



Initiatives in Action: School Readiness Initiative



We can do more together.

Beyond Child Care

Hundreds of organizations provide child care across the metro area. How do you find the right one for your child? The task is less daunting with a call to United Way's 2-1-1.

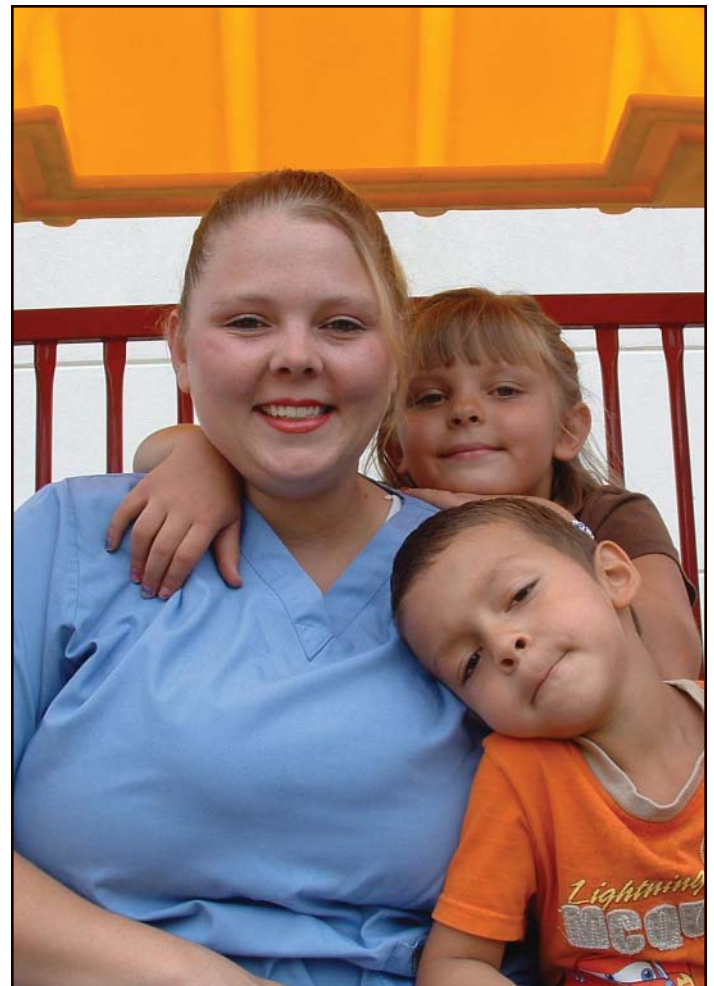
Jaylene, age 8, wants a fishing pole for her birthday. A visit to the Pro Bass Shop through a summer school field trip has left a lasting impression. Angela Sperry, her mom, is quite impressed. "Jaylene is a sparkly, girly girl and for her to want a fishing pole shows me that her eyes are being opened to fresh ideas at her new school," she said.

Angela feels fortunate to have found the perfect school, Little Debbie's Dream, a daycare and summer care program for her two children, Jaylene and Jeremiah, age 4. After her babysitter gave notice that she was unable to watch Angela's kids during the summer, Angela had no idea how to even begin looking for a child care center. A friend referred her to Qualistar Early Learning and United Way's 2-1-1 Child Care Options, a partnership that helps parents find licensed child care providers near their home or office.

Families can call United Way's 2-1-1 and talk to a trained referral specialist who will help find licensed child care providers. Mile High United Way also provides callers with a free, comprehensive packet of consumer education to help them choose a quality center for their child.

"I searched online first on my own and went through a frustrating maze. There are so many child care centers. I did not know who to trust so I asked a friend," she said. "I was directed to Qualistar Early Learning, which gave me contact information for 10 top-notch sites close to my home. I interviewed and narrowed it down to the best place to fit my needs. I couldn't have found Little Debbie's Dream on my own."

As a single mom of two kids, Angela needed a school to fit her work schedule and provide the best learning curriculum for her inquisitive children. She wasn't looking for daycare, she was looking for a nurturing environment that would help prepare her children for school. "The program I found treats each child independently and crafts a learning environment that keeps up with their learning ability. This is very important because Jeremiah is learning gifted and needs to be challenged. The teacher ratio to student is five-to-one, which is amazing."



Angela Sperry and her kids at Little Debbie's Dream daycare in Aurora.

“ Think about class size. Are there enough care givers to nurture all the kids at the site? Are caregivers supported with training opportunities? Is parental involvement high? ”

Parents who call United Way’s 2-1-1 can find out what questions to ask. “Think about class size. Are there enough care givers to nurture all the kids at the site? Are caregivers supported with training opportunities? Is parental involvement high?” said Margarita Colindres, United Way’s 2-1-1 Child Care Options Manager. “These are a few of qualities that earn a high rating with Qualistar Early Learning.”

Mile High United Way partners with Qualistar Early Learning under its School Readiness initiative to raise the quality of early care and education for children from low-income families. More than 4,400 young children in metro Denver were able to participate in a quality early learning environment last year alone.

Diana Romero Campbell, director of School Readiness for Mile High United Way, collaborates with her peers in the education field to build a high quality infrastructure for the community. “We do more than just help families find licensed child care,” she said. “At Mile High United Way, we advocate for systemic change at the local and state level to better prepare young children for success in school and life.”

Investing in people early makes sense. Analysts at the Federal Reserve tells us that an investment of \$1 in early childhood education results in a savings of up to \$12 in taxes for social services and criminal justice.

“Ensuring that young children develop to their fullest potential and have the best possible chance to succeed is a top priority,” said Romero Campbell. “Few of us get to play an instrumental role in an area that has the potential to positively affect thousands of children.”

Last year, more than 7,600 families called into United Way’s 2-1-1 to access child care referrals. Families looking for help, can simply dial 2-1-1.

For more information about Mile High United Way and our School Readiness Initiative, please visit our website at www.unitedwaydenver.org.

We can do more together.



Mile High United Way