

CDEPP Facilities Study

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Section 1: CDEPP Facilities Study: Facilities Inventory of CDEPP Sites

To inventory the facilities housing CDEPP children, and to ascertain the potential for housing additional CDEPP children, all public schools and private sector providers identified as being approved/licensed/registered to house such children were surveyed. The surveys sent to these providers asked for the number of classrooms being used for CDEPP children, the number of CDEPP children served, whether a waiting list existed, the potential for housing additional CDEPP children, and the challenges versus benefits of CDEPP from a facilities perspective. In addition all other elementary public schools not designated at the time of the study to house CDEPP children in the twenty counties in which CDEPP is now located were surveyed. This group included any schools in districts for which CDEPP is intended by legislation that did not have CDEPP children at the time of the study, and schools in districts not part of CDEPP, but located in the same county where CDEPP children were located. For example, though only one school district in Lexington County was designated to participate in the CDEPP program, all public elementary schools in the other four school systems in the county were also surveyed. Further, all private early childhood centers which were approved, licensed, or registered by DSS at the time of the study to house four-year-old children were surveyed, even though they were not participants in CDEPP. The public and private non-participants were asked about their interest in housing CDEPP children, the number they might serve, and the challenges versus benefits participation might entail from a facilities perspective.

The survey itself was mailed to each school and center. Included were directions for completing the questionnaire, and a notation that the participant could either return the survey by mail, or complete it electronically. After the initial mailing, a follow-up postcard was sent to every school and center, reminding each of the deadline date for submittal of the survey. Subsequently, each public school for which there was no response by the deadline date was sent at least one email asking that the survey be completed, and including another copy of the questionnaire along with the survey URL should the school prefer to respond electronically. For the private early childhood centers not responding by the deadline, each was called at least once. During the call the center was asked if it would prefer to do the survey via telephone, or if it would send the paper copy.

As can be seen in Table 1, the various approaches used to gather as broad input as possible resulted in substantial return rate. It should be noted that telephone calls to 23 private centers resulted in either reaching disconnected numbers or non-center entities. That is, the overall response rate was likely slightly higher than indicated in Table 1.

Note: For the purposes of this report, non-public schools providing early childhood experiences are referred to as “private” centers. This is a global term that

encompasses Head Start Centers, faith-based centers, and standard private sector businesses serving, or potentially serving, 4-year-old CDEPP children.

Survey Results: Classrooms Used For CDEPP

Public schools participating in CDEPP indicated that they were using 2.5 classrooms on average to house children in the program. Though one school reported using nine classrooms for CDEPP, a majority of the schools (60%) indicated that they were using one or two classrooms for the program. CDEPP private early childhood centers reported that they were using 1.5 classrooms on average to house children in the program. While one center indicated that six classrooms were involved with CDEPP delivery, most centers (77%) reported that they had one classroom in use for CDEPP. Table 2 summarizes the findings related to numbers of classrooms in use for CDEPP in both the public and private sectors.

Survey Results: Children Served by CDEPP

Among public schools the number of CDEPP children being served ranged from none (school approved but not housing students) to 140. However, the most often reported numbers of CDEPP students housed were 20 children (15% of the respondents) or 40 children (10% of the respondents). On average, CDEPP public schools reported housing 39 children in the program. Private sector CDEPP centers reported a range of from none (approved but not enrolling CDEPP children) to 100 CDEPP children being housed. However, the most often reported numbers of CDEPP children being housed in private centers were 5 (16% of the respondents) and 10 (19% of the respondents). Interestingly, another thirteen percent indicated they were not housing CDEPP children, though approved to do so. On average, CDEPP private sector providers reported housing approximately 14 students each. Table 3 summarizes the findings related to the numbers of CDEPP children enrolled in both the public and private sectors.

Survey Results: Extent CDEPP Children are Housed with Others

The CDEPP public schools completing the survey were nearly split in their responses to the question of whether CDEPP children were housed with other students in the same classroom. Approximately 53% indicated CDEPP children were housed alone, while 45% reported having CDEPP and other children in the same classroom. However, most CDEPP private sector providers (74%) indicated that they housed CDEPP children in the same classroom serving others. Only five (16%) reported having classrooms exclusively used for CDEPP children. Chart 1 presents a summary of these findings.

