

# south of market childcare, inc.

San Francisco, CA

## Overview

South of Market Childcare, Inc., is a licensed childcare facility in downtown San Francisco. It provides full-day, quality childcare and early education and family support services. The program's philosophy calls for involving the child's family to help them meet the child's needs.

The center's location at the top of the civic center provides participating families with easy access to several downtown children's attractions, including a large carousel, and a vegetable garden is located just outside the door. Although the center has a slick, modern design, it comes from a grassroots tradition: The director and staff have been providing childcare in the community since 1971, and the organization runs two additional childcare centers nearby.

One hundred and twenty-five children between the ages of 0 and 4 and their families receive services. Families range from homeless people with no income to middle-income homeowners. Many work downtown and bring their children from across the city, while others live nearby. Most participants are low-income Filipino, Latino, and Asian Pacific Islander families. The diversity of languages and cultures is evident from the moment one walks in the door. The center takes pride in celebrating the many cultures of participants and responding effectively to the needs of diverse families.

## Profile

### Staffing

Childcare: 30  
Family support: 3  
Management / administration: 5  
Other: 2  
Total: 40

### Children & Families Served

Ages 0-2: 18  
Age 3: 58  
Age 4: 49  
Total: 125

### Budget

\$1.4 million

### Services Provided On-Site

- Early childhood mental health
- Family resource center
- Food bank
- Parent education
- Respite care
- Social and recreational activities
- Social worker

## How the Program Builds Protective Factors

South of Market Childcare, Inc., builds five key protective factors that reduce child abuse and neglect. Programs, services, and characteristics contributing to each protective factor are listed below:

### Parental Resilience

- Diversity Committee
- Family Resource Center
- Mental Health Consultation
- Parent Education
- Respite Care
- Responsive Programs
- Social and Recreational Activities

### Social Connections

- Family Resource Center
- Parent Education
- Social and Recreational Activities
- Violence Prevention

### Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Parent Education
- Social Worker

### Concrete Support in Times of Need

- Emergency Resources
- Information and Referral
- Respite Care
- Social Worker

### Social and Emotional Competence of Children

- Responsive Programs
- Early Childhood Mental Health

### Partners

- Asian Pacific Islander Family Resource Center
- Providers of counseling on domestic violence and substance abuse
- Elementary schools
- School Choice

### Response Protocol

If a staff member is concerned about a family:

- Staff consult with lead teacher, then mental health consultant and administrator
- Director and other staff with a relationships with family talk with them and get permission to observe and document child's classroom behavior
- Observation and documentation occurs
- Meeting takes place among family, staff, director, and / or mental health consultant
- Next steps are determined, including who will make reports or referrals
- Staff support family during reporting or referral processes

### Staff Resources

Staff receive the following supports in working with issues of child abuse and neglect:

- Annual in-service training on domestic violence and child abuse and neglect
- Parent Services Project training
- Individual and group sessions with early childhood mental health consultant

## Key Program Features

### Diversity Committee

A committee of parents works to ensure that the cultures and languages of Latino and Filipino families are reflected in all aspects of the center.

### Early Childhood Mental Health

A mental health consultant specializing in early childhood works with staff, families, and children to develop tailored strategies to promote children's growth and development. The consultant observes and documents children's behavior in the classroom to help staff and families identify children who are having social, emotional, or educational difficulties. The consultant works with these children and their families, providing them with 8 to 10 on-site or home-based sessions. During the sessions, the consultant helps the family understand the child's needs and works with them to develop strategies for intervention. When long-term intervention and additional services are needed, the consultant acts as a case manager, referring the child and family to services and facilitating communication between service providers and childcare staff.

The consultant also works with staff to help them build learning alliances with families, engage families with respect, and treat families as partners in their children's care. With the family's permission, the consultant shares information with staff to help them fully understand the child's developmental history and past experiences.

The consultant and a teacher facilitate therapeutic activity groups for children. These groups help children understand and modulate their feelings, establish acceptable ways of expressing themselves, and interact with others.

- In-service training on child development and dealing with challenging behaviors
- Weekly team meetings and lead teacher meetings
- Training at community college

### Staffing Policies that Promote Staff and Child Well-Being

The center reduces the risk of child abuse and neglect while children are at the program through:

- Background checks on all prospective staff
- Staff training in recognizing signs of stress
- Stress prevention activities for staff
- Liberal leave policy to allow time off for mental health
- Ongoing mental health consultation
- Director's open-door policy

### Licensing and Accreditation

Licensed by California Department of Social Services as Community Childcare Provider

Working toward accreditation by National Association for the Education of Young Children

### Evaluation

Assessed annually by outside evaluator using Infant / Toddler Environmental Rating Scale and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale

## Emergency Resources

Families facing crises such as eviction or job loss can turn to the center and the network of participating families for concrete help.

