



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Training effort improves health and safety skills for nearly 20,000 Michigan child care providers**

*Thirty thousand more children are safer as a result*

LANSING – Thirty thousand Michigan children are better off today thanks to a massive safety training effort involving nearly 20,000 unlicensed Michigan child care providers.

A total of 19,498 providers – many grandparents, neighbors and other relatives assisting low-income parents – completed the mandatory first aid/CPR course in 2010, according to a final tally by the Department of Human Services.

The training, provided by Michigan’s nine Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Centers, was required by the state Legislature for all “relative and aide” providers who earn modest child care subsidies through DHS.

The resource centers are part of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation’s Great Start Child Care Quality Program, one of the most comprehensive child care quality initiatives in the nation. It helps parents find quality early-learning environments for their children and helps early childhood professionals provide top-notch experiences.

The training should enhance the quality of child care for more than 30,000 children, said Judy Y. Samelson, chief executive officer of ECIC.

“Outside of the family home, children spend more learning time in child care than anywhere else. So it’s crucial that child care environments be as safe and nurturing as possible.”

Samelson said enhancing child care in Michigan is a priority for the state’s economic well-being.

“It’s very simple: Better child care enhances school readiness, and children who are ready to thrive when they arrive in kindergarten tend to do better in school and go on to become the kind of strong, contributing workforce adults that Michigan needs to thrive economically once again.”

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The ongoing training – the first of its kind in the nation – will continue to provide a long-term safety boost for children throughout Michigan, Samelson said. In the short-term, providers in at least three instances employed their new-found skills to help choking and heart attack victims.

According to Lisa Brewer-Walraven, director of the DHS Office of Early Education and Care, the percentage of providers who completed training indicates a high level of commitment by caregivers to the children they watch.

“We’re encouraged that so many providers took advantage of this training because it impacts both their ability to care for children and their own professional development,” she said.

“This is one more way we can make certain that every child in Michigan is exposed to opportunities that ensure their success in the future.”

While Michigan has required licensed child care providers to master life-saving skills, this was the first time that unlicensed providers were required to complete such safety training.

The training program’s emphasis on home-based, unregulated providers is significant because the vast majority of children in child care in Michigan are in these unlicensed, private homes.

After completing the basic training course, nearly a thousand providers went on to complete an additional 10 hours of voluntary training in child care topics, thereby earning an additional 25 or 35 cents per hour from the state.

Karen Roback, director of the Great Start Child Care Quality Program, said many providers found that the training changed the way they view their work.

“It went beyond first aid and CPR training. It opened up a whole new group of providers to the potential they have to shape the learning and development of children in their care.”

Child care provider Naomi Davis, 69, a retired licensed practical nurse from metro Detroit, was initially skeptical about taking the training. With 16 grandchildren and great grandchildren, she wondered, “What the heck could they teach me?”

After taking the course, Davis, who cares for twin grandsons and a toddler, said she loved working with the instructors “and the material was phenomenal. As a care provider for children, I think everyone should go through it.”

Roback said Davis’ views were echoed by trainees across the state. Many said it personally changed the way they think about what they do with children in their care.

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*The Early Childhood Investment Corporation is a public/private initiative working to restructure Michigan’s investment in children from birth to five through state and local community efforts. For more information about ECIC and its efforts, go to <http://greatstartforkids.org/>*