

'Childcare Summit: Future Directions': Executive Summary

Joint Committee on the Status of Women

at Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Dental Medicine

On January 25, 2011, the Joint Committee on the Status of Women at HMS/HSDM held the first Childcare Summit: Future Directions at the Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School. The impetus for organizing this event was the following:

For over 30 years, obtaining quality, affordable, flexible and accessible childcare has challenged employees, staff, students, and faculty members at HMS/HSDM and their affiliated institutions. An exploration of this issue indicated that, despite some individual institutional efforts to address the childcare needs of their own constituents, there was a continued inadequacy of childcare options for a number of under-served groups in the HMS community. The leadership and members of the JCSW noted a long-standing need to promote a cohesive analysis, exploration, discussion, and commitment to readdress this challenge on a broader HMS and affiliated institutional scale.

With this in mind, the JCSW leadership spear-headed a summit to draw leadership and community members together with the following goals:

- Reengage the community in an exploration of childcare needs
- Facilitate a shared understanding of the scope of childcare needs and the impact of childcare challenges on the work and careers of community members
- Heighten awareness of the relationship between accessible childcare and the achievement of a healthy, successful work/life balance for all members of the community
- Promote thoughtful discussion, insight and interest in creative ways to address childcare needs
- Promote a renewed commitment on the part of community leaders to address the needs for childcare within the HMS/HSDM community

The Childcare Summit was co-sponsored and supported by the leadership of the HMS Office of Faculty Affairs and the Office of the Provost of Harvard University, and drew on the talents and expertise of staff and faculty members from the Office of Work/Life at Harvard University, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and the Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Faculty Development.

Over 180 registrants, attendees, and speakers attended the Summit on January 25, 2011. The Childcare Summit was opened by Dr. Jeffery S. Flier, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Harvard University. A history of childcare at Harvard was illustrated by Sarah Bennett-Astesano, Assistant Director of the Office of Work/Life at Harvard University. The plenary address was delivered by Professor Cathy Trower, Senior Research Associate and Research Director of The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who relayed research on the relationship between child and family care needs and the success of academic faculty members.

The Summit was anchored by four working break out groups, each charged with discussing and suggesting focused directions for addressing the challenges of childcare needs and successful work and career advancement at HMS and its affiliated institutions. The groups, goals, panelists, and outcomes follow.

Connections: Goals: *Identifying models of quality child care that meet needs*

Moderators: Susan E. Farrell, MD, EdM, Sarah E. Henrickson, PhD

Panelists: Sarah Bennett-Astesano, EdM, Dorothy Richardson, PhD, Andrea Piraino Stidsen, LICSW, Mary Brown, MSW

- Gather all affiliated institutions to share information about available resources
- Develop an online childcare network to share information amongst parents
- Consider the creation of a family childcare network
- Consider using local resources (trainees and networking) to support a family network

Collaborations: Goals: *Building childcare information networks across communities*

Moderator: Kathryn Rexrode, MD, MPH

Panelists: Linda Mills, MA, Nina Dickerman, MS, Gail Beauregard SPHR, Martha A. McNulty, EdM

- Create a consortium of Harvard-wide (including affiliated institutions) childcare champions
- Catalogue and share the available educational resources
- Utilize internal “opt-in” child care resources (“childcare mentors”)

Culture: Goals: *Creating flexible work culture to support child care needs*

Moderator: Maureen Connelly, MD, MPH

Panelists: Nancy S. Costikyan, MSW, LICSW, Steven D. Rauch, MD, Cathy Trower, PhD, Debbie Phillips, MA

- Engage leaders at many levels in the conversation about flexible work culture
- Deploy technology in order to improve flexibility and a diversity of options
- Impact relevant guidelines for funding using HMS as a platform for change
- Reinforce that it doesn't necessarily cost money to change culture

Commitments: Goals: *Addressing institutional support for childcare*

Moderator: Nicole Ullrich, MD, PhD

Panelists: Richard Mills, JD, Sarah J. Hamilton, Kathy Luneau-Simons, MS, Stephen Dempsey

- Centralize in a virtual arena the resources that are available at the different institutions
- Transparently catalog what others are doing related to childcare
- Find representatives from all affiliates to support and guide a central oversight group
- Consider creating a task force to continue overseeing this work
- Appoint a high level administrative LMA-wide person or group in charge of family care issues
- Recognize childcare as a workforce development and diversity issue, important for recruitment and retention of top talent in all jobs
- Consider flexible work hours and green campus initiative as changing work culture
- Collect date and exit interviews to determine how this issue may relate to people leaving institutions
- Make childcare affordability flexible

The Summit and its resulting outcomes were publicized through individual letters to HMS/HSDM and affiliated institutional leaders and in an open letter to the community. The outcomes represent coherent and recurring themes related to the importance of sharing information, collaboration, and investment in creative ways to address childcare needs. The JCSW prioritized community needs and three outcomes on which to focus for the immediate aftermath of the Summit:

- Supporting the creation of a consortium of childcare champions from the medical and dental institutions
- Collaborating with the HMS leadership to discuss and consider efforts to address childcare issues
- Creating a JCSW subcommittee that will continue to monitor and guide this ongoing work

A follow up survey was distributed electronically to Summit attendees (response rate approximately 50%). Of those who responded, more than 50% identified themselves as staff or instructors. Over sixty percent wanted to have more time to hear information from the panelist experts in the break out groups and over 50% expressed a need to have their concerns voiced and discussed in greater detail.

As of June 1, 2011, work on the three priorities identified above has produced the following exploratory information and strengthened the collaboration between the JCSW, childcare experts in the HMS/HSDM

community, and the executive leadership of Harvard Medical School. The results of these efforts are outlined here.

A group of professionals whose role it is to focus on important child care issues that impact faculty and staff, representing HMS/HSDM and the affiliated institutions, has been identified and will meet over the summer of 2011 to begin the establishment of the goals and mission of a childcare consortium. The mission of this consortium will be to consciously share goals and best practices around employee child care issues. A consultant who specializes in analyzing institutional and individual childcare needs was hired by MASCO to explore the feasibility of developing a HMS/HSDM and affiliate institution-supported Family Child Care Network. The results of this analysis have been presented to the executive leadership of HMS and will be shared with additional executives at affiliated institutions throughout the summer of 2011. A JCSW child care taskforce is being formed and will be charged with communicating the background information and feasibility of a Family Child Care Network for faculty and staff employed in the Longwood Medical Area.

In reviewing the outcomes of the Childcare Summit and the work to date and surveying the needs for quality childcare that exist within today's financially constrained environment, three future scenarios unfold as to the future of childcare within this community:

1. Continue as we have been with no substantial changes to current conditions
2. Allow individual institutions to manage their own employees' and staff faculty members' needs on an individual, ad hoc basis.
3. Foster a community driven, leadership-directed network of childcare resources to broadly address the needs of the community, with attention to those constituents who have previously been under-served by the current, limited childcare options.

The committee's thoughtful consideration of the continuing needs for childcare over decades of institutional history and the lack of collaborative problem-solving effort, leads us to propose only one best option to optimally address the issue of childcare at HMS/HSDM and its affiliates. In an effort to keep visible this issue, the JCSW commits itself to a continuing dialogue of support and guidance; education and collaboration, with all those who strive to address and meet this challenge.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan E. Farrell MD, EdM, Faculty Chair 2010 - 2011

Darla White, Staff Chair 2010 – 2011

On behalf of the JCSW Programming Subcommittee 2010 - 2011