Survey Results: Available Space for Additional CDEPP Children Within Existing Approvals

Among CDEPP public schools a large majority (71%) indicated that they had no more slots for additional CDEPP children. Among those schools that did have slots, the average number of additional CDEPP children that could be housed was approximately two. In contrast, only about 23% of the CDEPP private sector centers reported not having slots for additional children. In fact, another 23% indicated they could house ten or more additional children at their locations. Table 4 presents a summary of the findings related to this question.

Survey Results: Waiting List Of CDEPP Children

A sizable majority of CDEPP public schools (68%) indicated that they had no waiting list of CDEPP children. Of those that did have lists, the numbers of students waiting ranged from one to eighteen children. The most often reported waiting list size was four children. Almost all CDEPP private center providers (94%) reported that they had no waiting list. Two centers reported 2 to 8 children waiting, respectively. Chart 2 presents a summary of the data related to waiting lists.

Survey Results: Maximum Number of CDEPP Children Envisioned – Future

CDEPP public schools were asked what they envisioned as the maximum or ultimate number of CDEPP children that might be served at their respective sites. On average, these public schools saw themselves eventually housing 52 students. The envisioned future maximum ranged from none to 180 students. The most often envisioned ultimate CDEPP size was 40 students (26% reporting this size as maximum), followed by 20 students (23%), 60 (14%), and 80 (13%). Responses from the private childcare centers indicated that, on average, the desired maximum was 23 children. The range in terms of envisioned ultimate number of CDEPP children was from none to 100. However, just over half (52%) of the private sector respondents reported that the envisioned maximum was 20 children. The next most often reported ultimately envisioned size for this group was 10 CDEPP children (16% selecting this size). Interestingly, both groups, public schools and private daycare centers, foresaw themselves housing more CDEPP children.

While CDEPP public schools on average were housing 39 students at the time of the study, they envisioned a maximum of 52 students, on average. Similarly, private childcare centers were housing an average of 14 students when the survey was conducted, but they foresaw an average maximum CDEPP enrollment of 23 children. Table 5 provides a summary of the findings related to maximum number of children public schools and private centers foresaw themselves housing.

Summary of Survey Results Related to Numbers Served Versus CDEPP Capacity

In general, public schools responding to the survey who housed CDEPP children were at or near their current capacity to house this group of students. Less than 30% reported that they could house more students. On average, across the eighty schools, approximately two more children could be served per site. Further, over one in every five of these schools (22%) reported having a waiting list of CDEPP children. However,

with additional approvals, facilities modifications, etc., these public schools envisioned a maximum size CDEPP enrollment that was, on average, 13 more children than currently served per site. In effect, while public schools enrolling CDEPP children could house very few additional students beyond what they currently served, these schools would like to do so as space and approvals allow.

Among private childcare centers, the findings were somewhat different. While these centers on average served 14 CDEPP children, they indicated that they could enroll an additional six children on average within current approvals and available facilities. Additionally, fewer than one in ten of these centers (6%) indicated that there was a waiting list of CDEPP children wishing to enroll. Further, nearly one in every four (23%) of the private childcare centers responding to the survey indicated they could house an additional ten or more children. And, ultimately, subject to additional approvals and facilities considerations, these private centers envisioned serving 20 CDEPP children on average, compared to the average of 14 currently served.

Based on the survey results, public schools now serving CDEPP children are near capacity. However, space is available in approved private sector childcare centers to enroll more CDEPP children.

