

“Childcare Concerns from Faculty, Staff and Students at Indiana University Bloomington”

The Office for Women’s Affairs (OWA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the spring 2009 semester, the Office for Women’s Affairs (OWA) conducted a survey on the childcare concerns of faculty, staff and students. The results are summarized below.

The majority of respondents who do use the IU childcare facilities are satisfied with most aspects of their childcare experience. They give high marks for the centers’ communication with parents/guardians, involvement of parents/guardians in decision-making, the training of childcare providers, the curriculum and discipline strategies. The most frequently identified areas of dissatisfaction are regarding hours of operation, the nutritional choices available, and recent staffing changes. The area of least satisfaction is affordability, with several respondents noting that even though they make the choice to pay the fees at the center, it is not truly “affordable.” Survey respondents who utilize other forms of childcare also discussed the cost of IU childcare and accessibility (i.e. not enough “slots” at the campus centers) as barriers to using IU childcare.

Respondents who have lived in other locales compared their options for childcare in Bloomington with childcare resources in other places. The most salient comments come from faculty members who have had academic appointments in other places. The majority of these respondents perceive that there are less desirable childcare options in Bloomington than in other places they have lived. They also perceive that the state of childcare options on campus and in the community is a serious barrier in terms of recruiting faculty members to IUB. One faculty member said that the childcare situation is “upsetting and guilt inducing,” and another said “IU needs to do more if it wants to recruit world class scientists.”

Overall, respondents find that making childcare arrangements that are safe, affordable and a “fit” with their schedule needs is a major stressor and it seems to be a particularly daunting task for staff and students. Respondents in all categories indicated that the lack of childcare options and/or their current childcare arrangements have led to missed classes and missed time at the office. While faculty have more flexibility and (in many cases) more financial resources than staff and students, they are not immune to the stresses of childcare either, particularly in the critical pre-tenure years when they particularly need quality childcare in the summer, and in extended hours during the academic year.

The following are recommendations for positive change: (i) Each year, expand the number of IU Childcare slots available to IU faculty, staff and students; (ii) Apply for funding from private and public sources to provide sliding-scale options for staff, students and faculty as well as increased salary support for campus childcare center staff; (iii) Increase the hours of operation at campus childcare centers so that they more adequately meet the needs of campus parents; (iv) Incorporate IU’s strengths in music, language, technology, science, and education to enhance the quality of the Childcare curriculum; (v) Where permissible under university policy, campus deans, chairpersons and others should investigate, and where feasible, allow the use of telecommuting options and flexible scheduling to address select childcare issues; (vi) Our Director of Campus Childcare should hold an annual forum on the state of childcare on campus. Such communication may lead to innovative solutions, development opportunities and support from the broader campus community.

