

## Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) 2025-27

### Talking Points for California State Plan Input Sessions

*Prepared by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (R&R Network or “The Network”) for R&R member organizations*

#### Key themes for R&Rs to communicate at the input sessions

1. **The importance of CCIP** (California Child Care Initiative Project) to meeting CCDF objectives – mixed delivery for families (building the supply, etc.) and supporting the workforce.
2. **The importance of Consumer Education** – providing information, resources, safe and trusted information in a user friendly, accessible way.
3. **The importance of a R&R system** – R&Rs in every county, to reach all California families and providers in a consistent and reliable way no matter where families and providers are located. Families and providers deserve a system where contractors (R&Rs) all have timely access to information and opportunities (and/or can provide regular feedback to the state).

#### General Tips

- State your name and agency name.
- Specifically mention that your agency is a resource and referral (R&R).
  - Repeat “R&R” often in your comments. Repetition ensures that the state knows R&Rs play a significant role related to the state plan, that R&Rs are present and providing input, and that the note takers capture the term frequently in the write up that will influence the drafting of the state plan.
- Frame comments as “recommendations.”
- Refer to section names or section numbers from the [pre-print](#). The talking points below are separated by the three themes above. Within each theme, we provide a reference list containing the section names and numbers. The bullet points offer additional detail and suggested recommendations.
- Skim the [Federal Register Publication of the FY 2025-2027 Child Care and Development Fund \(CCDF\) Plan Preprint](#).

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THEME #1: The Importance of CCIP<sup>1</sup>

### 1A. Importance of CCIP: Health & Safety Standards

#### References:

- Section 5 Establish Standards and Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Health and Safety of Child Care Settings
  - 5.3 Health and Safety Standards,
  - 5.4 Preservice or orientation training on health and safety standards.
  - 5.5 monitoring and enforcement policies and practices for CCDF providers.

#### Recommendations:

- The Network recommends that CDSS support the expansion of existing R&R programs, such as the CA Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) and Health & Safety programs to build upon an existing infrastructure of training and support that is linguistically/culturally diverse, locally accessible, and sustains a relationship with potential, new, and existing home-based child care providers - licensed and exempt.
  - CCIP is already focused on providing intensive support for providers - virtually, in person, and in homes - and with the Network's support, receives consistent professional development for trainers and agencies to implement training curricula that is aligned with the topics outlined in sections 5.3.1-5.3.9, in a way that is relevant and appropriate for home-based caregivers.
  - The Network recommends that CDSS implement the curricula and infrastructure that the state has invested in to meet this requirement.
- The Network recommends expanding the capacity at CCIP sites to support additional multilingual trainers and all home-based child care providers in meeting the health and safety training requirement, with hands-on support towards implementation of health and safety practices (e.g. home visits).
- The Network also recommends that Health & Safety funding be expanded beyond regional hubs to improve access for providers and local capacity for ongoing technical assistance and support for all home-based child care providers receiving PHSP Training, and in turn, support UCSF in expanding their capacity building efforts, training, and technical assistance to R&Rs.
  - The Network recommends building upon existing infrastructure and expanding training capacity and access for all home-based child care providers, in particular, through all local R&Rs, the Network, and UCSF.
- The Network also recommends adequate funding and support for stipends, reimbursements, and equipment for providers to implement critical health and safety practices and establish safe environments that are tailored to the ages of the children in care. This should include, but not be limited to, safe sleep spaces, gates, and car seats.

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<sup>1</sup> CCIP = California Child Care Initiative Project

- Support and funding should also facilitate home visits through R&Rs that may help expedite the monitoring process by supporting compliance (e.g. pre-monitoring visits, checklists, implementation of safety measures, setting up safe sleep spaces)
- The Network recommends a supportive approach to monitoring of health and safety practices for CCDF Providers. Monitoring should be done in close partnership with R&Rs who can provide health and safety training and support in implementing health, safety, and fire standards.
- Monitoring and enforcement of policies and practices should be a transparent process that includes tools and information for Providers in their preferred language.
  - We recommend additional funding be provided for materials needed for providers to meet requirements.
- The Network recommends that CDSS streamline and target on-site inspections to focus on verification and documentation of meeting training requirements and background checks.
  - Monitors should sustain a close partnership with R&Rs who may provide additional training and support, as needed. Visits can also offer an opportunity to inform parents and providers of additional training, technical assistance, services (e.g. CACFP<sup>2</sup>), and materials to help establish healthier, safer spaces for children in their care.
  - We recommend that funding be prioritized to support families in addressing potential or imminent health and safety risks (e.g. safe sleep spaces, baby gates).

