



2007-2008 Public Policy Agenda (Two-year Legislative Session)

10-5-07

“Working to meet child care needs throughout California”

Overview

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 and driving the agenda for child care in California. In doing so, the Network’s policy work in the coming legislative session will be responsive to budget and legislative issues put forward by the Governor and Legislature.

Priorities:

Families:

- **Ensure all parents and families have access to child care and development information, education and high quality options for children from birth.**
- **Ensure all families, especially those least advantaged or who have special needs, have all the supports they need to raise strong, healthy children eager to learn.**

Child Care Providers:

- **Ensure that child care providers have access to education, training, technical assistance, appropriate compensation and resources in order to provide high quality services.**

Resources:

- **Ensure that expanded child care funding is a priority in the state budget.**
- **Ensure basic health & safety protections for all children in child care.**
- **Ensure that systems and funding are in place to improve the quality of child care throughout California.**

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

I. Preserve and Protect the Integrity of the Existing Child Care Delivery System

A. Resource & Referral Services:

1. Emphasize the integral role of resource & referral services in the child care system.
2. Ensure that the Education Code accurately reflects current R&R services and practices.
3. Sustain all existing R&R funding.
4. Continue to cultivate a relationship with the State and Federal level administrations to define the pivotal role R&R plays in promoting high quality, accessible and affordable child care for all families.

B. Access & Affordability:

1. Maintain child care subsidies for low-income and at-risk families.
2. Maintain the rights of all families to choose the care that best meets their needs.
3. 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.
4. Maintain annual updating of the State Median Income (SMI) for child care subsidy eligibility consistent with statutory requirements.
5. Promote the development of a methodology for a regional market rate (RMR) that results in a reimbursement rate for providers that is equitable and ensures parents a full-range of child care options.
6. Maintain tax credits and incentives for working families and promote their use.
7. Maintain a diverse child care delivery system that respects the culture, language and working patterns of all California families regardless of income.

C. Licensing:

1. Advocate for a fully funded child care licensing system for all children in California with standards that ensure safe and healthy environments, takes into consideration caseload standards and includes a trigger for increased funding options.
2. Maintain adequate resources to ensure consistent implementation of licensing regulations statewide including appropriate follow-up on complaints, investigations and actions; and
3. Ensure consistent communication and licensing practices between community care 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. Address Unmet Child Care Needs and Improve Access to High Quality, Safe Child Care for All Families

A. Resource & Referral Services:

1. Support innovative strategies for consumer education that foster awareness of all available child care resources including R&R, increase parental understanding of the regulatory process and increase understanding of the importance of high quality child care in all settings.
2. Develop a strategy for expanded R&R funding to meet the changing needs of California families 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 augmentation for the Child Care Initiative Project.
4. Seek funding for support and technical assistance through R&R's to maintain and increase access to child care for families of children with special needs.
5. Seek funding for support and training of license-exempt child care providers.
6. Promote the continued utilization of R&R data in public policy discussions and planning.
7. Seek funding to allow R&R's to adequately prepare and respond to potential disasters and pandemics.
8. Support strategies for access to health information and resources and services through child care programs.
9. 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.

B. Access & Affordability:

1. Promote the use and expansion of Paid Family Leave especially in areas of under-utilization.
2. Promote expansion of subsidies to fully fund all eligible families up to 75% of the SMI by annual increases in funding.
3. Improve access to high quality child care for families with parents and/or children who have special needs.
4. Improve access for families who work non-traditional schedules.

C. Licensing:

1. Promote annual unannounced visits to all child care facilities.
2. Restore the licensing advocate program to the pre-2003/04 level and necessary technical assistance supports to the field;
3. Promote a maximum group size for license-exempt care not to exceed the capacity for a small licensed family child care home.

D. Trustline:

1. Promote increased effectiveness and efficiency of the Trustline Registry system by:
 - a) Advocating for increased resources and support to expedite the Trustline process avoiding unintended adverse impacts for families and providers.
 - b) Increasing the Network's access to applicant information from CDSS; and
 - c) Increasing the monitoring of nanny agencies.
2. Expand Trustline coverage to all license-exempt providers receiving public subsidies.

E. Child Care Systems:

1. Work to expand the supply of high quality accessible infant/ toddler care in a variety of settings in response to the documented acute shortage of these services.
2. Provide for appropriate training/education, support and salary to recruit and maintain a diverse, high quality workforce in all child care settings.
3. Advocate for sufficient resources and technical assistance to implement and fully coordinate the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) system.
4. Advocate for annual increases in funding towards the achievement of a fully-funded child care subsidy system.
5. Address unmet needs and advocate for child care facility development and improvement that includes accessibility and appropriate environments.

6. Ensure that a fully funded, staffed & trained community care licensing is the cornerstone of any quality rating system that may be implemented and that it:
 - a) Takes into account the provider's status with licensing;
 - b) Rewards higher quality child care;
 - c) Increases family access to high quality providers;
 - d) Includes a well developed infrastructure to manage the system;
 - e) Includes training and technical assistance;
 - f) Supports programs seeking to improve the quality of care; and
 - g) Is developed with comprehensive child development field input including R&R.
7. Advocate for the implementation of age-appropriate curriculum in child development programs.

F. Universal Preschool System:

1. Advocate that any universal preschool system includes and builds on the strengths of the existing child care system and:
 - a) Provides a high quality program;
 - b) Provides equitable access for all children;
 - c) Addresses the developmental needs of preschool children;
 - d) Honors the needs and input of parents;
 - e) Meets family needs, including full day/full year services taking place in a variety of settings; and
 - f) Provides for adequate training/education, support and salary to recruit and maintain a diverse, high quality workforce.
2. Ensure the role of R&R in any universal preschool system by enhancing our role in:
 - a) data collection on child care supply;
 - b) Identification of facility needs and availability;
 - c) Parental engagement and awareness of options;
 - d) Coordination of staff training opportunities; and
 - e) Support for Title 22 providers in meeting the entry standards for participating in the universal preschool system.
3. Facilitate a broad-based dialogue on issues of high quality in preschool programs at the state and local level.
4. Monitor the "roll-out" of the Preschool Foundations and determine the appropriate role for R&R in informing parents and child care providers.
5. 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.
6. Ensure monitoring of the impacts that the emerging universal preschool system has on the child care infrastructure for other age groups in particular the availability and accessibility of infant/toddler care and advocate for strategies to mitigate impacts.

G. Infrastructure Supports

1. Advocate for a comprehensive child care quality improvement plan that addresses the infrastructure needs for program support.
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. Assist member agencies to improve access to quality school age child care in local communities.

H. Federal Funding:

1. Advocate for reauthorization and increased funding level of the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
2. Advocate for streamlined administrative requirements for the Federal Food Program and increased reimbursements.
3. Restore and expand the SCHIP program.
4. Advocate for consistent administration and adequate funding to ensure that all children have access to the Federal food program.
5. Support the Reauthorization of Head Start.