

FORTUNE

COVER STORY – Doctoring Day Care

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A specially staffed urban day-care center helps medically fragile tots

By Antoine Craigwell

Carmen Gonzalez, 26, struggled for nearly a year to find child care for her 3-year-old daughter, who has epilepsy. The answer was Mercer County Children's Medical Daycare in Mercerville, N.J. Entrepreneurs Beverlyn Grissom and Michelle Bunting, both 38, opened it to address the lack of local facilities equipped to care for children under 4 with serious medical problems, ranging from epilepsy to developmental

delays. Employing both nurses and on-call physicians, the facility cares for 63 children. “Because my daughter receives the correct dosage of the correct medication and gets one-on-one care, her walking and communication skills have improved,” says Gonzalez. Although the number of U.S. preschoolers with disabilities rose by 38% between 1994 and 2003, some states have few medical day-care facilities. In New Jersey, which has 37,500 children with disabilities, there are only

13 such centers. Mercer County Children's Medical Daycare turned a profit on \$3.2 million in sales for 2004. Medicaid pays for most of the children to attend, and the Department of Agriculture provides food stipends.

Mercer County Children's Medical Daycare, Mercerville, N.J.

*Daycare Founders:
Charles Bunting III,
Michelle Bunting, and
Beverlyn Grissom*