Rationale/Justification Points to the above recs. These points can be lifted as well in input sessions:

- R&Rs are uniquely positioned to connect informal caregivers with formal systems of support and are skilled at not only informing providers of health and safety standards, but also supporting them in implementing best practices within their child care programs and practices.
- Intensive, multilingual support that is culturally relevant and locally available on an ongoing basis is particularly critical to meet the 3 month requirement for pre-service training.
  - The Child Care Initiative Project developed a Health & Safety Facilitator's Guide aligned with the CECO<sup>3</sup> training (available in nine languages) and provides training of trainers to local R&Rs. Local R&Rs train thousands of home-based child care providers through CCIP (licensed and exempt).
- The Child Care Initiative Project provides information and resources that are developed for all home-based child care providers (FFN<sup>4</sup>, FCCH<sup>5</sup>, etc.). Most curricula are available in 9 languages and are provided through training, coaching, and technical assistance in every local R&R throughout CA, with support from the Network.

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<sup>2</sup> CACFP = Child and Adult Care Food Program

<sup>3</sup> CECO = California Early Childhood Online

<sup>4</sup> FFN = Family, Friend, or Neighbor

<sup>5</sup> FCCH = Family Child Care Home

- Moreover, the Network also trains R&Rs to implement TIC<sup>6</sup> Training & Coaching for the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children. Information from this program is also shared widely through R&Rs, though is not currently funded by CCDBG/CCDF.
- The Network, in partnership with MCOE<sup>7</sup> and CDE, developed an asynchronous training series (available on CECO in English, Spanish, and Chinese) to meet the training topic requirements outlined in [sections 5.3.1 - 5.3.9](#), to support the states efforts in meeting meeting the requirement and filling a need that was not already met by existing CPR/FA and PHSP Training or Mandated Reporter training.
- R&R Health & Safety hubs work with UCSF to receive and provide training on EMSA-approved Preventative Health and Safety Practices (PHSP) to support providers in meeting their required training toward licensure.
- CCIP is the predominant entry point to California's quality improvement system, working with potential and existing licensed FCCH and license-exempt providers. CCIP is a part of the state's broader, systemic approach and progression of professional development (section 6).
- Majority of R&Rs work closely with or are co-housed with subsidy programs and can more readily connect with CCDF providers so that they are aware of the supports available to them. They have also demonstrated effective capacity to engage informal caregivers with formal systems of support.
- Local R&Rs, via CCIP, provided more than 2,300 home visits for home-based child care providers (potential and existing licensed FCCH and license-exempt) in FY 22-23. (SEE or Reference infographic)
- In FY 22-23, local R&Rs, via CCIP, provided 7,400 office visits, for home-based child care providers (potential and existing licensed FCCH and license-exempt). --- note the ability to build relationships.
- Through CCIP infrastructure and Communities of Practices, R&Rs may share best practices in approach to one-on-one technical assistance and support in implementing best practices to meet health and safety standards.
- [Note: Lead Agencies \(CDSS\) have the option to develop alternate monitoring requirements for care provided in the child's home that are appropriate to the setting. A child's home may not meet the same standards as other child care facilities and this provision gives Lead Agencies flexibility in conducting more streamlined and targeted on-site inspections. For example, Lead Agencies may choose to monitor in-home providers on basic health and safety requirements such as training and background checks. Lead Agencies could choose to focus on health and safety risks that pose imminent danger to children in care. This flexibility cannot be used to bypass the monitoring requirement altogether. States should develop procedures for notifying parents of monitoring protocols and consider whether it would be appropriate to obtain parental permission prior to entering the home for inspection \(98.42\(b\)\(2\)\(iv\)\(B\)\).](#)

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<sup>6</sup> TIC = Trauma Informed Care

<sup>7</sup> MCOE = Merced County Office of Education

## 1B. Importance of CCIP: Workforce

### References:

- 6. Recruit and Retain a Qualified and Effective Child Care Workforce
  - 6.1 Professional Development Framework

### Recommendations:

- The Network recommends increased funding for local R&Rs and the Network to expand access and support via the CA Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP).
- The Network recommends that providers completing any CCIP or TIC training also be eligible for increased rates.

Rationale or Points to Justify the above recommendations:

- The Child Care Initiative Project core curricula is aligned with the ECE Competencies and is designed for the full continuum of home-based child care providers. Most training sessions are available in 9 languages.
- Trauma Informed Care Training and Coaching curricula is part of the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Children in Foster Care. The Network has trained more than 300 R&R trainers, building capacity and access for providers across the state.

## 1C. Importance of CCIP: Quality

### References:

- Section 7. Support Continuous Quality Improvement.
  - 7.4 Improving the Supply and Quality of Child Care Programs and Services for Infants and Toddlers

### Recommendations:

- The Network recommends expanding support to staff provider networks to strengthen and deepen support that is already being provided and boost the viability of FCCH businesses, thus supporting continuity of care for infants and toddlers.
- The Network recommends additional funding to help increase access for providers, and reach which provide intensive support that strengthens home-based care for infants and toddlers.
- The Network recommends expanded support for CCIP to increase access for all potential and existing home-based child care providers (licensed or exempt), particularly those caring for infants and toddlers. Additional funding provides greater access for providers to linguistically diverse training and support; agencies provide in depth, time intensive support that is grossly underfunded and understaffed. Increased funding should allow for a minimum of one full time trainer and coach, administrative support, and materials and funding for provider support.