Table 1
 Surveyed Population Compared to Questionnaire Return Rate:
 For Subgroups and Total Number of Schools and Centers

	Total Population	CDEPP Public Schools	Non-CDEPP Public Schools	CDEPP Private Centers	Non- CDEPP Private Centers
Total Sampled (Count)	624	96	90	68	370
Total Return (Count)	299	80	44	31	144
Return Rate (%)	48%	83%	49%	61%	39%

Table 2
 Number of Classrooms in Use for CDEPP:
 For Public Schools and Private Centers

	Average Number of CDEPP Classrooms in Use	Maximum Number CDEPP Classrooms Reported by Center or School	Most Often Reported Number of Classrooms Used for CDEPP (with % responding)
Public Schools	2.5	9	1 (34%)
Private Centers	1.5	6	1 (77)%

Table 3
Numbers of CDEPP Children Enrolled:
For Public Schools and Private Centers

	Average Number of CDEPP Children Per School or Center	Maximum Number CDEPP Children Reported Served by Center or School	Most Often Reported Number of CDEPP Children Served (with % responding)
Public Schools	39	140	20 (34%)
Private Centers	14	100	10 (19.4)%

**Chart 1: % of Schools and Centers
Indicating CDEPP Children are Housed
Alone**

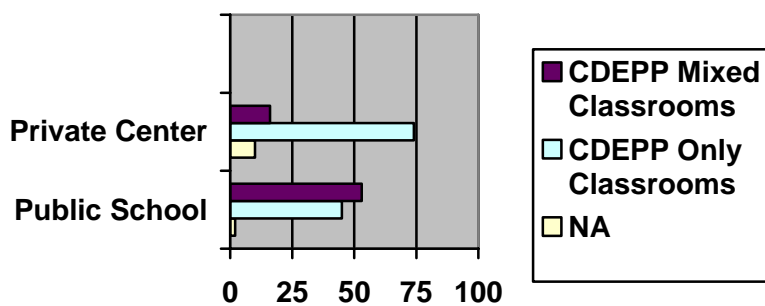


Table 4

Numbers of Additional CDEPP Children That Can Be Housed Within Existing Approvals: For Public Schools and Private Centers

	Can House More Students (% indicating “yes”)	Average Number of Additional Students Who Could be Housed	% Reporting Able to House 10 or More Additional Children
Public Schools	29%	2.2	8%
Private Centers	77%	6.0	23%

Chart 2: % of Schools and Centers Reporting Waiting List of CDEPP Children

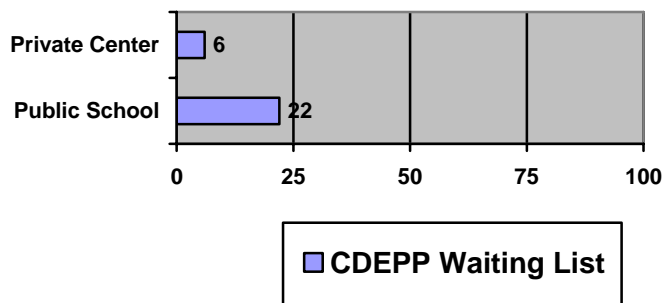


Table 5
 Envisioned Ultimate Number of Enrolled CDEPP Children:
 As Compared to Current Enrollments

	Average Envisioned Maximum Enrollment	Most Often Envisioned Maximum Enrollment	Current Average CDEPP Enrollment
Public CDEPP Schools	52	40 (26% selecting)	39
Private Childcare Centers	23	20 (52% selecting)	14

Section 2: CDEPP Facilities Study: Facilities Issues Noted By CDEPP Sites

In addition to surveying CDEPP public schools and private childcare centers regarding their use of space and numbers of children housed, these schools and centers were asked to respond to a series of statements about possible issues they may have confronted as they sought to house CDEPP children. What follows are the results of that portion of the study.

Survey Results: Issues/Factors Faced in Becoming a CDEPP Site

Both public schools and private childcare centers were asked to indicate the extent to which the following facilities-related items were a consideration in becoming a CDEPP site: Department of Social Services (DSS) Approval; Sufficient Space; Displacement of Current Programs/Children; Facilities Costs; and Outdoor Requirements. For each of these, the respondent chose one of the following: 1 = insignificant consideration; 2 = consideration; 3 = major consideration; and 4 = foremost consideration.

