



CLOSING THE GAP:

How CCR&Rs Can Help
Communities Meet
Their Child Care Supply
and Demand Needs

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Executive Summary

Families across the United States struggle to find quality child care that meets their needs. In communities large and small, the supply for child care too often falls short of meeting the demand. As outlined in Child Care Aware® of America's (CCAoA) 2016 report, [Child Care Deserts: Developing Solutions to Child Care Supply and Demand](#), families who need child care during nonstandard hours and families with infants and toddlers have an especially difficult time finding licensed child care that meets their needs. In addition to these trends, we are elevating a new challenge we have learned from the field: a decline in the number of family child care homes across the country.

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies work tirelessly to fill the gaps between child care supply and demand in their states and communities. Because they work closely with both sides of the supply and demand equation – helping parents locate child care and helping providers fill their vacancies – CCR&Rs and partners are a major part of the solution for closing child care gaps across the country.

Using data-informed strategies and targeted child care recruitment, CCR&Rs and partners are on the front lines increasing families' access to quality child care. This report highlights examples of CCR&Rs and state-level advocacy organizations working to close gaps in their states and communities.

Additionally, the work of CCR&Rs and others must be accompanied by policy changes at both the national and the state/local levels. To better meet the needs of working families, CCAoA recommends that Congress:

- Authorize and appropriate higher levels of funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG).
- Support legislation that invests in the child care workforce.
- Support family-friendly policies that allow parents to work and their children to thrive.

CCAoA also recommends that state and local governments:

- Fully fund State CCR&R Networks to increase quality, consistency, and accountability.
- Ensure CCR&Rs are funded for targeted recruitment, retention, and community engagement activities, as well as data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Expand state and local investment in high-quality child care by establishing tiered Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) reimbursement rates based on quality rating.
- Collaborate with state and city planners to re-imagine land use and zoning laws.
- Improve compensation for the child care workforce.



Report Overview

- Introduction
- Where are the Gaps?
- How CCR&Rs Can Help Fill the Gaps
- How Policymakers Can Help Fill the Gaps

Introduction

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a grassroots response to the massive entry of women into the workforce and the resulting unprecedented need for child care to support America's working families. As demand increased, CCR&Rs became the primary source of specialized training and technical assistance for child care businesses. Their unique relationship with parents and child care providers allowed CCR&Rs to quickly become a trusted partner for communities, businesses, and policy makers interested in making a positive impact on child care for working families.

Located in 47 states with touch points at the local, state, and national levels, CCR&Rs are a vital resource for families, child care professionals, and communities. They help families find child care that meets their needs, work with child care providers to build the supply and increase the quality of child care, and facilitate business and community engagement. As a connector of resources, CCR&Rs serve as a hub for families, child care professionals, and business and community stakeholders to access information, resources, and services to increase availability of quality, affordable child care for all. CCR&Rs' interrelated services offer a comprehensive implementation mechanism that can easily be leveraged by government partners at the local, state, and national levels.

The passage of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) of 2014 represented the most significant bipartisan effort to address America's child care needs in history. For nearly 50 years, CCR&Rs have served their communities, collected data, and beat the drum for a more robust national child care system that addresses the evolving needs of families. The 2014 reauthorization of CCDBG elevated their importance by naming CCR&Rs, specifically, to conduct child care supply and demand analyses in states due both to their extensive knowledge of the topic and to their prevalence in states and communities throughout the country. This law essentially recognized the work CCR&Rs were already doing to help families find licensed child care and conduct outreach to build the child care supply.

Families across the country need child care programs that help young children develop, promote healthy habits for life, and allow parents and guardians to contribute to the economy without worrying about their children's safety. Too often, families are unable to find or to afford child care that checks all these boxes – the supply of licensed child care too often falls short of meeting the demand. CCR&Rs in states and communities across the country can – and are – working to close child care gaps in innovative ways.

Mapping the Gap™: CCAoA's Supply and Demand Work in States

Since the release of the 2016 report, CCAoA has worked with CCR&Rs in 10 states to create [interactive story maps](#) that analyze child care supply and demand by ZIP code. In addition to mapping gaps in child care supply and demand, we have also mapped Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy use by ZIP code and a "unique child care issue" in each state. Unique child care issues include:

- The supply of child care during nonstandard hours,
- Infant-toddler child care supply and demand, and
- Measuring the decline in the number of child care programs over time.

Methodology:

The demand for child care by ZIP code is calculated using US Census data to estimate the number of children with all parents, single or married, in the work force. Child care supply is calculated from the licensed capacity of all child care programs in a ZIP code. We subtract the supply from the demand to obtain the supply and demand gap in a given ZIP code. The ability to drill down to the ZIP code level helps CCR&Rs target resources to communities with large gaps between child care supply and demand.