Rationale or Points to Justify the above recommendations:

- R&Rs are uniquely positioned to establish and sustain community-based provider networks through the Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP), which works closely with all potential and existing family child care providers, with a focus on support expansion to care for infants and toddlers.
- CCIP is available across the state in every county, through every local R&R, and with infrastructure and capacity building support from the Network. The Network has implemented shared services pilots and shared resource support.
  - CCIP has effectively provided home visits, training, technical assistance, materials, and incentives for FCCH Providers who expand their capacity to care for infants and toddlers since 1985.

**General CCIP statement:**

The California Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) strengthens home-based child care across the state. Housed in every single local Child Care Resource & Referral agency (69 local projects), CCIP provides the most linguistically diverse support for potential, new, and existing license-exempt and licensed Family Child Care Providers. We are the predominant entry point to our quality improvement system, providing an on-ramp for license exempt and FCCH Providers alike. CDSS contracts with us, the CA Child Care Resource and Referral Network, to develop and provide training and technical support to all local projects.

During the last two FY's, with expanded funding from ARPA, CCIP supported 1,959 providers in becoming licensed, 643 providers in re-opening their business, and more than 1,000 providers in expanding their programs. Collectively CCIP served an average of over 1,300 FFN/LE Providers annually.

CCIP trainings and TA are available in at least 9 languages and are critical in serving those that care for infants and toddlers, in particular. We value in-depth support in every community and recognize that this takes time - R&Rs provide home visits, office visits, and continuous support.

**We recommend expanded funding to continue to improve equitable access for providers to training, coaching, and technical assistance. Base funding does not allow for even one full-time staff person in most agencies - it is inadequate to meet the needs across our state.**

## THEME #2: Support Consumer Education

### References:

- Section 2. Promote Family Engagement Through Outreach and Consumer Education
- Section 5.4 Background Checks

### 2A. Importance of Consumer Education: Family Engagement

Section 2. Promote Family Engagement Through Outreach and Consumer Education. This section is supporting the role of parents as child care consumers who need information to make informed choices regarding services that best suit their needs. The target audience for the consumer education information includes three groups: parents receiving CCDF assistance, the general public, and when appropriate, child care providers. OCC<sup>8</sup> expects that Lead Agencies are using targeted strategies for each group to ensure tailored consumer education information.

### Recommendations:

#### 2.1 Outreach to Families with Limited English Proficiency and Persons with Disabilities

- We recommend that the state provide translated materials or additional funding that is specific for the purpose of meeting the needs of non-English families and for 508 compliance.
- Additionally, while there can be some economies of scale when the state provides translated materials, we recommend specific funding for non-English materials should be made available for all agencies to translate their materials, especially to fairly serve California's linguistically diverse families.

#### Justification:

- The state does not provide non-English materials or additional funding for local contractors, this has become a financial burden for many agencies as they attempt to meet the linguistic needs of their communities.
  - Financial burden on agencies to front the cost for their own translations further contributes to the inequities amongst contractors, families, and providers.
- The state has a statewide consumer education website that offers information materials in non-English languages: Spanish, Traditional Chinese and Vietnamese.

#### 2.2 and 2.2.4 Parental Complaint Process and 2.2.4

- We recommend that the information related to the history of a child care facility should be in the languages they are most comfortable with.
- Uniform Complaint Policies and complaints filed by parents regarding license exempt sites is not available to the public, this process lacks transparency and it is unclear if the

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<sup>8</sup> OCC = Office of Child Care

CCR&R who provides referrals is notified of serious incidents. Families seeking child care on exempt sites should have access to transparency regarding the history and resolution of complaints. We recommend this information is more widely shared with CCR&Rs and families.

- “Records of substantiated complaints are kept by the school district, UCP complaint records including those regarding providers exempt from licensure are maintained in a database maintained by the Lead Agency” – if parents have access to this database it is not widely known how to access it. In order to comply with Oliver's Law, we recommend this information to be shared with the CCR&Rs and consumer education website that offers public referrals.

2.3 Consumer Education Website. The Subsections ask how the Lead Agency ensures that its website is consumer-friendly and easily accessible. a description of how the State/Territory licenses child care providers, a rationale for exempting providers from licensing requirements, the procedure for conducting monitoring and inspections of providers, and the policies and procedures related to comprehensive background checks.