Among the public schools surveyed, the two items with the highest average scores (indicating a problem or challenge) were obtaining DSS approval (average score of 2.8, or major consideration) and having sufficient space for the CDEPP children (average score of 2.7, major consideration). Public schools on average also saw meeting outdoor requirements (i.e. play areas/equipment) and facilities costs to house the CDEPP children as approaching a major consideration (average ratings of 2.54 and 2.45 respectively). Displacement of other programs or children, such as moving 5-year-old kindergarteners to other spaces to provide adequate facilities for CDEPP children, was not rated as significant an issue. The mean response was 1.76, approaching “a consideration.” Table 6 presents a summary of the data from public schools for this question.

Among the private childcare centers surveyed, the two items with the highest average scores (indicating a problem or challenge) were obtaining DSS approval (average score of 3.10, or major consideration) and having sufficient space for the CDEPP children (average score of 2.97, major consideration). These centers on average saw facilities costs to house the CDEPP children and displacement of current programs/children as falling between a consideration and major consideration (average ratings of 2.48 and 2.32 respectively). Meeting outdoor requirements (playgrounds, equipment, etc.), was not rated quite as high in terms of being a significant issue. The mean response was 2.19, or “a consideration.” Table 7 presents a summary of the data for this question.

In general, both public schools and private centers faced similar significant facilities-related problems or issues when seeking to house CDEPP children. These were: Meeting Department of Social Services approval, and finding sufficient space to house the children in the program.

Table 6
 Challenge of Facilities-Related Issues in Becoming a CDEPP Site:
 Rating from CDEPP Public School Survey

	Average Rating
DSS Standards	2.80
Enough Space	2.71
Outdoor Requirements	2.54
Facilities Costs	2.45
Displacement of Existing Programs or Students	1.76

4 = Foremost Consideration
 3 = Major Consideration
 2 = Consideration
 1 = Insignificant Consideration

Table 7
 Challenge of Facilities-Related Issues in Becoming a CDEPP Site:
 Rating from Private CDEPP Childcare Center Survey

	Average Rating
DSS Standards	3.10
Enough Space	2.97
Facilities Costs	2.48
Displacement of Existing Programs or Students	2.32
Outdoor Requirements	2.16

- 4 = Foremost Consideration
- 3 = Major Consideration
- 2 = Consideration
- 1 = Insignificant Consideration

Section 3: CDEPP Facilities Study: Non-CDEPP Interest in Being CDEPP Site

Private childcare centers and public schools not enrolling CDEPP children at the time of the survey were asked a series of questions about their interest in enrolling CDEPP children in the future, and what facilities-related issues would have to be considered. These schools and centers were located in the counties in which districts qualifying for CDEPP were located, regardless of whether the school or center was in the CDEPP district itself.

Survey Results: Interest in Enrolling CDEPP Children

Forty-four public schools not currently housing CDEPP responded to the survey. Of these, only eighteen, or 41%, indicated that they were likely to seek approval to house CDEPP children if they could. A majority (59%) replied that they likely would not seek to house CDEPP children. Of the eighteen public schools who did indicate that they likely would seek to house such children if the Project allowed, half (9) would seek to house a unit of 20 children, while the others would seek to house a range of 30 to 80 students. Of the 144 non-CDEPP private childcare centers replying to the survey, more than half (60%) indicated they would likely seek to house CDEPP children should the Project continue and they gain approvals to do so. Among these 87 centers who expressed interest in housing CDEPP children, the largest portion (23) replied that they likely would seek to enroll twenty children. The next most often selected likely number of children the centers would seek to enroll was ten (17 centers selected this number). The other selections ranged from three children to 120 in terms of how many the centers would like to serve if designated to do so.

In general, non-participating private childcare centers were more likely than non-participating public schools to indicate a likelihood of enrolling CDEPP children in the future. Among centers and schools likely to consider adding CDEPP, they most often indicated a willingness to house 20 or more children. Table 8 presents a summary of the findings related to interest among non-CDEPP sites in housing CDEPP children.

