



LAURA GOSS/Emerald

Julian, 4, swings high with the help of sophomore Ryann Cowley at the EMU Child Care Development Center.

Care: Program adapts to student schedules

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explained Dennis Reynolds, University child care coordinator. He completed an undergraduate internship at the center on Moss Street in 1972 and never left.

"I had a friend who was working here, and I thought it would be an easy credit and would be fun," Reynolds said. "I found it much more meaningful than just fun. I found the work I wanted to do."

After 15 years as a classroom teacher and 11 years as an administrator for children's programs, he has seen the evolution of the University's system. One house for temporary use was opened in June 1970 and has been used for the last 27 1/2 years, he said.

"At the time it was considered a radical notion that there would be child care on a University campus," Reynolds said. "The demographics have changed, and it is no longer seen as a radical issue for students and employees."

In the '70s there was more federal money for students, but when that money started drying up, the student government filled the gaps in terms of supporting child care, said Reynolds.

Today, student incidental fees help subsidize one-third of the operating expenses for the seven child care and development programs available to students, employees and community families that service approximately 260 to 350 children altogether.

"There's definitely a higher level of quality because it's not for profit," Wasson explained. "It's not just day care but child development centers that care about the kids."

There are several differences between the University program and independent day care providers, Reynolds said. The University day-care centers pay their employees a higher salary than centers with similar costs. This higher salary ensures a lower turnover rate among employees and more quality staff workers.

The centers also offer a variety of schedules for day care that change each quarter when the student's schedule changes. The centers adapt their schedules to meet



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Emma, 2, has her first "driving lesson" in the center's outdoor play area during a brief break from the rain on Tuesday.

student needs. For example, they can change their schedule to accommodate student-parents during Finals Week, Reynolds said.

Wasson is a member of the Student Senate and her husband is active in the ASUO office. Her child care is adaptable to her schedule.

"It's easy, at any hour things may come up. I'll think I'll be done at a certain hour and I won't be able to make it," says Wasson, who can call the center and ask if her child can stay longer. "It's really flexible with you."

Students buy blocks of time when they have classes and can save money by only scheduling the care their child needs. The centers' main priorities are serving students, and 65 to 70 percent of the children in the program are

children of University students.

"Child care is a popular issue right now," said Cheryl Hunter, ASUO executive coordinator. "Overall, society has had a mixed commitment to it. We realize the importance of child care, but we don't fund it."

In addition to ASUO funding, student government has made an effort to help individual students afford child care.

"We've tried different things over the years, like changing the level of eligibility for subsidies or adjusting the number of families in the subsidy program," Hunter said.

Last year the ASUO accepted 210 subsidies, which amounted to \$212,000 set aside specifically for student-parents who receive a percentage of their day care funding from the ASUO. Parents can use

the subsidy in any day care program they choose.

"The ASUO subsidy is key because it pays for 55 percent of our child care, which helps out so much because child care is really expensive," said Wasson.

University day care can ease confusion with bills. Wasson knows if there are problems paying that month's complete cost, the bill will be transferred over to her Oregon Hall account.

President Clinton's new child care initiative will mostly target moderate income families, Reynolds explained.

"But hope is on the horizon in terms of federal funding," he said. If passed by Congress, Clinton's plan would expand bloc grants that states receive to subsidize low-income family care. It would also support child care providers' educations, employer tax credits for providing day care, and funding to improve after school care.

Hunter believes Clinton's plan may have more of an impact on the quality, and not necessarily the cost, of child care.

Beyond funding the real need is for students to get directly involved with the children in their communities, he said. Reynolds would like to see more students involved with the University day care and child development centers.

"It is easy on campus to live in an ivory tower and to forget that not everybody in the world is between 18 and 25 years of age," Reynolds said.

"We are so conditioned every day to see certain kinds of people on campus," said Beth Daniels, who has been working for the child care centers for the past three years. "The EMU program I work with is an opportunity to let their [children's] presence be known."

Her work consists of making snacks, setting up the touch tables for children, using play dough and facilitating exploration and play.

"For three hours I forget about the paper I have to do tonight or the test I have to study for tomorrow," she said. "It allows me to hold on to my inner child."

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