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APPENDIX B

POSITION PAPER ON AFTER SCHOOL CARE

SUBMITTED TO SOCIAL SERVICE COMMITTEE

OF EDMONTON SOCIAL SERVICES

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EDMONTON SOCIAL SERVICES
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I INTRODUCTION

At the present time the Day Care Section of Edmonton Social Services is funding the operation of six After School Care programs with a combined capacity of 140 spaces. Five of these services are administered by the Boards of existing day care centres. The sixth program is operated by a society specifically established for this purpose. There is a rapidly growing interest in After School Care. Four formal submissions have been made requesting funding for new services and a large number of more informal inquiries have been received from communities considering the development of new programs.

There are a number of issues in the present system of development and support of After School Care programs which need to be resolved before further expansion takes place. Included in such issues are:

(a) the need for a revised funding system to more adequately support individual programs,

(b) the development of standards to guide the development of new programs,

(c) an agreement on the most appropriate administrative structure for new programs and,

(d) an agreement on the priority to be placed on the extension of After School Care programs relative to the extension of Family Day Care and pre-school centres.

It was felt that before making major policy decisions related to After School Care there would be value in gathering input from individuals and organizations who are involved in or have an interest in After School Care.

Toward this end a Community Task Force on After School Care was initiated. The Task Force held a number of meetings, and developed a sub-committee structure to prepare recommendations on specific issues. A copy of the Report of the Community Task Force is attached. The following analysis reflects much of the discussion of the Task Force and the recommendations have been prepared after careful consideration of the work of the Task Force.

II REVISION OF THE FUNDING SYSTEM

Several of the subsidized After School Care programs experienced severe financial problems over the past year. The major problem was the inability of the services to maintain a full enrollment. The narrow neighbourhood base of the After School Care program means that within a general context of heavy demand and limited service, individual programs may continue to be faced with unfilled spaces. With the present method of funding (a purchase of service agreement) revenue is tied directly to attendance. However, declining enrollment does not significantly lower the program's operating costs. The result is that such programs were faced with mounting deficits.

Recommendation #1: The method of funding be changed from a purchase of service to a purchase of space agreement.

This would mean that the service would be guaranteed a certain level of income regardless of enrollment. Careful monitoring would have to take place in order to determine at what point the community's use of a program can no longer justify ongoing subsidy.

After School Care programs operate both on normal school days and also full days during school holidays, through the summer and at Christmas and Easter. Costs vary considerably between the part day and full day operation. In the past we have set one per diem which was intended to average these costs through the year. In fact the level of the per diem was barely adequate to cover the part day operation and resulted in a deficit during the full day operation.

Recommendation #2: That a base per diem of \$3.50 be set for normal part day operation and that a second per diem of \$7.00 be set to cover the full day operation.

Another problem which has been encountered is the fact that there are variable cost factors from program to program. Some services have rent and utilities to pay while others do not. Those programs integrated with day care centres have the capacity to provide full meals if funds are available while others lack the necessary facility and would be unable to use such funds. The net result of this is that a common per diem penalizes some programs unfairly.

Recommendation #3: That the base per diem be adjusted for those programs which have specific building costs; which are able to provide full meals; or have other exceptional costs.

III DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

The Provincial Government is presently reviewing the standards covering all forms of day care service and it is expected that new legislation will be introduced within the next year. In the meantime we find ourselves with no guidelines specific to After School Care. The operating guidelines which we have developed pertain specifically to pre-school programs and while some sections would apply to After School Care they would not all be appropriate or applicable.

Recommendation #4: That the standards proposed in the Report of the Community Task Force be applied as guidelines in the approval and assessment of After School Care programs.

It is not intended that these standards be adopted as a final statement but rather that they be accepted as a working paper which can be revised as we gain more experience in this field.

IV SPONSORSHIP OF AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS

As pointed out in the introduction all but one of the After School Care programs presently being funded are sponsored by a society which also operates a day care centre for pre-school children. Increasingly, however, requests for funding are coming from developing community groups whose sole interest is After School Care. While this model certainly has some advantages, primarily in the areas of parental involvement and program flexibility to meet local needs, a number of disadvantages are also apparent. Such Boards, because they have fewer resources to draw upon, tend to be less well organized and often have difficulties in maintaining a continuity of Board Membership. In contrast to this the "centre-sponsored" After School programs have a broader base of support and organization. In addition there is the advantage of a continuity of service for families.

A third option for the sponsorship of After School Care services has been proposed. This involves the development of regional Boards which would administer a number of After School Care programs. This alternative would overcome the disadvantages of the individual program Boards which were referred to above. Because of the relatively low status of After School Care programs, it may prove difficult to attract and maintain the interest of potential Board members unless their own children are involved in one of the services administered by such a Regional Board.

Recommendation #5: That preference continue to be given to the development and administration of After School Care programs by organizations also involved in delivery of pre-school day care services, but that other options including the subsidization of individual community Boards and regional umbrella Boards be accepted if required to expand services to new areas.

The above discussion points out that each of the options has advantages and disadvantages and that there is no "best" answer for all situations. My own preference is to favour the use of existing day care Boards, but I also feel it is important to be flexible and continue to use other approaches if the circumstances dictate them.

V EXTENSION OF AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS

It is apparent from the number of requests for After School Care funding that this area of day care programming could absorb all new funds for expansion. In addition to the After School Care programs a number of school aged children are receiving subsidized care in the Family Day Care Program. In view of this and in view of the fact that it is generally somewhat easier for parents to find private arrangements for school age than for pre-school children it is important to establish some guideline for the rate of After School Care expansion relative to the expansion of services for pre-school children.

Recommendation #6: That a general guideline of one new After School space for each two new pre-school spaces be adopted as a guide to future expansion.

As pointed out above, four formal applications have been received requesting funding for After School Care programs. Three of these come from existing programs which have been operating with other community sources of funding which are now depleted. The fourth is an application for a new program from the Board of an existing day care centre.

Recommendation #7: That the applications for funding from the Thorncliffe After School program, the Duck-Inn, the Oliver Community School Care program and the Beverly Day Care Centre be approved to a maximum subsidy of twenty-five spaces.

In view of the fact that a number of communities have made requests for funds which we will not be able to meet it is important that as additional funds become available careful consideration of the relative priority of the various funding requests take place. In addition it would be important to achieve as wide a geographical coverage in the After School Care field as is possible.

Recommendation #8: That a priority indexing system be developed as a general guide to the approval of new programs.

Recommendation #9: That a maximum program size of twenty-five spaces for any one individual location be approved, again as a general guideline in the expansion of services.

VI SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

At present all subsidized day care programs including After School Care programs are required to have as part of the service, social work services. This service is purchased from our Department.

All of the children served by the After School Care programs are enrolled in school. As such these children and their families have access to the social work services of the school system. Our requirement, is leading to a duplication of service which we can ill afford. The more of our staff time allocated to formal day care programs the less staff resource (and consequently less service) we have left to administer the Family Day Care programs.

Recommendation #10: That the requirement for social work service be dropped for all After School Care programs.

VII CONCLUSION:

This is not intended to be a final policy statement on After School Care. As we gain more experience with this evolving day care service, ongoing changes in our approach will likely be required. In addition it is not intended that these guidelines create a rigid approach. They will need to be applied with some flexibility. However, they will serve to clarify our present position and help to rationalize future After School Care development.

M.G.D./blb..