Table 8
Percent Expressing Interest in Becoming a CDEPP Site:
Public Schools and Private Centers

	% Expressing Interest	Most Likely Unit Size to be Sought
Non-CDEPP Public Schools	41%	20 students
Non-CDEPP Private Centers	60%	20 students

Section 4: CDEPP Facilities Study: Facilities Issues Noted By Non-CDEPP Sites

In addition to surveying non-CDEPP public schools and private childcare centers regarding their interest in housing CDEPP children, these schools and centers were asked to respond to a series of statements about possible issues they might have to confront if they sought to house CDEPP children. What follows are the results of that portion of the study.

Survey Results: Possible Issues/Factors That May be Faced in Becoming a CDEPP Site

Both public schools and private childcare centers were asked to indicate the extent to which the following facilities-related items were a consideration in becoming a CDEPP site: Department of Social Services (DSS) Approval; Sufficient Space; Displacement of Current Programs/Children; Facilities Costs; and Outdoor Requirements. For each of these, the respondent chose one of the following: 1 = insignificant consideration; 2 = consideration; 3 = major consideration; and 4 = foremost consideration.

Among the public schools surveyed, the two items with the highest average scores (indicating a problem or challenge) were having enough space for CDEPP children and the possible facilities costs associated with enrolling more children (ratings of 3.07 and 2.92, respectively, indicating major consideration). Public schools on average also saw displacement of other programs or children, such as moving 5-year-old kindergarteners to other spaces to provide adequate facilities for CDEPP children, and outdoor requirements as significant issues. The mean response averages were 2.52 and 2.45, respectively, approaching “major consideration.” Meeting DSS requirements received an average rating of 2.18, indicating it was a consideration, but not on the same level as the other factors addressed in the survey. Table 9 presents a summary of the data from non-CDEPP public schools for this question.

Among the non-CDEPP private childcare centers surveyed, the three items with the most similar and highest average ratings (indicating a problem or challenge) were having enough space to house CDEPP children (2.78), meeting DSS standards (2.74), and the costs of facilities (2.71). Analysis of responses to the item dealing with challenges of meeting outdoor requirements produced an average score of 2.53. For non-CDEPP private centers, all four of the above issues were either viewed as major potential challenges, or approaching that level of concern. However, these centers generated an average rating related to displacement of children or programs of 2.17, indicating it was a consideration, but not on the level of the other factors addressed in the survey. Table 10 presents a summary of the data for this question for private centers.

In general, both non-CDEPP public schools and private centers saw challenges ahead if they sought to house CDEPP children. And, both groups indicated that having enough space would be the biggest consideration. However, the two groups also

exhibited some differences. For example, of the factors addressed, private centers rated displacement of other children or programs as the least challenging issue, while non-CDEPP public schools indicated meeting DSS standards to be the issue that would demand the least consideration.

Table 9
Challenge of Facilities-Related Issues in Becoming a CDEPP Site:
Rating from Non-CDEPP Public School Survey

	Average Rating
Enough Space	3.07
Facilities Costs	2.91
Displacement of Existing Programs or Students	2.52
Outdoor Requirements	2.45
DSS Standards	2.18

4 = Foremost Consideration
3 = Major Consideration
2 = Consideration
1 = Insignificant Consideration

Table 10
Challenge of Facilities-Related Issues in Becoming a CDEPP Site:
Rating from Non-CDEPP Private Childcare Center Survey

	Average Rating
Enough Space	2.78
DSS Standards	2.74
Facilities Costs	2.71
Outdoor Requirements	2.53
Displacement of Existing Programs or Students	2.17

4 = Foremost Consideration

- 3 = Major Consideration
- 2 = Consideration
- 1 = Insignificant Consideration

Section 5: CDEPP Facilities Study: Challenges of Housing CDEPP Children Versus the Benefits of the Project for Schools and Centers

All public schools and private daycare centers surveyed were asked to indicate whether, from a facilities perspective, CDEPP was worth the challenges. The scale used for this item was as follows: 1 = benefits far outweigh the challenges; 2 = benefits somewhat outweigh the challenges; 3 = challenges somewhat outweigh the benefits; and 4 = challenges far outweigh the benefits. Public schools already involved with CDEPP tended to indicate that the benefits far outweighed the challenges (average response rating of 1.55). Participating CDEPP private childcare centers on average were not as positive as participating public schools, but still indicated that the benefits at least somewhat outweighed the challenges (average response rating of 2.16). Public schools surveyed that were not participating in CDEPP also indicated that the benefits likely would somewhat outweigh the challenges (average response rating of 2.02). The group that expressed the greatest concern about the potential benefit versus the facilities challenges of housing CDEPP was the non-participating private sector providers. The average rating on this survey item by this group was 2.47, which indicates an ambivalence about whether benefits gained are worth the costs and other challenges. While about fifty percent of the non-participating centers felt that the benefits of participation likely would outweigh the challenges, almost that same percentage indicated that the challenges would outweigh the benefits.

