Extension Trains Child Care Providers via Satellite

The Situation
Child care is a complex issue and today's leading domestic concern. Changes in the American family structure and the dramatic increase of women in the work force have heightened the demand for child care. The quality of child care available impacts the development of our children, the effectiveness of today's family, and the future of our society.

Our response
Cooperative Extension personnel from University of Idaho received a grant from ES-USDA Telecommunications Program and a matching grant from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to produce a satellite videoconference, Achieving High Quality Child Care, broadcast on October 9, 1993. The 3 1/2 hour videoconference and written materials were developed by a multi-disciplinary coalition from the University of Idaho and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The faculty with expertise in nutrition, family life education, money management, food safety, child development, and public health from 4-H and Youth, Family and Consumer Sciences, Agricultural Communications, were involved in the project. The videoconference topics included: planning age-appropriate activities, providing a safe environment, understanding business practices, identifying local resources, providing positive guidance and discipline, feeding young children, and recognizing and reporting child abuse. The information shared during the videoconference was reinforced through group discussions, activities, and publications.

Achievements
Three hundred ninety-eight persons from forty-eight states requested information necessary for serving as downlink sites. There were 12 downlink sites in Idaho with several exceeding capacity and referring participants to alternate sites. Of the 1,055 who returned evaluations, the majority of the respondents (88%) said the information presented was just right and none said it was too difficult. The primary audience was owners and operators of home-based child care facilities, owners/operators of child care centers, and their employees.

The most useful information participants learned during the conference was:
- 26% Taxes, insurance, and recordkeeping
- 16% Reporting child abuse
- 16% Sanitation and safety
- 13% "Everything was useful"
- 11% Discipline
- 9% Feeding young children
- 7% Referral resources

When asked about future actions:
- 49% planned to talk to authorities about improving child care legislation;
- 39% planned to refer parents to agencies/others;
- 38% planned to review insurance coverage;
- 36% planned to encourage children to serve themselves;
- 36% planned to conduct a community needs assessment of child care;
- 29% planned to perform an environment safety check of their premises;
- 29% planned to keep track of time the home is used for business; and
- 29% planned to sign an IRS W-10 form for parents.
Four months later...

Providers continued to give the training high marks when surveyed in the mail four months following the training. More than a third of the respondents couldn’t pin down any one thing they put into place since the training but indicated the knowledge gained from the training as helpful to them every day.

- 35% Every day use something learned from conference
- 21% Sanitation and safety
- 18% Improving/changing procedures and records
- 9% Shared information with others and follow-up class
- 8% Professional and legal issues
- 6% Loving each child for who they are
- 3% Explain to parents my needs & rules/increased parent support

The Future

When asked what additional child care training information they wanted, most of the participants responded age appropriate curricula. Other areas requested for future training were discipline, health and safety issues, training on AIDS and CPR, more advanced follow-up videoconference, stress management techniques, and dealing with burnout.

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