

Quality Child Care Alliance (QCCA) History

The Quality Child Care Alliance or the QCCA is the newest committee of Dubuque County Empowerment. The QCCA goal is to build a system of accessible quality child care for all families with children age 0-5. That means, no matter who you are, where you live within county boundaries, your income level, or your child's special needs, you would have the right to have quality care for your child – that you can afford.

The QCCA began in November 2005 when Empowerment and several partner organizations received a community-based grant from Iowa State Extension to host a community conversation (forum) on child care and its status in our area.

At the forum, participants made the following comments:

- There is no common definition of quality child care for this area.
- There were many great efforts going on to improve quality in care and we were making some progress.
- Even with some strengths in quality of care, some families were falling through the cracks.
- Even though some quality existed, sometimes families could not find it in the options available or affordable to them.
- Some families who wholeheartedly believed they had their child in a quality care situation did not really understand what “quality” was and how to recognize it.

Those who attended realized that the meeting was the first step and more planning was needed. The result was an initiative and a group called the Quality Child Care Alliance.

Through Empowerment, the QCCA was able to write for another grant opportunity – called Quality Improvement funding – to hire a consultant from Smart Start in North Carolina. Smart Start is a state-wide initiative similar to Empowerment; it offered technical assistance to other states to further efforts on behalf of young children.

The grant was approved, and the QCCA hired Rhode Bicknell as the consultant. She has visited Dubuque County six times and has assisted the QCCA with the following:

- Facilitating planning retreats and community engagement meetings.
- Defining “quality child care” for Dubuque County.
- Completing local a Child Care Workforce Survey (See: Child Care Workforce Survey)
- Creating a strategic plan with five core goals as a foundation to developing a system of care based our community's unique qualities. (See: QCCA Subcommittees, Goals, & Activities)
- Building our own local model of quality child care.

In 2007, Empowerment formally adopted the QCCA as a committee, allowing Empowerment to continue devoting Quality Improvement funding to support continued technical assistance from the Smart Start consultant as well as to hire a QCCA coordinator to further facilitate development.

We are excited with our progress and growth. Our future plans for 2008 include:

- Finalizing our model child care system for Dubuque County. This model will incorporate best practice standards and state quality initiatives with specific indicators for infant and toddler care.
- Public awareness, outreach, and education to parents, child care providers, and businesses on the importance of quality child care and early childhood brain development.
- Grant seeking to implement recommendations and programs.