Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Mental Retardation, is responsible for early intervention services to children birth to three years of age. From age three to entrance age for public education, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, is responsible for these services. Locally, the Tuscarora Intermediate Unit provides services for eligible children three to kindergarten age. Intervention and supportive services may be provided in the child’s home, child care center, Head Start, or other familiar setting<sup>8</sup>. Children with one or more special needs are described in the table below.

**Table 8. Special Needs Children by School District<sup>9</sup>**

<b>Special Needs</b>	<b>Huntingdon Area</b>	<b>Juniata Valley</b>	<b>Mount Union</b>	<b>Southern Huntingdon County</b>	<b>Tussey Mountain</b>
Children receiving Early Intervention Services					
Ages: 0 – 3	21	7	14	9	7
Ages: 3 – 5	38	19	17	20	
Children with Disabilities					
Number	374	138	242	190	
Percent (%)	13.6	14.0	14.5	12.9	

<sup>8</sup> Information provided by Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11, Early Intervention Services.

<sup>9</sup> Data were obtained from Tuscarora Intermediate Unit #11; HMJ Tri-County Mental Health/Mental Retardation, and State of the Child in Pennsylvania (2002).

## Children in Poverty and At-Risk<sup>10</sup>

National data support the general conclusion that children are at greatest risk of poverty than other age groups and that rural children are at greater risk (proportionally speaking) than urban children as a result of fewer available services. These findings are no less true in Huntingdon County where the number the children in poverty is substantially higher than the rest of the state due to the poor economic conditions of the county. The following tables provide information about the current poverty status of children in the county as well as other socio-economic and risk factors associated with the effects of poverty.

**Table 9. Selected Socio-Economic Indicators for Children in Huntingdon County**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>PA Rate (%)</b>	<b>Rural Counties Rate (%)</b>	<b>Huntingdon County Rate (%)</b>
Children under 18 receiving TANF (per 100 children) – 1998	9.8	5.5	4.5
Children under 18 receiving TANF (per 100 children) – 2001	6.0	3.1	2.7
Children in Single Parent Homes – 1990	20.1	15.5	15.9
Children in Single Parent Homes – 2000	25.1	20.7	21.2
Children ages 17 and under in poverty -- 1997	16.6	16.9	17.8
Children age 6 and under in poverty – 1997	17.4	19.9	20.3
Children dropping out of school (per 100 students enrolled in grades 9 – 12) – 1997	3.8	29.	2.8
Children dropping out of school (per 100 students enrolled in grades 9 – 12) – 1999	3.9	3.1	4.0
Children born to mothers with less than a high school education – 1990	16.4	18.0	16.6
Children born to mothers with less than a high school education – 1999	14.8	16.8	13.9
Births to Single Teens – 1996	9.4	8.5	12.8
Births to Single Teens – 1999	9.2	8.5	10.6
Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect Cases (per 1000 children) – 2000	1.7	2.0	1.9
Child Welfare Placements ages 0 – 18 (per 1000 children) – 1999	8.0	4.1	5.7

<sup>10</sup> State of the Child in Pennsylvania (2002), KIDS COUNT Census Data Online (2002).

**Table 10. Free and Reduced Lunch Participation Rates of Elementary Schools in Huntingdon County 1999-2000.<sup>11</sup>**

School District/Elementary School	Enrollment	Eligible for Free Lunch	(%)	Eligible for Reduced Lunch	(%)	Free & Reduced Lunch (%)
<b>HUNTINGDON AREA</b>						
Brady Henderson	185	55	35	22	14	49
Jackson Miller	105	28	27	15	14	41
Southside	397	78	20	51	13	32
Standing Stone	512	151	29	38	7	37
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>36.4</b>
<b>JUNIATA VALLEY</b>						
Juniata Valley Elementary	397	98	25	51	13	38
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>MOUNT UNION AREA</b>						
Kistler	54	12	22	9	17	39
Mapleton –Union	136	43	32	13	10	41
Mount Union	330	131	40	34	10	50
Shirley Township	245	92	38	25	10	48
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>46.9</b>
<b>SOUTHERN HUNTINGDON COUNTY</b>						
Rockhill	215	49	23	32	15	38
Shade Gap	147	39	27	18	15	38
Spring Farms	243	39	16	30	12	28
Trough Creek	142	6	25	27	19	44
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>32.1</b>
<b>TUSSEY MOUNTAIN</b>						
Robertsdale	173	62	36	16	9	45
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Huntingdon County</b>	<b>3284</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>38.5</b>

