

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The League of Women Voters of Alaska supports the availability of childcare for everyone who needs or wants it with priority given to those children whose need is greatest. The League believes users should be primarily responsible for childcare financing. Supplemental financial and regulatory responsibilities should be shared by all levels of government to insure that child care is of high quality, affordable and available to those who need it.

AMPLIFICATION

Child care objectives include providing enriching and varied experiences for children of parents who must or choose to work, or parents who are physically handicapped or who need emotional relief from child rearing. Childcare might also provide social, emotional, and developmental experiences which may be lacking in the home or provide protective service, emergency care, or drop-in care.

Parents' determination of whether to send their children or where to send them for childcare should in all instances be voluntary. Parental involvement should be strongly encouraged in any childcare situation. An important consideration is the availability of parent training and counseling. To provide a choice, different types of care should be available with an emphasis on center care and family home childcare, but including in-home childcare. Facilities are acceptable in any safe place, *e.g.*, a storefront, public or private building, portable unit, or other location.

Nurturing care, that in which the caregiver is aware of and attempts to meet the individual needs of each child, is the minimum each child should receive on a full time or regular basis. Custodial care, meeting physical safety needs alone, is unacceptable for childcare. Emphasis should be placed upon comprehensive care, *i.e.*, care provided by a person educated, experienced, and/or trained in dealing with the special needs of young children and able to meet those needs on an individual basis. Childcare for the handicapped or developmentally deprived child requires specially trained staff. Specific childcare requirements should be related to the number of hours per day a child is in attendance and qualification of teachers.

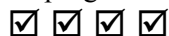
Regulations and standards appropriate to the locale and involving health, nutrition, safety, space per child, low staff-child ratio, and staff training should be maintained by state and local governments. Coordination of local, state, and federal standards is essential. Regulation and standards should be regularly reviewed.

The League believes there should be differentiation between childcare and pre-school programs. All programs dealing with pre-school age children should meet standards of early childhood growth principles. Pre-school programs should be taught by qualified teachers.

Users should have primary responsibility for childcare financing based upon the ability of the parent to pay. Available public funding should go to those children who need is greatest: children of parents who must work or are physically or emotionally incapable of full-time childcare. Governments may provide partial subsidies of start-up and operational costs.

League suggests that local schools could be involved in providing space and training for childcare needs. This might be in the form of summertime or after school use of facilities, parent education, and educating older children in the care of younger children.

School-aged children who have no adult supervision available to them prior to or after school present other significant problems and would benefit from special programs designed to meet their needs.



Adopted 1976; Revised 1986; Amended 2001; Reaffirmed each year since at LWVAK Convention.