**Recommendations:**

- The CDSS CCLD<sup>9</sup> website includes information for parents and providers.
- Mychildcareplan.org is a user-friendly site for families seeking child care options, written in plain language and offered in English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese and Vietnamese, is 508 compliant and offers a link to the transparency site at Licensing and together they meet the intent of the Consumer Education requirements. We recommend building upon this platform with enhanced functionality that users want.
- The CDSS facility search requires the seeker to have the license number of small family child care homes, while this meets the intent of the law in California, it is not a user friendly search if a family is looking for new child care options. We recommend the state utilizes the existing CCR&R system and consumer education website as the preferred child care search. The CCR&Rs and consumer education site have links back to the CDSS site, but after visiting the CCR&R they will have a license number to check on the status and history of site.
- The CDSS CCLD website includes the ability for parents to search for child care centers and large family child care homes by zip code. To search for small family child care homes the party needs to know the family child care home license number, (this makes searching for an unknown site difficult.) It works well in partnership with the mychildcareplan.org site, but as a stand alone search it can be difficult for parents to find what they are looking for. We recommend the state promotes the statewide consumer education website

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<sup>9</sup> CCLD = Community Care Licensing Division



- Additionally, the CCLD website does not offer enhanced information that is important when families are seeking child care, but the consumer education site and local CCR&Rs do. For example, a site may be licensed for 12 or 14 children and you can see that on the CCLD site, but the parent will not see that the site only cares for children 0-5 or if it offers evening, weekend care or transportations. We recommend the state promotes the statewide CCR&R system and consumer education website.
- It is confusing to call the CDSS CCLD a consumer education website, we recommend the State be consistent when referring to the consumer education website, mychildcareplan.org and the CDSS CCLD website.
- The CDSS CCLD website includes information for parents and providers, but lacks information regarding the statewide consumer education website. We recommend the state references the statewide consumer education website and its resources for parents and providers.
  - Mychildcareplan.org is a user-friendly site for families seeking child care options, written in plain language and offered in English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese and Vietnamese, and offers additional resources, we recommend the state references the statewide consumer education website:
  - 5 Steps to Becoming a Family Child Care Provider in California, with a link to the CDSS site for more formal licensing and monitoring information.  
<https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/becoming-a-family-child-care-provider/>
  - License Exempt Child Care Centers, basic information that would be better if the link to exempt center database at the department was included, we also need to add something about the uniform complaint policy at LEAs.  
<https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/license-exempt-child-care-centers/>
  - Serious Injuries, Deaths, & Child Abuse in Child Care, with link to CDSS Child Care Facility Fatality Data  
<https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/serious-injuries-deaths-child-abuse-in-child-care/>
  - Complaints to Community Care Licensing, with links to the CDSS video on how to file a complaint and information on how to file a complaint.  
<https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/complaints-to-community-care-licensing/>
  - Background Checks with information on background checks for child care staff, Criminal Record Clearances and TrustLine with links to appropriate sites:  
<https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/background-checks/>
  - Licensing and Monitoring for Child Care Facilities in California, user friendly and easy to read information on types of license, how to get licensed, monitoring and inspection visits.  
<https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/licensing-and-monitoring-for-child-care-facilities/>

- Facility Search Mobile Application is not available, we recommend removing reference to it from the CDSS website.
- The CDSS website provides a link to the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network where the user can enter their ZIP code to find their nearest R&R Agency and contact information. Because the Mychildcareplan.org is a statewide consumer education website with a variety of information in multiple languages, and because the local CCR&R that is associated with the user prominently displays the R&R's contact information, we recommend adding information regarding mychildcareplan.org as a mechanism to share information about local CCR&R agencies.
- We recommend that the CDSS includes contact information for both CDSS departments (CCLD and CCDD<sup>10</sup>) as well as a contact for the mychildcareplan.org consumer education website. Adding the contact information for the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network would offer information that helps the consumer know how they can contact DSS and its licensing regional offices.
- The Network recommends including the Consumer Education 1-800-KIDS-793 phone line in the State Plan as a service that helps the State of California provide consumer friendly, accessible avenues through which families can access information about child care and connect with their local child care resource and referral program.
- The Network strongly supports the continued use of the Consumer Education 1-800-KIDS-793 phone service that allows consumers to a) receive both basic child care information in California and contact information for the local child care resource and referral program that serves their area 24 hours a day 7 days a week; and b) speak to an information specialist during weekdays, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. It's important for the following reasons: 1. This 800 number is included on the mychildcareplan.org website. Any consumer friendly website should have a staffed toll-free number for consumers to call during business hours for consumers to contact to ask questions and get referrals and resources. 2. According to the CCDF Final Rule, consumer resources should be easily accessible, ensuring the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English and persons with disabilities. Further the Final Rule requires that families receive referrals to their R&Rs. With the 1-800-KIDS793 phone service, consumers for which the website doesn't meet their needs (i.e. consumers that prefer to communicate verbally or in a way other than via a website, like TTY-based telecommunications relay services, or that speak languages other than the mychildcareplan.org provided languages of English/Spanish/Chinese/ Vietnamese), or for those that don't have access to or have limited access to reliable Internet services are able to get the consumer information they deserve by calling 1-800-KIDS-793.