## Unemployment

Employment in Huntingdon County has been a major issue for several decades. Of the population 16 years and over, 54.2 percent are in the civilian labor force, 5.6 percent are unemployed. Of parents of children under six years of age, 63.6 percent are in the labor

<sup>11</sup> National School Lunch Program (2001)

force and spend an average of 28.9 minutes of travel time to work<sup>12</sup>. Per capita income is \$15,379 with median earnings for male and female full-time, year-round workers being \$29,977 and \$21,840, respectively. Residents of Huntingdon County have been adversely affected by downturns in the economic as reflected by a change in employment sectors (from manufacturing to service industries) and sustained periods of high unemployment (ranging in 2002 from 6 to 12% monthly unemployment).

The percent of families below poverty level is 8.2, with 12.1% below poverty with children under 18 years of age and 15.9% below poverty with related children under 5 years. Of families with female householder (no husband present), 28.0% are below poverty, 40.5% with children under 18 years are below poverty level, and 59.0% of female head of household families with children under 5 years of age are below poverty level.

## II. Local Planning Committee Structure

The Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative began its work in March 2003 under the sponsorship of Families and Communities Together (FACT) Collaborative as part of their Children Action Team.

The Initiative was created to develop a comprehensive early care and education plan for Huntingdon County by June 30, 2003. From its inception to the end of the first funding year of the project, an Executive Committee has met to develop and implement the start-up plan. With the recruitment of members of the Initiative, the following has been accomplished:

1. **Organizational infrastructure.** An Executive Committee was recruited with six active members representing the community, CCIS, business and the Collaborative. The current membership (35 active members) of the Initiative was recruited with the major child care stakeholders actively involved in subcommittee work. As a result of strong coordination and communication, four (4) monthly meetings of the Initiative were held. A vision/mission statement was developed collaboratively and endorsed. Consistent with the philosophy of the FACT Collaborative, group leadership and consensus-based decision-making have been operational norms of the Initiative in identifying and addressing early care and education concerns.
2. **Comprehensive Child Care Plan.** Provider, parent, and employer surveys relative to child care needs and gaps in Huntingdon County were developed from standardized instruments. 5,500 parent surveys were distributed and 315 responses were received (6% return rate) by the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. Analysis of the surveys will be conducted throughout the summer and results will be incorporated in an updated 2003-2004 comprehensive plan.

In the development of the current plan, members of the Initiative participated in

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, Summary File 3, DP-3—Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics.

subcommittees to identify key priorities areas, as well as to develop goals and objectives. These form the foundation of the Initiative’s work for the next fiscal year and will be adapted and refined as survey data are available. Three of four scheduled community forums were conducted with input from the community in three regions of the county. These findings have likewise been incorporated in the final report and have influenced the prioritization of needs.

3. **Sustainability Plan for Child Care Initiative.** Linkages with the Collaborative’s Resource Development Group have been established and discussions with the Collaborative’s Coordination Team relative to supportive funding for planning purposes have been reviewed and endorsed. Subject to the availability of Family Service System Reform Initiative funding, these matching dollars will be used to leverage activities related to the goals and objectives of the plan. Through the efforts of members of the Collaborative participating in the Initiative, federal grant proposals to support early care and education are being investigated with probable submission throughout July and August 2003.
4. **Child Care Advocacy Plan.** Extensive advertising announcing the parent survey and community forums was accomplished (approximately 8 ads reaching a readership of 14,000 and 30 days of cable advertising reaching 20,000 viewers). Anecdotal evidence suggested that an increased awareness of child care needs in the community occurred. Further, the advertisement prepared prospective survey participants for the parent surveys received through their place of employment.

The Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative has a current membership of 35 members representing child care providers, parents, local and state government, education, community-based organizations, and social service agencies. The current members of the Initiative are identified below:

**Table 11. Huntingdon County Child Care and Education Initiative Membership List – 2002-2003**

Name	Organizational Affiliation
Carol Allenbaugh	Families and Communities Together Collaborative
Mark Peters	Families and Communities Together Collaborative
Amy Streightiff	Child Care Information Services of Huntingdon County
Julie Duffey	Huntingdon County Business and Industry
Melanie Hawn	Center-based Day Care – Parent
Connie Baker	Child Care Resource Development Group
John LaRose	Child Care Resource Development Group
Deb White	Child Care Information Services of Huntingdon County
Debra Gregory	Penn State Cooperative Extension
Dawn Shields	Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11
Ann Foor	Director, Huntingdon County Human Services Office
Larry Sather	PA State Representative
Nancy Peone	PA State Representative – Assistant
Keith Black	PA State Representative – Assistant

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organizational Affiliation</b>
Louise Ketner	Huntingdon County Child and Adult Development Corporation
Margaret Kough	Huntingdon County Children's Services
Dick Sciablaba	United Way
Mike Honstine	Center-based/Faith-based Day Care Provider
Judy Wilson	Home Day Care Provider
Cordy Henry	Home Day Care Provider
Tammy Eastman	Parent Child Home Program
Dr. Martin Keeney	Center-based Day Care – Parent
Laurie Claar	Home Day Care Provider
Regina Raffenberger	Home Day Care Provider
Amy Reeder	Home Day Care Provider
Kathleen Reeves-Davignon	Home Day Care Provider
Donna Waleski	Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11 – Special Needs
Bethlyn Corbin	Huntingdon County Base Service Unit
Mary Wittaker-Myers	Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11
Brenda Barron	Employment and Training Services, Inc. and PA CareerLink
Deb Cisney	Employment and Training Services, Inc. and PA CareerLink
Linda Hancock	Huntingdon County Information and Referral Services of Southwestern PA
Kara Cook-Ritchey	Center-based Day Care – Parent
Tonia Brode	Nurse-Family Partnership – Nurse Home Visitor
Jim Hoover	Huntingdon County Women-Infant-Child (WIC) Program
Christine Breene	Juniata College Early Childhood Center
Carolyn Lehman	Community member/concerned parent

The members of the Initiative come from the various regions of the county commonly identified by the four school districts: Huntingdon Areas School District, Juniata Valley School District, Mount Union Area School District, and Southern Huntingdon County School District.

The membership of the Initiative has formed a number of subcommittees to identify needs, goals, objectives and action plans. Committees and members are identified below:

#### **Executive Committee**

- Melaine Hawn, Parent
- Amy Streightiff, CCIS
- Julie Duffey , Huntingdon County Business and Industry
- Carol Allenbaugh, Families and Communities Together Collaborative
- Mark Peters, Families and Communities Together Collaborative

### **Capacity Committee**

- Louise Ketner
- Amy Streightiff
- Carol Allenbaugh

### **Quality Committee**

- Laurie Claar
- Amy Reeder
- Regina Raffensberger
- Melanie Hawn
- Carol Allenbaugh

### **Child Care Career Development Committee**

- Judy Wilson
- Cordy Henry
- Judy Wilson
- Tammy Eastman
- Carol Allenbaugh

### **Families with Special Needs Children Committee**

- Bethlyn Corbin
- Donna Waleski
- Mary Myers
- Carol Allenbaugh

### **Parent/Public Education Committee**

- Deb White
- Dawn Shields
- Tonia Brode
- Debra Gregory

## **III. Major Needs in Huntingdon County**

The membership of the Initiative, feedback from Community Forums, preliminary review of Provider, Employer, and Parent Survey, as well as the Executive Committee have identified the following major needs related to child care in Huntingdon County.

