

Agenda Questions/Responses
June 24, 2004

- 10. Please give more detail on the Rising Star program and how the mentoring project will work.**
Who will provide the mentoring? (Council Member Daryl Slusher)

The Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider certification is a statewide program developed by the Texas Workforce Commission and administered by each local workforce board's Child Care Contractor. (In Travis County, the contractor is the Texas Migrant Council that operates as WorkSource Child Care Solutions.) It is a voluntary process for improving the quality of childcare services using quality standards/criteria including a self-study evaluation and a monitoring process. A Texas Rising Star Provider meets requirements that exceed the State's Minimum Licensing Standards for childcare facilities. The certification system provides graduated levels of certification as providers meet progressively higher certification requirements (2, 3, and 4 stars). Certification as a Texas Rising Star Provider is available to Licensed Center, Licensed Group Day Home, and Registered Family Home providers who meet the certification criteria. The process improves the quality of child care provided, not only to TWC subsidized children, but to all children enrolled in certified facilities.

The City and County require their social service preschool childcare contractors to meet quality standards such as TRS. Because of reduced State support, the TRS program in Travis County is closed to new providers, and monitoring visits are conducted only once every three years. Previously, monitoring was done quarterly. City support will open the program to more providers and provide monitoring at least annually.

TWC's website has the quality standards document (264 pages) at:
<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/provcert.pdf>

Child Development Specialists from Family Connections act as mentors to child care teachers and directors, and provide intensive, hands-on training on-site in each teacher's classroom for three or more hours a week over a three month period. The three hours typically consist of one hour of observation, one hour of discussion, and one hour of co-teaching. In addition, childcare centers in the program will be provided with centerwide workshops on topics relevant to their specific needs, and access to resources and materials from Family Connections' mobile libraries. In addition, the program provides underserved preschools with educational materials including books, computers, furniture and toys. Many of the materials are donated. The project enables teachers to create developmentally appropriate environments and improves educational opportunities for children.

Childcare providers for the mentoring program are identified through referrals from Family Connections mobile outreach staff, State child care licensing workers, and/or WorkSource Child Care Solutions child development specialists. Priority will be given to providers that serve a high percentage of low-income children.

23. Please provide more detail on why this additional expense is necessary. (Council Member Daryl Slusher)

The finish-out allowance needs to be increased in order to provide an HVAC system that meets the City's code, to cover security system (access card reader) costs, to cover steel price increases, and to ensure that the materials used in the finish-out meet the City's Sustainability Guidelines.

When the City entered into the original lease with Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA) the specific programming needs of the City were unknown. The City used the ARA architect's estimate for building finish-out, which was \$20/square foot. Because the City would be a long-term tenant of this building, the decision was later made to finish-out the leased space using the Council approved Sustainability Guidelines. As the City designed the finish-out, it became clear that the \$20/square foot allowance would not cover the costs to incorporate sustainable materials and to upgrade the HVAC to meet code requirements. The ARA bids for construction also came in at a higher rate per square foot. Therefore, to handle the current space programming needs additional Council Authorization is necessary. With this lease amendment, the total finish-out allowance will be \$974,819. Our current estimate to complete the finish-out is approximately \$935,000, which leaves a \$44,819 contingency.