



Parents: The Best Advocates for Children

4Cs of Alameda County | www.4calameda.org

You want to find high-quality child care, to make sure your child is happy and learning when you're at work or school. But when you start looking, you may find out that the good programs in your community cost more than you can afford. So you put your name on the list for a subsidy to help you pay for child care -- then you find out that you may not get a subsidy for months or years, if ever! That's because the state only provides enough money for about one-third of eligible families.

It may seem like there's nothing you can do about big government decisions, such as how much money to spend on child care. But actually, **you are exactly the right person to make a difference** – by joining together with other parents to fight for quality, affordable child care for all families.



PARENTS HAVE WON MILLIONS FOR CHILD CARE

Parent Voices, a statewide grassroots organization of parents fighting for quality, affordable care for all families, has:

- Stopped the state government from going ahead with planned cuts to child care in six recent years.
- Persuaded the state government to change the requirements for child care subsidies so that many more families would be eligible – and to approve an additional \$67 million to provide child care for more families.
- Lobbied the federal government to provide \$15 million in “stimulus funds” for California child care in 2010.

To find out more, visit www.parentvoices.org.

YOU ARE THE BEST ADVOCATE

- **You have a story to tell:** about your child and your family, about the barriers to finding high-quality child care, and about why it's so important.
- **Your story is powerful:** Year after year, state legislators report that parents' stories about the need for child care have been effective in convincing decision-makers to provide funds for child care subsidies.

BECOME AN ADVOCATE FOR CHILD CARE

- **Get together with other parents:** Share experiences, resources, support.
- **Learn how the system works:** Who makes decisions that affect children and families? How can parents have an impact?
- **Learn new skills:** Many parents just like you have learned how to do things they never thought they could do: speak in public, talk to legislators, run meetings, plan events, organize other parents.
- **Participate in action:** Participate in marches, rallies, public hearings, and other actions.
- **Apply these skills and experiences** as an advocate throughout your life: to advocate for your children in school, for family-friendly policies at your job.

PARENT VOICES, a grassroots organization of parents fighting for quality, affordable child care for all, provides many opportunities for parents to get involved:

- **Meetings of local Parent Voices chapters** all over California, where parents get to know each other, share experiences and support, and plan local actions. In Southern Alameda County, contact Parent Voices organizer Jennifer Greppi, 510-584-3115, jennifer@parentvoices.org.
- **An annual “Knowledge is Power” training conference**, where parents learn about how state government works, how to understand policy debates, and how to develop the skills they need to become powerful advocates.
- **The annual Stand for Children Day**, when hundreds of parents from all over California gather in Sacramento to let legislators know about the importance of state support for high-quality, affordable child care.
- **Meetings with state legislators** and other decision-makers, testimony at legislative hearings, and other opportunities to speak out for families and children.

One Parent's Story



Gina Jackson, a Parent Voices member in southern Alameda County, says that before she joined Parent Voices, “I felt so alone in my day-to-day struggles. At my first Parent Voices meeting, I was like, ‘Wow, I’m not the only one!’ It was very inspiring to know you’re not alone, and that you have strength in numbers.”

ADVOCATING IN YOUR CHILD'S CHILD CARE PROGRAM OR SCHOOL

Maybe you are concerned about something that happens in your child’s classroom. Or you feel that the program is not meeting your child’s needs. As a parent, you have the right – and the responsibility – to work for solutions. You can:

- **Talk with the teacher or child care provider.** Talk about your concerns about how the problem is affecting your child, rather than making accusations that put the teacher or provider on the defensive. Most teachers and child care providers, like parents, want the best for children. With that shared concern, you can problem-solve together.
- **If talking with the teacher doesn’t solve the problem**, you can talk with the center director or the principal, or use the school or center’s problem-solving process.
- **If a child care problem is endangering the children’s safety or health**, contact the state Community Care Licensing department, 1-844-LET-US-NO (1-844-538-8766) or visit cclld.ca.gov.
- **If a classroom, school, or school-district problem is affecting other children**, you can talk with other parents to figure out ways you can work together to solve the problem.

PARENTS: WINNING BETTER SCHOOLS, PARKS, AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Groups of parent advocates have won many victories for their children:

- Many neighborhood groups have succeeded in getting city governments to clean up parks, provide playgrounds, and ensure park safety.
- Groups of parents around the state have won school building repairs and new textbooks, by pushing their schools to access a special state fund for improving schools in low-income areas.

For these stories and many more, go to: http://www.4children.org/topics/parent_activism/ and read the *Children’s Advocate* newsmagazine, available at 4Cs of Alameda County