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SURVEY: ECONOMY HURTING CHILD CARE IN GEORGIA

600 fewer child care centers operating at year-end 2009; others cut programs & staff
Parents who can't afford child care "going underground" to unlicensed providers

Atlanta (April 2, 2010) – The effects of the recession are trickling down to the youngest Georgians.

A new survey from Quality Care for Children shows that the number of child care centers in Georgia declined sharply in 2009 with a net loss of approximately 600 centers while the number of nationally accredited centers dropped roughly 27 percent, from 304 in 2008 to 221 in 2009. Meanwhile, more parents who have lost jobs or seen their income reduced are turning to less expensive, sometimes unlicensed and unqualified caregivers for their children.

"Nearly two thirds of Georgia families already use child care and the demand keeps growing. But the economy is taking its toll," said Quality Care for Children CEO Pam Tatum. "Supply is down, the number of quality centers is down, and more parents have fewer options and are feeling financially pressured to leave their kids in care situations that may be unsuitable – even dangerous -- in order to make ends meet. Ultimately it's the kids who pay the price."

For the second consecutive year Quality Care for Children conducted its statewide survey of child care centers and providers and found substantial declines in both quantity and quality of care.

The QCC survey identified two main trends occurring during the recession: a substantial drop in the availability of licensed child in Georgia, and a large decline in the number of high quality child care centers (accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the most widely recognized mark of quality for child care centers).

- The total number of child care programs in Georgia is also down substantially over the past three years, with the biggest drop coming in 2009, when the number of family child care providers fell by nearly 34 percent and the number of child care centers dropped 19 percent.

- Since 2007, the number of child care centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children decreased by more than 27 percent. As of mid-December 2009, only 221 programs serving 26,843 children were NAEYC accredited. This means high quality child care for only a small percentage of the estimated 470,000 children in Georgia under the age of 6 who spend as much as 10 hours a day in the care of someone other than their parents.

This year's report sited several reasons why and how child care quality and quantity are declining:

- More parents are unable to afford high-quality care and are opting for cheaper care for their children. Although less expensive care does not always mean lower quality, it is often the case.
- As revenues decline, many centers are forced to cut back on teacher and staff training as well as needed repairs and supplies, such as books.
- Enrollment is dropping, putting programs at risk. Nearly one out of five child care centers, and more than one-fourth of family care providers are "worried about having to close."

Copies of the report are available at www.qualitycareforchildren.org.

About Quality Care for Children

Quality Care for Children is an Atlanta-based nonprofit organization with a 30-year history of ensuring Georgia's infants and young children are nurtured and educated. The organization's primary focus is on creating excellence in child care and early learning by:

- Building Supply: providing training and resources to child care providers to increase the overall quality of care.
- Finding Quality: helping parents access quality affordable care for their children to ensure the best early learning experiences.

Quality Care for Children (QCC) is the single source of child care referrals for the State of Georgia through 877-ALL-GA-KIDS help line and www.allgakids.org. The organization also works with child care providers to ensure children are fed nutritious meals through the child care food program. In total, the organization leverages more than $4 million annually in food reimbursements.