



2006 Public Policy Agenda

“Working to meet child care needs throughout California”

This Public Policy Agenda is dedicated to our core commitment of providing information and access to quality, safe child care for ALL families in California by working to maintain the integrity of the existing child care delivery system, addressing unmet child care needs and improving access to services.

2006 Overview

The Network’s policy work in the coming year will be responsive to budget and legislative issues put forward by the Governor and Legislature. However, as an organization with responsibilities to all families regardless of income and all providers regardless of type of care offered, we are committed to taking a leadership role with member support in the following areas:

Priorities:

- **Ensure that child care funding remains a priority in the state budget.**
- **Ensure basic health & safety protections for all children in child care.**
- **Seek continued funding to maintain and increase child care capacity for children with special needs.**
- **Ensure parental engagement and awareness of the emerging universal preschool systems and the integration of existing child care and development services into local plans.**

The attached Public Policy Agenda is divided into two sections. The first section "Preserve & Protect" is designed to address the need to maintain existing services and the second "Expand" addresses the need to expand and enhance

I. Preserve and Protect a State Child Care System within the Department of Education Recognizing that Child Care for all Families is an Integral Component of the Education System

This section addresses the urgent concern to maintain existing funding and support for child development services.

A. Resource & Referral Services:

1. Sustain all existing R&R funding while maintaining a mix of state and federal funding, emphasize the integral role of resource & referral services in the child care system.
2. Continue to cultivate a relationship with the State and Federal level administrations to define the pivotal role R&R plays in promoting quality, accessible and affordable child care for all families.

B. Access & Affordability:

1. Maintain child care subsidies for low-income working families.
2. Maintain and support the contracted child care center-based system (including Family Child Care Education Networks) working toward increasing the standard reimbursement rate (SRR) to be an equitable reimbursement system and not less than the RMR ceiling.
3. Promote the use of a State Median Income (SMI) or an alternate measure that reflects accurate and up-to-date California income.
4. In coordination with partnering organizations advocate for a regional market rate (RMR) that is equitable and ensures parents a full-range of child care options.

C. Licensing:

1. Advocate for a fully funded child care licensing system with standards that ensure safe and healthy environments for all children in California.
2. Ensure safe and healthy environments for children in child care programs: a) restore site visits by Community Care Licensing to the pre-2003/04 budget level; b) restore the licensing advocate program to the pre-2003/04 level; c) ensure a maximum group size for license-exempt care not to exceed the capacity for a small licensed family child care home; and d) maintain a distinct division for child care licensing at the State level.
3. Continue to collaborate with Community Care Licensing to ensure consistent communication and licensing practices between licensing and R&R agencies.

D. Revenue & Budget:

1. Ensure that child care contracts continue to receive funding in the event the budget isn't signed in a timely manner.
2. Support increased revenue-generating options to meet any budget shortfall.
3. Coordinate with partnering organizations to seek multiple-year contracts for child development service programs.

II. Expand Access to Quality, Safe Child Care for All Families

This section addresses the need to improve and expand quality child care services for all children and families in California.

A. Resource & Referral Services:

1. Support innovative strategies for consumer education that foster awareness of all available child care resources, increase parental understanding of the regulatory process and increase understanding of the importance of quality child care in all settings.
2. Develop a strategy for expanded R&R funding highlighting the unique role R&R's play in the delivery of services to all families, all types of child care providers and all areas of the community.
3. Seek continued funding (as established in SB1703 & SB640) for support and technical assistance through R&R's to maintain and increase access to child care for families of children with disabilities through quality child care funds and other funding sources.
4. Promote the continued utilization of R&R data in public policy discussions and planning.

B. Access & Affordability:

1. Maintain tax credits and incentives for working families and promote their use.
2. Promote expansion of subsidies to fully fund all eligible families up to 75% of the SMI or an alternate measure.
3. Promote increased funding as needed for the established statewide Central Eligibility List (CEL) system.
4. Maintain a diverse child care delivery system that respects the culture, language and working patterns of all California families regardless of income.
5. Improve access to child care for families with parents and/or children who have disabilities.

C. Trustline:

1. Promote increased effectiveness and efficiency of the Trustline Registry system by: a) stopping payment when a Trustline applicant background check triggers an automatic disqualification, exemption process or investigation b) increase the Network's access to applicant information from CDSS; and c) increase monitoring of nanny agencies.
2. Expand Trustline coverage to all license-exempt providers receiving public subsidies.

D. Child Care Systems:

1. Ensure a continuum of basic health and safety protection through training and technical assistance opportunities for all types of child care providers including license-exempt, family child care and child care centers.
2. Provide for adequate training/education, support and salary to recruit and maintain a high quality workforce.
3. Advocate for a sufficient timeframe to implement the new Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) system.
4. Address unmet needs and advocate for facility development and improvement that includes accessibility and appropriate environments.
5. Ensure that any quality rating system for licensed child care includes: a) incorporation of child care licensing as a base-line; b) rewards for higher quality child care; c) increases family access to quality providers; d) is supported with a well developed infrastructure to manage the

- system; e) provides training and technical assistance and supports programs seeking to improve the quality of care; and f) is developed with comprehensive field input.
6. Support development of a Child Care Master Plan for a fair and equitable child care system in California that incorporates an inclusive planning process and focuses on all age groups including infants, toddlers and school age children.
 7. Work to expand the supply of quality infant toddler care in a variety of settings in response to the documented acute shortage of these services.

E. Universal Preschool System:

1. Monitor any emerging universal preschool system to ensure that it: a) provides equitable access for all children; b) addresses the developmental needs of preschool children; c) honors the needs and input of parents; d) is inclusive of and builds on the strengths of the existing child care system, including full day/full year services; and e) provides for adequate training/education, support and salary to recruit and maintain a high quality workforce.
2. Ensure the role of R&R in the emerging universal preschool system by enhancing the role in: a) data collection on child care supply; b) identification of facility needs and availability; c) parental engagement and awareness of options; and d) coordination of staff training opportunities.
3. Facilitate broad-based input from the early childhood field and parents in the emerging universal preschool system standards and curriculum giving special attention to English-language learner issues and the needs of children with disabilities.
4. Ensure monitoring of the impacts that the emerging universal preschool system has on the child care infrastructure for other age groups and advocate for strategies to mitigate impacts.

F. Infrastructure Supports

1. Advocate for a comprehensive child care quality improvement plan that addresses the infrastructure needs for program support; the maintenance of basic health and safety in child care programs; recruitment, preparation and training of the child care workforce; consumer support, information and assistance for parents; and implementation of curriculum appropriate to the age of the child.
2. Advocate for changes to the child development permit matrix to broaden the acceptable training options.
3. Work toward improved compensation and benefits for child care staff and licensed family child care providers including continued and increased funding for C.A.R.E.S. and similar programs.
4. Improve access to quality school age child care in local communities.
5. Support efforts to continue the Child Care Food Program and advocate for streamlined administrative requirements, increased reimbursements and explore other funding sources.
6. Support efforts to streamline administrative procedures and increase resources for the administration of all child care programs.

G. Federal Funding:

1. Monitor Federal legislation and policies that have an impact on child care in California.
2. Support efforts to reauthorize and improve CCDF, TANF, Head Start and the Higher Education Act.