In general, public schools, whether participating in CDEPP or not, felt that the benefits to their schools would more than make up for the facilities challenges that must be faced. Participating private childcare centers tended to agree, though slightly less positive than the two sets of public schools surveyed. Private centers not participating in CDEPP, on the other hand, were not sure that benefits gained for their centers would outweigh the facilities challenges if they decided to participate. Table 11 presents a summary of the findings related to the item.

Table 11
Facilities Challenges of CDEPP Versus Benefits:
Rating from CDEPP and Non-CDEPP Schools and Centers

	Average Rating	% Indicating Benefits Far Outweigh Challenges	% Indicating Challenges Far Outweigh Benefits
CDEPP Public Schools	1.55	61%	4%
Non-CDEPP Public Schools	2.02	34%	16%
CDEPP Private Centers	2.16	32%	13%
Non-CDEPP Private Centers	2.47	31%	31%

- 1 = Benefits far outweigh challenges
2 = Benefits somewhat outweigh challenges
3 = Challenges somewhat outweigh benefits
4 = Challenges far outweigh the benefits

Section 6: CDEPP Facilities Study: Qualitative Input from Public Schools and Private Childcare Centers Surveyed

The public schools and private childcare centers also were asked to provide comments about their thoughts on housing CDEPP children, particularly from a facilities-related perspective. What follows is a sampling of statements provided by each of the four groups surveyed. The statements don't necessarily reflect the position of all, or even most, schools and centers. Instead, these statements are provided to highlight some of the issues, considerations, challenges, and benefits related to CDEPP from a bricks and mortar standpoint.

Selected Comments from CDEPP Public School Survey Participants

"DSS requirements added additional costs with no funding."

"We will have to relocate 6 special education classrooms next year to do so (have sufficient size spaces to house 4-year-olds)."

(A critical issue is the) "size of classroom and adjacent playground spaces."

"Is the cafeteria large enough to provide the necessary breakfasts and lunches (is a critical issue)."

"I don't like mixing K4 students with older 4th and 5th grade students (in) hallways (and on) buses."

"If we expand our program to house 2 CDEPP classes we would have to build a restroom adjacent to the only existing classroom of proper size. That would be another major expense."

"The program (CDEPP) positively impacts the lives of these students (4-year-olds). Thanks!"

The above comments generally complemented the quantitative survey findings. Most public school CDEPP participants found value in the Project. However, getting started was frustrating from a facilities perspective. Finding space of sufficient size, meeting requirements related to health and safety, providing appropriate playgrounds, and fitting the program into already full buildings produced significant challenges.

Selected Comments from CDEPP Private Center Survey Participants

“Building space and DSS/DHEC/Fire Marshall requirements (are critical issues).”

“(A critical issue is) having all children mixed and served (mixing low income and high income).”

“To accommodate CDEPP children I had to purchase a building for my office.”

“Sufficient playground space (is a critical issue).

“(Participating centers) need a safe, clean, and comfortable learning environment.”

“The children are first priority and their education comes first. This is not a game.”

“The provider needs to have a passion for the work that they do. It’s not a program to ‘get rich quick,’ but a program focused on better educating the children.”

The comments penned by private sector childcare providers participating in CDEPP also supported their quantitative responses. As was the case with public school providers, the private childcare centers considered CDEPP important, but did experience frustrations related to finding sufficient space, gaining required facilities-related approvals, and the cost of facilities-related modifications.

