

## **WOMEN'S SELF-EMPLOYMENT PROJECT**

*Award Winning Program: CARE Entrepreneurial Training Program*

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**Children do well when their families  
do well, and families do better when they  
live in supportive communities.**

**FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards, a partnership  
of the National Congress for Community Economic  
Development and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, recognize  
NCCED affiliates for outstanding programs that help give  
children what they need most — strong, capable and  
economically successful families.**





**CHILDREN DO WHAT THEIR PARENTS DO.  
IF THE PARENTS ARE SUCCESSFUL, THE  
CHILDREN WILL FOLLOW.”**

**CONNIE EVANS, FOUNDING PRESIDENT,  
WOMEN’S SELF-EMPLOYMENT PROJECT**

**NOTHING BUT  
THE BEST**

Kimberly Pickens always had the spirit of an entrepreneur. Several years ago, this mother of two young boys set up a child care facility in her home. While the children thrived in her care, the business was a financial disaster. Parents paid late, and some didn’t pay at all. Unfamiliar with the state rules, Pickens failed to charge the appropriate co-pay from parents who received a subsidy for child care. After a year in business, all she had to show was a hefty tax bill. Pickens knew she needed help. “I looked into other business start-up programs, but they were too expensive,” Pickens recalls. Then

she learned about CARE. In the supportive environment of CARE, Pickens learned about the state’s reimbursement regulations and how to draft binding contracts with parents. She fine-tuned a business plan and learned to market her business. Her confidence grew. She passed her state inspection and recently received her license. “Thanks to WSEP, I have the foundation to run a successful business now,” Pickens says. “I want nothing but the best for my children, and now I can provide that for other people’s children, too.”

In the mid-1990s, the Women’s Self-Employment Project (WSEP) sought to address two needs in its Chicago community by creating a program that trains women to develop home-based child care businesses. CARE Entrepreneurial Training Program helps these women make the transition from welfare to work as it gives neighborhood families additional options for high quality, affordable child care. The program is a natural extension of what WSEP does best — providing women with supports that will take their families out of poverty while stabilizing the community.

Taught by community women with extensive business experience, the 12-week program guides women to develop business plans, set up business bank accounts, create budgets and design marketing strategies and materials. They learn the state regulations for running a home-based facility, as well as CPR, first aid and security screenings. They apply for their child care license and insurance. CARE also provides a \$1,500 line of credit, and women in CARE can take advantage of WSEP’s other services, such as a business networking program and Individual Development Accounts that match savings to offset business expenses or buy a home. If a participant decides not to open her own business, CARE connects her to a job at an existing child care facility. Of the 88 women enrolled in CARE last year, 56 developed business plans and 22 started businesses.

CARE staff continue to support women in the program for two years. Graduates mentor new participants, which helps all of them keep connected to the WSEP family. “These women become role models for their children and for other families in the neighborhood,” says WSEP Founding President Connie Evans. “When people see a neighborhood woman starting a business, and moving into a whole new area of asset development, it inspires change. It’s a powerful catalyst.”