Other Rationale, in general:

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<sup>10</sup> CCDD = Child Care and Development Division

- If we want to meet the diverse needs of families in California, the information they seek to understand the history of a child care facility should be in the languages they are most comfortable with.
- Consumers going to the state webpage should know there may be a more user friendly, translated option for them to search for addressing their needs, and they can't if the mccp.org is not referred to from the state CCL or DSS site.
- When considering the inclusion of license-exempt child care providers the state should consider a workgroup to learn about options for meeting the regulatory needs related to CCDF and maintaining privacy. While some exempt providers may welcome the opportunity to be included on a statewide referral site, other providers may prefer not to be included, for example a grandparent who cares for his/her grandchildren.
- Exempt providers may also be reflective of non-English speaking families, ensuring there is language equity on all sites will be important.
- mychildcareplan.org includes rating scores when available for individual providers; there is a mechanism for the local CCR&R to share the ratings if available. California should consider a quality improvement system that is equitable, considers parents input on quality and takes all quality improvement efforts that the state currently funds into consideration.
- Mychildcareplan.org offers search results that include the following information (when available): contact information, enrollment capacity, Hours, days of operation, some provider education and training, languages spoken by the caregiver, quality improvement efforts and score (if available), if they accept subsidies (CCDF certificates), ages of children served, and a direct link to the providers monitoring reports.

## **2B. Consumer & Provider Education**

### Section 2.4. Additional Consumer and Provider Education

This section asks about the full diversity of child care services to promote parental choice to parents of eligible children, the general public, and where applicable, child care providers. In addition to the consumer education website, the consumer education information can be provided through CCR&R organizations or through direct conversations with eligibility case workers and child care providers.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The CCR&R modules were funded with one time funding and similar to other training modules we recommend that they should be updated, and that the CCR&Rs would benefit from state funding to a statewide coordinating CCR&R Network to offer the training and assist them with meeting their core R&R expectations as well as best practices. This would help to ensure these critical community resources are known and provided to families when they contact any CCR&R.
- Mychildcareplan.org offers similar community information from a statewide level, explaining programs to parents in simple language with links to statewide websites and

information on how to contact the local CCR&R who can then connect them with local programs. <https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/financial-assistance-programs/> Therefore, we recommend this consumer education service should be promoted.

#### Justification points:

- The primary system for providing eligible parents, the general public, and child care providers about the availability of child care services is through its system of Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R), who provide both direct communication, written materials, and outreach to the community.
- The “My Child Care Plan” website provides this information. The website is tailored for all audiences using multiple languages. Information is tailored to parents with topics such as: How to apply for subsidized child care. This connects parents with other social service programs such as CalWORKs<sup>11</sup> and WIC<sup>12</sup>. Information for Providers focus on how to provide quality care including a listing of available training and resources to support licensing.
- The R&R programs work with the required programs to help families understand the local options and opportunities that may benefit their family now or as they plan for child care options, as well as how to access eligibility/waiting lists. R&Rs also help local providers to understand the program options and ways to support families that can benefit from services.
- There exists R&R Phone Counselor modules created by the Network and R&R agencies to train staff to provide information about:
  - Head Start and Early Head Start, program eligibility, and contact information to the grantees in their service area.
  - LIHEAP<sup>13</sup>, eligibility for the program, and local contact information,
  - SNAP/CalFresh program, program eligibility, and County Welfare Department contact information,
  - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) eligibility, as well as contact information on how to apply for services, and County Welfare Department contact information. Information is available on how to apply to WIC and how to obtain and maintain WIC benefits.
  - CACFP program, program eligibility, and the Department’s contact information,
  - CHIP program, program eligibility, and County Welfare Department contact information.
  - programs carried out under IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C, program eligibility, and contact information to their local school district, the SELPA, and the Regional Center in their service area.

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<sup>11</sup> CalWORKs = California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids

<sup>12</sup> WIC = Women, Infants, and Children

<sup>13</sup> LIHEAP = Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

- The Network takes great value in developing materials that are written in easy to understand language, is available in multiple languages and grounded in child development practices. Some of the resources are available for the public and other materials, such as Training of Trainers for CCR&R staff are available for CCR&R training staff, including materials beyond the above requirements and that include resources such as through California Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) where training facilitated locally at each R&R offers family child care technical strategies to providers in an effort to supporting the mental health of both providers and the families that they serve, and/or trauma informed and awareness training and best practices.

## 2.6 Consumer Statement for Parents Receiving CCDF Funds

Parents must be provided with a consumer statement in hard copy or electronically (such as referral to a consumer education website) that contains specific information about the child care provider they select (98.33 d).

### **Recommendations:**

- The mychildcareplan.org meets all of the eight requirements listed for certification, including the option for the submission of voluntary quality standards met by the provider. In addition to QCC<sup>14</sup> scores, the State could consider a way to promote other voluntary standards the provider meets through badging. For example, if a provider has completed the Trauma Informed Care training they would have a badge that indicated the completion of the training. We recommend that more user-friendly indicators of key information be developed and standardized to make it easier for families to quickly assess information about the provider they select.

### Justification:

- CCR&Rs include consumer statements verbally, digital and in written materials regarding child care referrals and information on choosing child care.
- A good proportion of families search providers electronically in public and private outreach mechanisms. To match this trend, the consumer education website includes links to the provider licensing status and complaint history, inspection dates, information about CCDF subsidies and how to apply for them, where to file complaints and how to contact the Child Care Resource and Referral Programs across the state.