The following needs are ordered in terms of importance and the Initiative has outlined broad objectives and activities in the next section for the next funding year.

- 1. Resources to enhance the quality and safety of child care services.** Providers, in particular, have cited the lack of available financial resources in meet licensing requirements as a major barrier to increasing child care capacity. Informal feedback has indicated that some unregulated providers would be more likely to become regulated providers where financial resources/incentive are available to assist in meeting safety requirements. Providers and parents alike cited the need for more financial assistance in promoting quality child care. Recommendations related to educationally appropriate indoor and outdoor toys, instructional materials and resources, and equipment to enhance the quality of child care were most frequently mentioned.
- 2. Identification and integration of unregulated providers into the child care service system of the county.** Relative to neighboring counties, Huntingdon County has a disproportionately high rate of unregulated (relative/neighbor) child care providers. The concern of the Initiative is to include as many types of providers in the work of the Initiative as possible. The interest is not only to identify providers but ways to determine the quality of care available in such settings. Inclusion of all child care providers in an integrated system of care that promotes quality care and early educational experiences is an important need. In community forums, parents in more remote parts of the county noted significant concerns about safety and early education experiences in child care settings. Parents cited a lack of available and quality child care resources to identify providers as well as methods for evaluating child care providers.
- 3. Training of child care providers to ensure quality child care.** Surveyed providers indicated a strong interest in early childhood development and education, child care best practices, and business development strategies as major training interests. Many also cited scheduling problems and lack of convenient training locations as significant barriers to training and professional development. Parents likewise indicated that they expected child care providers to have a good understanding of childhood development, safety, and the ability to create educationally-rich and stimulating environments that promote early learning and readiness for school.
- 4. Child care for children with special needs.** Currently there is no child care service specifically dedicated to the special needs of children with mental and/or physical disabilities. Increased training and sensitivity toward children with developmental or other handicaps was cited as a need. Additionally, parents and providers alike noted the need for “sick” child care services as well as back-up provider services when a child care provider is unable to provide regular care due to illness or other personal needs.
- 5. Parent/Public education and awareness of child care provider system and resources in Huntingdon County.** Parents cited a general lack of awareness of child care resources and available “quality” child care or of ways to identify

quality providers in the county. Additionally, working parents cited the need for greater employer sensitivity toward employees with children and child care needs. Greater awareness of resources and requests for a resource guide were often cited as unmet needs by parents.

## **IV. Quality and Capacity Child Care Plan**

### **Priority Areas and Associated Goals**

Based on the input of members of the Initiative and the respective committees, the following priorities, objectives and activities have been recommended for implementation in funding year 2003-2004. These priorities are listed, not rank ordered for importance, as the Initiative regards these priorities as equally important for implementation. Committees will work concurrently in accomplishing as many as possible in the coming year.

### **Priority Area #1: Increase the Capacity for Child Care in Huntingdon County**

- Increase the capacity of the current child care provider system.
  1. Develop a provider survey to determine the number of available child care openings among the existing providers.
  2. Survey local businesses to determine whether employers have issues regarding employees needing child care and options available to employees.
  3. Develop a resource map of current providers to determine where geographical gaps in services exist.
  
- Increase accessibility to child care services by reducing barriers to service.
  1. Determine the major barriers to accessibility among consumers of child care services.
  2. Determine the extent to which transportation to child care services is a barrier.
  3. Improve knowledge of the child care service network through the development of a child care resource directory.
  
- Address costs associated with capacity-building initiatives and investigate available and additional funding sources.
  1. Determine from providers the kind of economic challenges associated with increasing child care capacity.
  2. Research available funding opportunities related to capacity-building and the reduction of barriers to current services.