## Family Resource Center

Families can drop in and get information and support at an on-site family resource center that is sponsored by the Junior League. It houses a lending library that includes children's books and games. A full-time coordinator is available to meet and talk with families about parenting and other issues of concern. Every Wednesday afternoon, a parent support group is conducted in Tagalog to help Filipino parents, including foster parents, nurture their children and function in the culture of the United States. The center offers workshops on domestic violence and child abuse in three languages to help families understand their options and build a climate of non-violence in their homes. Parents have come together at the family resource center to develop and push an agenda for school reform, making the center a nexus of neighborhood organizing on school issues.

## Information and Referral

South of Market Childcare, Inc., has developed an extensive network of service providers in the area who reliably assist families upon referral.

## Mental Health Consultation

In addition to providing early childhood mental health services, the center provides mental health consultation to parents and staff.

## Parent Education

The parent education program brings families together to learn about topics in which they are interested. The topics of these classes, workshops, and support groups are based on parents' requests and needs. They typically include early literacy,

## What People Say

"In New York, your neighbors are your friends, but not here. The parent group was a nice surprise and helped make up for that."  
—Parent

"We had tried a bunch of things. None of them worked. [The mental health consultant] identified [my son's] strengths as well as challenges and related them to his behavior. If only we had known someone like him when our son was an infant."  
—Parent

"These people are as concerned as we are. They make me feel like my kid is the most important one in the place."  
—Parent

"I learned how to watch my son differently. I saw how he was aggressive and wouldn't share. We learned from [the mental health consultant] how to help him."  
—Parent

"They already knew what [my child] could do. I had to learn."  
—Adoptive parent

"I always think first what it feels like to be a parent."  
—Teacher

"I try to be sure parents see there is no anger on my face, even when I am being firm with a child."  
—Teacher

"Parents do not always want to hear there is something wrong with their child. Sometimes it takes a team of many people documenting behavior, talking with parents for six months or more to help a father believe that his child needs help."  
—Teacher

Kindergarten readiness, setting limits, and more. The sessions are offered in a variety of languages, including English, Tagalog, and Spanish. In addition, a parent handbook is distributed; among other topics, it covers laws regarding child abuse and protective services. These topics are also discussed during families' orientation sessions.

In addition to the parent education activities offered by the center, a partnership with the organization School Choice provides workshops for families as their children enter school.

### **Respite Care**

Respite care is provided to families free of charge one evening per week and two Saturdays per month. It is provided to children ages 0 to 12 whose families live in the area. Respite care provides parents with time away from their children so that they can attend to their personal needs. The service relieves stress and therefore contributes to preventing child abuse and neglect. Parents with children with special needs are particularly grateful for the respite care provided by the center.

### **Responsive Programs**

To provide quality early childhood education and to help families access the resources they need to promote the welfare of their children, the program responds to the needs, strengths, and cultures of children and families.

### **For Families**

South of Market Childcare, Inc., uses the Parent Services Project model. This model emphasizes strong partnerships between and among staff and families. All activities respond to the cultures of the families who participate. Staff are hired from each of the ethnic groups represented among participants, and many of the center's staff started out as participating parents. Translators are present at all activities so that all parents can participate equally.

## **For Children**

Each of the children's programs follows a developmentally appropriate curriculum that helps all participating children grow socially and emotionally as well as cognitively. These programs include: an infant / toddler program for children ages 0 to 3 (which provides each child with a primary care provider), a preschool program, and a transition program for children who are about to enter Kindergarten. Teachers complete assessments to determine each child's needs within two months of enrollment and then every three to six months.

## **Social and Recreational Activities**

Several social and recreational activities are offered each year to help families connect with each other. These include: bumper bowling, soccer games, potlucks, multi-cultural events, picnics, and trips out of the city; a recent trip to Great America amusement park was some families' first excursion outside of San Francisco. Staff help parents organize sales of T-shirts and cookbooks and other fundraisers to support some of these activities.

## **Social Worker**

A part-time social worker with an open-door policy provides case management to families in need. She is linked to a variety of neighborhood and community resources and helps families use these resources. She also taps an extensive network of providers who help homeless families access housing and other benefits. The social worker also helps facilitate parenting classes and coordinates assistance for parents whose children have special learning needs.

## **Special Needs**

Children's special needs are identified as early as possible so that they can begin to receive intervention and special services. This identification is enhanced by the classroom observations

conducted by the early childhood mental health consultant. When special needs are identified, staff refer families to specialists outside of the center who conduct assessments, including the school district's special education staff. The early childhood mental health consultant and any staff who are close to the family meet with them to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan and Individualized Education Plan, and offer the family support after the meeting.

### **Violence Prevention**

South of Market Childcare, Inc., hosts workshops on domestic violence for participating families and for families in the community. These workshops help prevent abuse and create community norms against violence. Staff are trained in modeling conflict resolution methods. They use this training to help children learn to solve problems without hitting. The center's curriculum incorporates conflict resolution into all social and emotional development activities.