## **2C. Health & Safety Standards and Monitoring Processes**

### **References:**

- Section 5. Establish Standards and Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Health and Safety of Child Care Settings.

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<sup>14</sup> QCC = Quality Counts California

- 5.6 Comprehensive Background Checks.

**Recommendations:**

- The Network recommends that a clear plan and timeline be created and named in the State Plan that delineates how the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Justice will actively collaborate to:
  1. introduce necessary legislation, that includes appropriate funding, and
  2. make necessary technological changes to bring the state into full compliance with the background check requirements as outlined in the CCDF for all licensed and license-exempt child care providers in California. This plan should include but not be limited to California's participation in the National Fingerprint File (NFF) Program at the FBI, receiving FBI rapbacks, and checks of the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR).
- The Network recommends that the State Plan be very clear on the definition of the Guardian database and the difference between the Guardian database and TrustLine. They are not the same thing. Guardian is a tool CDSS uses to assist with the management of background checks for licensed facilities, TrustLine and the California Home Care Registry. TrustLine is a statutorily defined background check for license-exempt child care providers.

## THEME #3: The Importance of a Resource & Referral (R&R) System

### References:

- Section 7. Support Continuous Quality Improvement
- Section 1. Define Leadership and Coordination with Relevant Systems and Funding Sources
  - 1.7 Coordination with CCR&R systems
  - 1.8 Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan
- 5.3 Health and Safety Standards for CCDF Providers.

### Recommendations:

#### 7.5 Child Care Resource and Referral

A Lead Agency (Department of Social Services or “CDSS”) may expend funds to establish, expand, or maintain a statewide system of child care resource and referral services (98.53(a)(5)). It can be coordinated, to the extent determined appropriate by the Lead Agency, by a statewide public or private non-profit, community-based, or regionally based lead child care resource and referral organization (658E(c)(3)(B)(iii)).

### 3A. The Value of R&Rs

#### 7.5.1. Child Care Resource & Referral (“CCR&R”)

We agree with the points and answers that are in the 2022-2024 CCDF State Plan and recommend adding the following:

For Parents: CCR&Rs provide information on the full range of child care options in the parents requested area and they also provide support and TA information regarding child development and parenting, community resources and safety net programs, social connections and enrichment, concrete support as families need it. CCR&Rs help families to find child care solutions as well as connections within the community to support the needs of their children and family as a whole.

For Providers: CCR&R provide the basic R&R services and they meet the providers where they are, assessing and responding to various TA, coaching and training needs. They assist with the CCIP training modules, CPR/First Aid, Preventive Health, Business and Tax trainings, Trauma Informed Care Training, Child Care Navigator for Emergency Child Care Bridge Program. In addition to TrustLine support, CC&Rs offer playgroups, provider cafes, developmental support, nutrition information to exempt child care providers. During the pandemic CC&Rs supported providers with PPE, Covid Test kits, updates and information on emergency regulations and public health guidance. CCR&Rs across the state helped develop the mychildcareplan.org consumer education website and contribute updated provider information monthly rather than quarterly. CCR&R data is what helps to make the mychildcareplan.org site a rich and responsive resource for families while offering a platform for additional free digital marketing for providers.

For General Public: CC&Rs educate the communities they serve with child care need and demand data, they share data with Local Planning Councils for Needs Assessments and Priority development, work with local First 5 QCC efforts to plan for overall quality improvement activities. CC&Rs are out in the community, meeting parents where they are, informing them of the child care needs, recruiting new child care providers and sharing child care referral and subsidy information.

#### 7.5.2 Measurable indicators of progress relevant to subsection 7.5

In addition, there is a large knowledge gap with providers who do not know about their CCR&R which we feel is an unintended consequence of an online family child care home application process. When the state moved from an in-person family child care home orientation that was mostly hosted at CC&Rs to an online application that did not share applicant information with CCR&Rs it created a large number of providers that were not aware of the CCR&R. CC&Rs and the Network have been working to remedy this situation but it still remains a problem with Licensing offices citing privacy requirements as a reason that they do not share orientation participant information with CCR&Rs. Even if the online Licensing orientation had a segment on CCR&Rs they may be seen as a solicitor unless the partnership between the Licensing staff and the CCR&R is strengthened. Additionally, many providers that do not have a relationship with the CCR&R do not understand parental choice and how referrals are randomized during a referral; the R&R is also often confused with the Alternative Payment Program and providers become frustrated with the R&R about subsidy rules and regulations.

- We recommend the State share orientation information with R&Rs.
- We further recommend the state include R&Rs in the orientation when offered in-person and promote the state funded R&R services throughout the licensing process so that the providers can develop a trusting partnership with the R&Rs.

We support ongoing feedback from parents seeking child care and providers listed with R&Rs to understand the knowledge of, accessibility, and effectiveness of R & R services to connect families with child care that meets their needs.

- We recommend the CDSS meet with CCR&Rs to learn about parent surveys and questions that help to identify the effectiveness of services versus disappointment with a child care system that is underfunded and lacks access.

