

# Cooperative Child Care for Rural Residents: The Experience from California<sup>\*</sup>

by

Elizabeth Kim Coontz and  
Elizabeth Esper

Center for Cooperatives, University of California, Davis, USA

Journal of Rural Cooperation, 31(2), 2003:111-125

---

## Abstract

Over the past third of a century, Western welfare states have made policy shifts toward decentralization and privatization, and expected the private non-profit sector to take a larger role in addressing social welfare needs. In the US, welfare policies that focus on employment for the parents of young children, the large number of parents in the workforce, and inadequate child care services in rural communities combine to make the case for innovative child care strategies particularly compelling. This article reports the findings of a project that explored the feasibility of using cooperative models of child care to address the needs of rural communities in California. The project examined relevant literature and identified existing federal and state programs involved with child care for low-income families, as well as relevant funding sources for cooperative development. Interviews were conducted with those involved in low-income housing, early childhood development, welfare-to-work programs, and economic development in rural communities. Interviews also helped identify rural affordable housing developments and rural communities for specific feasibility studies. The findings of the project demonstrate compelling reasons that cooperative models of child care, especially the parent model, can offer effective strategies for expanding needed child care in rural communities.

---

<sup>\*</sup>An earlier version of this article was presented at the ICA Research Congress: Mapping Co-operative Studies in the New Millenium, May 28-30, 2003 in Victoria, Canada. This paper was also in part compiled from a grant prepared from USDA Rural Development, September 30, 2002.