Selected Comments from non-CDEPP Public School Respondents

“The potential benefits of the program are very important to helping some of our most at-risk students be better prepared for school. The only drawbacks are having adequate facilities to support the program.”

“Our biggest concern is room availability since we are in a building over 65 years old.”

“We would be very interested in having a four-year-old program, but our growth has made our population much higher than our capacity.”

“I would love a 4-year-program. Facilities and space are the major obstacles.”

“I’m not sure of the requirements for adequate facilities.”

Public schools not participating in CDEPP generally expressed an interest in serving at-risk four-year-olds. However, as reinforced in the quantitative portion of this study, many had concerns about sufficient space to house these young children. Also, they were not totally sure what would have to be done to their buildings to accommodate the program.

Selected Comments from non-CDEPP Private Childcare Center Respondents

“(Two concerns are) inadequate funding levels and inadequate space to provide services.”

“Our only areas of concern at this time are 1) staff-teacher training and qualifications and 2) outside equipment.”

“The one concern that our center has is providing transportation for the children to get to our facility.”

“I’m a private day care and do not want to enroll in this program.”

“We don’t have a lot of space because we’re only licensed to hold about 40 children.”

“Facilities aren’t available to expand services.”

“We have a great interest in participating in the program (CDEPP).”

“(State) must provide enough finances to offset additional expense (all expenses!)”

“The average daycare in SC that follows the regulations is struggling now to survive.”

“Any program that would assist in providing adequate funding for the education of our 4-year-old students is needed, irrespective of the facility or program (challenges).”

The comments from private centers not participating in CDEPP complemented their quantitative responses. While many supported the importance of meeting the needs of at-risk four-year-olds, several centers were concerned that cost considerations would make participation in CDEPP prohibitive. However, many did comment that they were interested in finding out more about CDEPP, including facilities-related requirements.

Summary of Comments of Respondents

The written comments of those responding to the facilities survey painted a picture of people, whether in the public or private sector, who saw the value of serving the educational needs of 4-year-old at-risk children. In general, both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that those not participating in CDEPP had more concerns than

those active in the Project. In other words, the actuality of the challenges of becoming a CDEPP site, private or public, may be less onerous than the expectation of them.

Section 7: CDEPP Facilities Study: Facilities-related Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion 1:

Providing adequate facilities to house CDEPP children has been a challenge for both public schools and private childcare center providers. Meeting DSS standards related to health, safety, and space size was cited by both groups as the greatest challenge. This was followed by having sufficient numbers of spaces to house the CDEPP children. However, on average, both public schools and private sector providers participating in CDEPP considered the facilities challenges to be at least somewhat outweighed by the benefits to the schools and centers. Public school participants were particularly positive about the benefits versus the costs.

Conclusion: Based on the survey findings, including the qualitative comments provided by those responding, schools and centers do not consider the “headaches” of providing healthful and safe facilities for CDEPP children to be an insurmountable obstacle to offering the program.

Recommendation: Nonetheless, the state needs to consider ways to assist those willing to commit to enrolling CDEPP children in terms of special funding for capital costs related to life-safety upgrades.

Conclusion 2:

Across the 20 counties included in the facilities study, there were CDEPP public schools and private childcare centers that were full to capacity. This is especially true among public schools, with only about one in three indicating it could serve more CDEPP children. However, almost four of every five private centers indicated that they could enroll more CDEPP children. While one in four public schools reported having a CDEPP waiting list, only 6% of the CDEPP private centers indicated they had CDEPP children waiting to enroll. Interestingly, even among public schools, 177 vacancies, or available slots, for CDEPP children were identified by the respondents. Add to this the 185 unused CDEPP slots noted by responding private childcare center providers, and it becomes apparent that places to house CDEPP are available. That is, among those responding to the survey, there are approximately 362 available slots. This is especially important to consider when the combined reported waiting lists totaled only 142 students. Another consideration is the fact that 40% of the non-CDEPP public schools and 60% of the non-CDEPP private childcare centers surveyed in the twenty counties expressed an interest in participating in CDEPP delivery in the future.