### **3B. Benefits of a Coordinated R&R System**

Section 1.7 Lead Agencies may use CCDF funds to establish or support a system or network of local or regional child care resource and referral (CCR&R) organizations that is coordinated, to the extent determined by the State/Territory, by a statewide public or private non-profit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization (such as a statewide CCR&R network) (658E(c)(3)(B)(iii); 98.52).



**Recommendations:**

The state has fallen short in helping to create a more uniform system of R&R services because the state has not funded an infrastructure to support these contracting agencies in their deliverance of service. This is a weakness in the system leaving open the potential for unanswered questions and delays that impact consumers because the state doesn't have the capacity to respond to every agency's questions, to convene or organize contractors for two way, regular communication, and/or to efficiently utilize this potential system for mobilizing resources, responding to crisis, and/or connecting these agencies with state or county partners and resources to help families or child care providers. Lack of reliable information restricts the ability of the state to adapt or make changes as needed.

- We recommend the state fund a coordinating entity (non-profit organization) to help the state in collecting consistent reporting information, facilitating two way communication with contractors which would help maximize the impact of this program, and make it easier for the state to respond to the local constituencies, and serve as a non-partisan vehicle to give feedback to the state, and for decision makers to know the impact of state funding supporting child care in their communities.
- Funding of this service should not be at any expense of current R&R contractors.
- We further recommend the state funding a coordinating entity to ensure families and providers, and contractors are served more equitably. Access to information or ability to navigate state systems is difficult for smaller agencies, thus favoring individual or more resourced agencies, and further exacerbates differences in ability to serve or obtain resources for their families/providers. An organized, collective voice that takes the field as a whole into account is more equitable for all contractors and the consumers they serve.

Flexible funding has allowed agencies to meet the varying needs of their consumers. The assignment of a contracting agency in every county has assured basic and minimal coverage of service to be offered at each county level, which has laid the basis to deliver services in all parts of the state. These contracts create the foundation for a statewide system of R&R services that offer the opportunity to scale projects, to help the state have a better understanding of community needs, and to collect data and document impact of policies on families, providers and communities.

- We recommend that funding continue to local R&Rs in every county level so that families and providers in every county receive services.

**Justification Points:**

- California has funded CC&Rs in every county in California, since 1984, ensuring that every area has access to state and CCDF services. Agencies are responsive to their families and provider needs and to meet those needs, R&R contractors enhance CCDF

services where local resources may be available. Since moving to the Department of Social Services these agencies have created an email address where contractors can communicate more directly with the contracts division.

- Currently the state has 70 contracts in 57 agencies in every county in California. Some counties have more than one R&R contract. Some contracting agencies are responsible for more than one county. Contractors are primarily non profit agencies, and some are awarded to County Offices of Education.
- Funding to support communication with the state for information and technical assistance has come from local agency resources for a service that is mostly to the benefit of the state and reducing some of the resources from local communities.
- Without coordination and consistency of guidance of service to consumers (training, professional development and/or operational support/resources), a family can potentially have a different experience across contractors.
- State decision makers can not receive complete or accurate assessment data to conduct analysis of the needs of the communities if guidance and technical assistance is not regularly provided to contractors.
- In a state as large and diverse as California, communication is broken if there is no reliable mechanism for the state to update appropriate points of contact at each agency and funded contract in a consistent or timely manner. Without a coordinating entity that is able to reach every contractor, it ensures the state does not unintentionally favor the most able/resourced contractors and instead is able to reach deeper into harder to reach communities and to more equitably serve all California families. It also helps the state look at the whole sector vs. responding to individual agency requests which would be more inclusive in reaching some of the hardest to reach consumers, especially those in rural and/or fast growing communities that do not have the capacity to connect with the state department personnel.
- Coordination and disciplined communication is what has made us successful in quickly responding to emergency situations. A coordinating entity would help emergency responders have a more central way for OES to receive information (ex. GIS mapping, understanding specialization of working with smaller children and the range of the child care providers, communicating with families, assisting with communicating with local partner agencies (ex. emergency shelters), and connecting agencies so relationships can be built. It was extremely helpful to have a coordinating entity to help in the local deployment of materials in the recent pandemic crisis.
- A coordinating, trusted entity that works on behalf of the field and not favor any one agency will help with efficiencies – that is, the ability to pool and shift without worry of “losing out”, or adjust across in ways that benefit the areas most in need, and helping facilitate the movement of resources as needed.
- Having a structure of joint accountability, and joint problems solving is possible by having non-partial facilitators that work to bring contractors together with their

commonality of contracts with forums for deeper understanding, relationship building, co-consultation and cooperation to make system improvements that benefit end users – families and providers.