## **Priority Area #2: Improve the Quality of Child Care and Education in Huntingdon County**

The quality of child care and education is a significant issue among providers and parents alike. The Quality Planning Committee identified five key objectives in improving the quality of child care and early education:

- Increase Safety of Child Care Provider Sites.
  1. Develop emergency safety plans for fire, accidents, and unwanted visitors to increase safety of children.
  2. Ensure the availability of age-appropriate and educationally stimulating toys.
  3. Develop a system in which clearances can be rechecked more easily than re-application.
  4. Ensure that CPR and First Aid trainings are provided at convenient times and locations and lower cost per renewal period.
  
- Increase Funding to Ensure Quality of Services and Accessibility.
  1. Provide funding for age-appropriate and educationally stimulating indoor and outdoor toys.
  2. Increase funding for age-related educational centers and activities.
  3. Advocate for broader financial guidelines to include more working-poor and middle-class families.
  
- Ensure that Child Care Services are Reliable and Dependable.
  1. Develop a system of back-up services for child care providers when unable to provide regular care due to illness or other personal needs.
  2. Develop a system of sick-child care services when a child is too sick for regular child care services.
  3. Enhance parents' understanding of the criteria for evaluating illness and participation in child care services.
  
- Improve System of Communication among Providers, Parents, and State.
  1. Develop methods, procedures, and protocols for enhancing parent/provider communication and child care policies and procedures.
  2. Improve coordination of paperwork, forms, and documentation among parents, providers, and CCIS.
  3. Increase informational access to state regulations, training events, available child care resources, and policies and procedures.
  4. Increase provider productivity and competence through training in different business strategies and decision making.
  
- Improve Quality Assurance Monitoring of Child Care Services.
  1. Develop a monitoring and evaluation system of child care providers to ensure the best quality of child care.

### **Priority Area #3: Increase Child Care Career Development Opportunities within Huntingdon County**

- Develop training curricula that meet the local needs of Huntingdon County child care providers.
  1. Survey training needs of child care providers.
  2. Provider training in security and health plans, policies, and procedures.
  3. Increase the number of child care training topics (e.g., discipline, business management tools, etc.).
  
- Increase the number of available training opportunities.
  1. Increase the number of available training opportunities in PA Pathways.
  2. Increase the number of re-certification and continuing education training opportunities using newer educational and technological methods.
  
- Make trainings more accessible to providers throughout Huntingdon County
  1. Provide trainings during more non-traditional times (e.g., other than 8am – 5pm, evenings, and Saturdays) and at more convenient locations within Huntingdon County.

### **Priority Area #4: Increase the Availability and Accessibility of Child Care Services to Families with Special Needs Children**

- Identify the needs of families with children with special needs.
  1. Conduct a needs assessment.
  2. Link needs with training and capacity-development.
  3. Implement training and capacity building projects.
  
- Increase the availability of child care that makes accommodations for children with mental and physical disabilities.
  1. Increase provider education about and sensitivity to children with developmental or other handicaps.
  2. Develop a “sick” child provider service capable of dealing with children with special needs.
  3. Develop one special needs child care provider.
  
- Increase linkages among family, child care providers, and educational system.
  1. Develop closer links among child care providers and early intervention services.

### **Priority Area #5: Increase Parent and Public Education relative to Child Care Services in Huntingdon County**

- Develop a media strategy to promote child care services in Huntingdon County.
  1. Develop child care resource directory.
  2. Establish relationships with local media outlets (newspaper, radio, cable, outdoor advertisement).
  3. Increase the number of public education events at which the Initiative promotes quality child care and education in Huntingdon County.
  4. Enhance parents' understanding of the criteria for evaluating illness and participation in child care services.
  
- Develop stronger relationships with the medical community (i.e., pediatricians and medical centers), non-profit and business sectors.
  1. Increase the number of organizations promoting quality child care and service providers.
  2. Increase the number of newsletters including information on child care and early education.
  
- Develop educational and promotional materials on quality child care.
  1. Develop brochure, flyers, and handouts related to early care and education based upon best practice and research (e.g., Penn State University, "Selecting Quality Child Care").