Conclusion: While there may be problems of sufficient space to house some CDEPP children, the issue appears at the macro-level to be one of where the vacancies are, not whether there are vacancies for CDEPP children. Stated

differently, if available CDEPP spaces/slots were more fully utilized, especially among private centers, there would not be a general shortage of spaces or waiting lists for CDEPP children across the twenty counties surveyed. And, there is sufficient interest among non-participating schools and centers to suggest that the possible available spaces to house CDEPP children could be increased substantially. This is not to say that there aren't some specific geographic areas where both public schools and private daycare centers are at their CDEPP capacities. However, in general, spaces for CDEPP children are available. Whether parents will elect to use these slots, and whether the slots are sufficient in number in all geographic areas, needs further attention.

Recommendation: The state needs to develop communication systems that make parents better aware of their CDEPP housing options. As part of this, parents should be encouraged to consider the benefits of both public and private CDEPP providers. Further, the state may want to consider incentives to encourage parents to select schools and centers with available space for CDEPP children. Finally, additional study is needed to identify "hot spots" where demand substantially exceeds all available CDEPP slots, and to determine how to make use of the interest in housing CDEPP children expressed by non-CDEPP schools and centers in these areas

Conclusion 3:

While the primary focus of this study was on space availability, it became apparent that location of CDEPP within a public school or private childcare facility is an important issue as well, especially among public schools. Several respondents indicated that they worried about four-year-olds being located in the same area of the building as older children. Others added that they worried about the four-year-olds riding on buses with older children. Some respondents suggested that public schools may want to consider special stand-alone centers on separate sites, or self-contained centers on standard school sites, so that 4-year-olds are less likely to encounter problems with older youngsters either on the bus or at school.

Conclusion: CDEPP children housed at private centers tend to be with other children similar in age, though some centers do have older youngsters later in the day. With few exceptions, public schools house 4-year olds on the same site as children who are 11 or 12 years old. Whether this is best practice is yet to be determined.

Recommendation: The state should study the pros and cons of where to locate CDEPP units. That study should address issues related to safety of young children in being transported to schools and centers, as well as any safety issues related to contact with older students on the same campus.

Conclusion 4:

While this study focused on the twenty counties in which school districts qualifying to participate in CDEPP were located, the reality is that many affected parents

work in areas where the county in which they live may not be the most logical choice of location for that parent's child to be enrolled in CDEPP. For example, one of the districts studied is located in Lexington County. That county has five school districts. In addition, depending on the direction the parent may travel to work, or otherwise where he or she might find the most efficient, safe transportation route for his or her child to school or center, several other districts and myriad private centers not currently designated to house CDEPP children are potentially available. Stated differently, some children qualifying for CDEPP may be better served if they could select school districts or private childcare centers not in the districts or even the counties now associated with CDEPP. Again as an example, a parent may find it easier in terms of transportation and being involved in the educational process of his or her four-year old if that parent could select a public school or private childcare center in the vicinity of his or her work.

Conclusion: Limiting CDEPP to prescribed geographic locations may be too restrictive in terms of allowing parents to choose an educational institution best suited for their children. Parent's place of work and travel distance/cost considerations may make schools and centers in other locations more logical.

Recommendation: The state should study the feasibility of expanding CDEPP sites to more geographic locations. Such a study should ascertain from affected parents what additional site options they may wish considered.

Conclusion 5 (Overall Conclusion):

Adequate and sufficient housing is an important component of evaluating CDEPP. And, there are some issues in these areas that must be addressed. One of these has to be provision of some type of capital funding to cover at least the partial cost of health and safety upgrades at private centers and public schools that are seeking to house CDEPP children. Further, while choice of CDEPP provider is an integral part of the initiative, proactive efforts are needed to encourage parents to elect to use available slots before the state spends large amounts of funds to provide additional approved centers and schools. Having said that, however, based on the survey results, facilities themselves will not likely "make or break" CDEPP. While there are hurdles to overcome, public schools and private centers are finding ways to provide adequate facilities. With some fine tuning of the CDEPP funding mechanism, overcoming these facilities hurdles can be made even easier. In the end, most respondents indicated that, while facilities certainly were important, much greater challenges existed in the form of program funding and adequate staffing.