- The greatest beneficiary of this service now is the state who is most in need for a coordinating entity to share the burden of communicating with contractors and facilitating feedback and input and the state should be contributing towards the cost of the work of the existing coordinating entity (the Network) that has served as a repository of info for technical assistance, history/documentation/contract orientation of responsibilities, administrative coordination, professional development and communication, and convening contractors regionally and statewide.
- It is beneficial to have an infrastructure that is connected with other like systems across the state and nationally and serve as thought partners that can contribute towards national objectives, lifting California's experiences and also bringing in information that helps our state improve and leverage the innovation of others.
- A non-government entity has the ability to reach deeper and faster than the state can – research, convening entities, cross systems with educational entities, use of technology, etc.

### **3C. R&Rs in Emergency Circumstances**

#### **1.8 Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan**

##### **Recommendations:**

- While the current disaster plan meets the reporting needs, there is a lack of training between the state plan and the implementation at the local level. Disaster training is an additional task that is expected to be absorbed by CCR&Rs and offered as additional trainings to local child care providers, there is a need for training on the state plan. We recommend the state provide training to CCR&Rs on disaster response from an agency level. We also recommend that disaster training that is offered by CC&Rs to child care providers is a funded activity.
- There is a lack of communication between the States expectations, local response personnel and the ECE field. CCR&Rs often have to find their way to the local table for disaster planning and response. We recommend that the state use their influence to encourage the inclusion of the R&R as an essential partner in local disaster planning efforts with OES and other partners.
- Including CCR&Rs throughout the disaster planning process will increase the local and state responses as well as available resources in communities, but each disaster is different, and the response capacity will change depending on the impact of the local agencies. With that point, we must also consider the costs of disaster response on the local agencies as we experienced with the COVID-19 emergency. We recommend the State convene CC&Rs to listen to lessons learned during the pandemic and other disasters and use findings to assess the reasonableness of certain expectations to ensure the

CCR&Rs have the capacity to respond. We recommend additional funding for disaster response when expectations of CCR&Rs increases.

- Over the past five years California has experienced significant disasters including wildfires and flooding, it is time to revisit and learn from the experiences. The state plan and flow chart includes how the state will communicate through the Everbridge system, up to federal reporting, but often the CCR&R is the one that providers are contacting when disasters strike. We recommend improving the communications system so that there is an option for providers can contact the CCR&R who can then report up to the appropriate reporting parties, this would reduce confusion and duplication during the emergency.

In general:

- All disasters are local and local agencies are a main partner in the 3 main sections of preparation, during and after the disaster. CCR&Rs often become the Hub for the child care community offering resources for recovery, relocation, temporary operating information, child care availability, temporary child care options and more.

Section: 5.3.7 Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a human-caused event

**Recommendations:**

- The definitions to help emergency responders know the child care ecosystem is great. But there is no way for emergency personnel to know who is who and how to make contact at the local level to get assistance or to navigate at the state level to assist.
- We recommend that the Plan should be updated and revisited knowing that disasters of various types have occurred in the last decade and are anticipated to occur more frequently in the future.
- We recommend that once the Plan has been updated, that the appropriate parties, in particular the R&Rs understand what is in the plan, can support the three stages of disaster and emergency preparedness.
- We further recommend that Emergency Services and the state and local level are aware of the local R&Rs and the information they hold in reaching providers in proximity of potentially affected disaster or emergency responses.
- We recommend that communication be facilitated between Child Care Licensing and municipal agencies once a public facility, such as a library or public school is indicated in a child care providers' emergency plan so that the public facility can be prepared that they are identified as a location should an emergency at a providers' facility has occurred.

Justification /Background points:

- The State has requirements for every licensed provider to have plans for emergencies. These child care providers with the monitoring by the Child Care Licensing Division

have plans and meet the requirements of the emergency preparedness and response for their facility and the children in their care.

- In 2016, the Lead Agency contracted with UCSF Child Care Health Program to create the Child Care Disaster Plan. This plan covers the definitions and procedures for preparedness and response, however, the entities named may or may not know their responsibilities within this plan. There is no support to “practice” or understand the plan so that all named parties understand their roles and what they need to do. This plan exists on paper, but not in practice.
- R&Rs were never trained on their role to implement the 2016 plan
- They have not been in the position to facilitate and support child care providers in any systematic way. At this point it would depend on the interest and ability of the agency to help – ex. in a mass disaster.
- There is no facilitation of communication between Offices of Emergency Response at the local level about the plan, which is likely initiated by the state level). Because the databases of small family child care homes are not publicly available, emergency responders may not know of eminent risk of children in some facilities (unless the state maps it for them)
- Emergency responders may or may not know of the unique needs of working with children – ex. some children are not mobile, some can not communicate or identify their parents by name/phone number. Providers may not quickly be able to transport children. Children can not read or may not understand hazardous materials if they have fallen and are accessible to them. Emergency Responders may not know the social emotional needs of children.
- Emergency responders may also need child care assistance to do their jobs and may not know how R&Rs can support them with their own children when responding to an emergency.
- Some providers may have declared their neighboring school district, library or other municipally operated place as convening location in case of disaster, and those receiving facilities may be unaware or unprepared that they are listed as an emergency shelter for young children. Communication assistance and joint preparation may be necessary or adequate supplies or space may not be available.