

Portfolio

2005 CALIFORNIA CHILD CARE

California
Child Care
Resource & Referral
Network

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A compilation of data
about child care in
California. County-specific
information available at
www.rrnetwork.org.

Produced by the

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& Referral Network** ©2005

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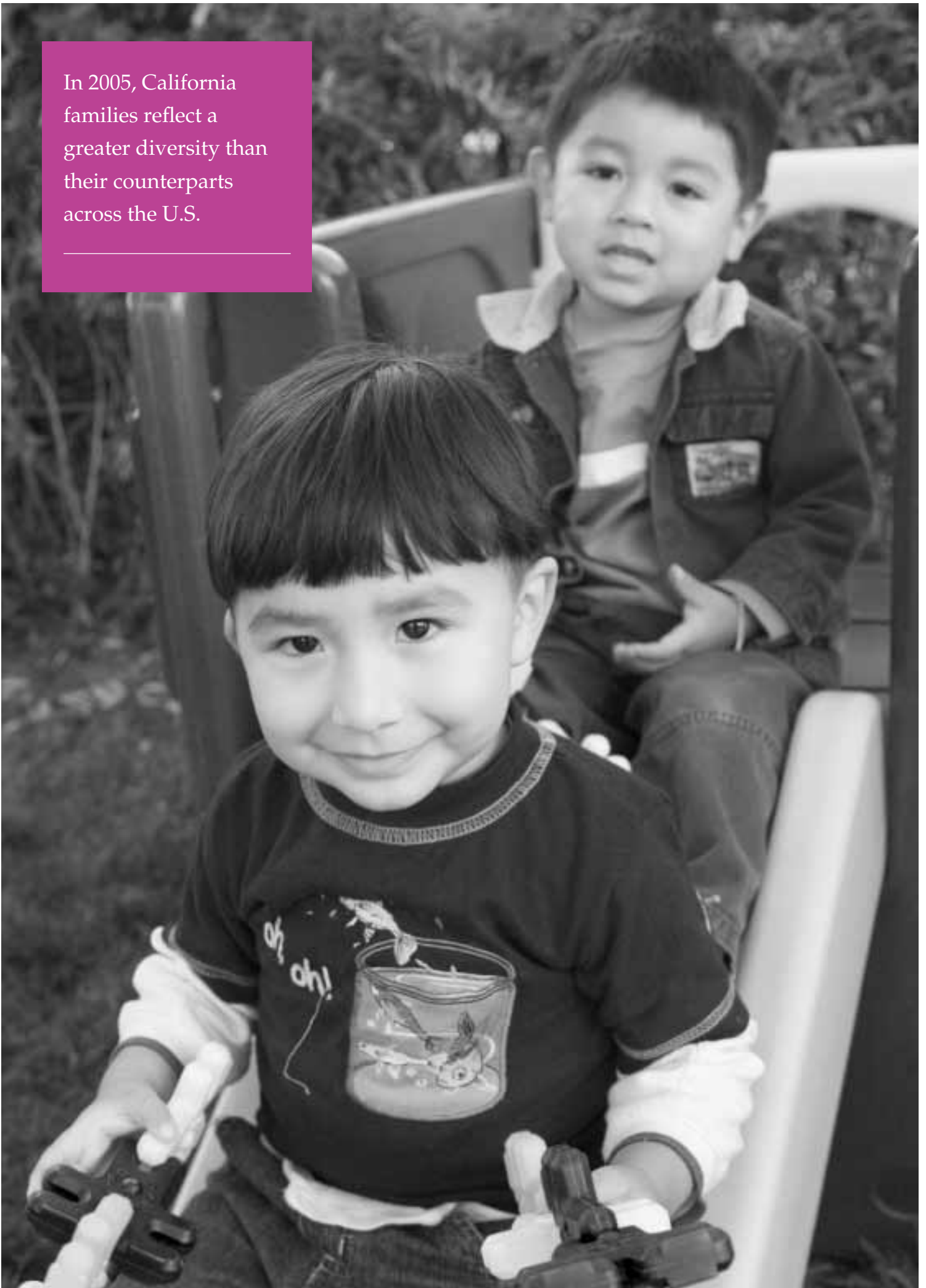
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In 2005, California families reflect a greater diversity than their counterparts across the U.S.



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, when the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network was founded, our member agencies began the task of collecting information about both local child care options and the needs and concerns of parents who were challenged to find care for their children.

It was 1980, and women were joining the workforce in large numbers. Single parent households were increasing as were households with two working parents. We collected "data" by hand, often on index cards and oversized rolodexes. Though our information was anecdotal, it reflected trends, problems, and the needs of real families as they struggled to find appropriate, quality care for their children and as they juggled work and family issues.

Over the years we've moved beyond these informal analyses to the development of sophisticated electronic data collection methods to examine information about child care supply and need, community by community. But we have also retained our direct and personal connection to families and providers – believing strongly that parents need and want support as they face the difficult task of navigating their child care options.

In 1997, following a two-year effort to standardize the data collection of the 61 locally-based, state-funded resource and referral programs (R&Rs), the Network launched its first biennial report, *The California Child Care Portfolio*, documenting child care supply and demand, county by county and statewide.

This fifth issue of the *Portfolio* expands the content of previous versions, providing information about population changes impacting communities, schools, employers, and the child care field. We believe the data expresses relevant and compelling information about child care consumers in California – a diverse and complex population. Today's parents face new and growing challenges, and many of the same ones faced by parents of the 1980s. Compared to our early days in the field, California's children today are more likely to have a foreign born parent, to be in a family that has moved into their current county of residence in recent years, to hear a language other than English spoken at home, and to have at least one parent who is commuting at least two hours each day. Our families are also far more diverse than their counterparts across the country.

The 2005 California Child Care Portfolio illustrates the persisting effects of economic and social pressures on California families and child care. The state's overall population continues to grow and shift with an infrastructure struggling to meet current needs. The *Portfolio* comes amid increased attention to California's role in the global economy and the importance of education and training as anchors to retain a competitive edge and halt the flight of jobs and industries. Government leaders and the public-at-large are recognizing the importance of education during a child's formative first years. But despite increased focus on the needs of young children, families continue to struggle to find and afford child care because the supply, especially for infants, is severely limited in virtually every county in the state and because what is available is unaffordable for many working parents.

Over the years, the *Portfolio's* portrait of child care availability has allowed policymakers, educators, community leaders, and philanthropic organizations to plan for the years ahead. We hope that the information in this 2005 *Portfolio* and in the county-specific data pages (available at www.rrnetwork.org) will continue to assist those charged with budget and policy decisionmaking as they reflect on how those decisions impact children in California.

We welcome your comments and thank you for your support. By working together, we can secure affordable, quality care for all of California's children.