In the 2016 report [Child Care Deserts: Developing Solutions to Child Care Supply and Demand](#), Child Care Aware® of America (CCAOA) elevated the efforts of CCR&Rs and their partners that conduct child care supply and demand work. Since the release of the report, CCR&Rs have continued to explore innovative ways to share this data, most notably through mapping. This report continues where our 2016 report left off – elevating stories from CCR&Rs and partners working to close the gaps every day. We outline key findings and recommend best practices from Mapping the Gap™, and we supplement our narrative with the incredible state-and-community-level solutions engineered and implemented by CCR&Rs and partners.

A note on the term “Child Care Deserts”

You may have noticed that CCAOA has moved away from using the term “child care deserts” in our latest reports and research. In our 2016 report we noted that we hoped to learn more from the child care field to inform a more specific definition of that term. Through our Mapping the Gap™ work we decided to measure the spectrum of child care supply and demand gaps by community in order to make recommendations to states on how to target resources to the areas of greatest need. Therefore, CCAOA has moved away from using the term “child care deserts” in our reports and are instead focusing on measuring gaps between child care supply and demand.



Where are the Gaps? Findings from Targeted Supply and Demand Mapping

It can be difficult to get a perfect picture of child care supply, as most accessible child care data is limited to licensed child care programs. Children receiving care in unlicensed programs or with family, friends, or neighbors (FFN) are often not tracked in child care data systems. Aside from data collection, licensed child care often provides a safer environment for children due to monitoring standards that are not required by unlicensed or license-exempt child care programs. However, the data we do have help us estimate that of the **12.5 million** children in some sort of regular child care arrangement, **59% spend** at least some time in licensed, center-based child care.

Limited Access to Quality Child Care

High-quality early childhood programs benefit both young children and society as a whole. Research shows that high-quality early childhood programs contribute to stronger families, greater economic development, and more livable communities. Measuring quality is fundamental to delivering quality child care, and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) provide one key method to determine access to quality. **QRIS** is a systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level

of quality in child care programs. CCAoA reports statewide QRIS participation in our annual **State Fact Sheets** for the 49 states that are operating, piloting, or planning a QRIS.

Unfortunately, many families do not have access to any licensed child care, let alone access to quality-rated child care programs. CCAoA recently mapped access to quality-rated child care programs in **Delaware**, **North Dakota**, and **New Hampshire**. Compared to other states with voluntary participation, these three



Measuring and Mapping Quality Child Care in Texas

In 2017, **CHILDREN AT RISK**, a research and advocacy organization that focuses on the quality of life for children throughout Texas, created a Child Care Desert Map that analyzed access to all child care, including subsidized child care and quality child care. They found that three in four Texas children under five years old in families of low income live in a subsidized child care desert; less than a third of subsidized child care spaces are certified in the state's QRIS program. Cities across Texas have already used CHILDREN AT RISK's Child Care Desert Map to target efforts to increase teacher qualifications in Austin, to improve child care provider recruitment in Dallas, and to identify the best placement for a new child care program in Amarillo.



states have relatively high voluntary child care program participation in QRIS. Despite these higher participation rates, though, our analysis revealed that many families may still struggle to access quality child care. If this analysis is expanded to other states using QRIS, CCR&Rs can use data to influence how resources can be targeted effectively and equitably to help improve access to quality-rated child care.

Infant-Toddler Supply and Demand

Quality infant and toddler child care is crucial for our youngest learners, but families have greater difficulty finding child care spaces for infants and toddlers than they do for preschoolers. States require lower child-to-staff ratios for infants and toddlers (children ages 0-3) than they do for preschool-aged children (ages 3-4) because of their developmental stage and unique health and safety needs. Quality and accreditation standards require even lower ratios in order to look beyond health and safety requirements to promote social-emotional development fostered by the early relationships babies form with their caregivers.

Accrediting organizations like the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#) recommend a child-to-staff ratio of 4:1 (and no higher than 6:1) for infants and toddlers, while recommending 10:1 for preschoolers. Adherence to these quality requirements of lower child-to-staff ratios means programs require a greater number of experienced infant-toddler child care staff per classroom. Without an investment in additional staff for child care programs, this can mean that fewer infants can receive care in a program compared to the number of preschoolers a program can accommodate. Find more information about this topic in CCAoA's recently released brief paper, [Infant & Toddler Child Care in America](#).

CCAoA released a series of [story maps](#) analyzing infant-toddler child care supply and demand in four states: Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, and



Building the Supply of High-Quality Child Care for Infants and Toddlers in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services recently made a major step forward in addressing the shortage of high-quality child care by investing \$635,000 in new CCDBG Dollars to establish the Oklahoma Right Start Infant-Toddler Project. The project offers child care programs:

- Free formal training
- Four months of technical assistance focusing on infant-toddler care,
- 30 hours of free coaching, and
- Peer networking opportunities.

In order to be eligible, child care programs must be participating in the Oklahoma Quality Rating and Improvement System, and at least 10 percent of licensed capacity must be filled with children receiving state-funded subsidy assistance. The Oklahoma State CCR&R Network, [Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Inc.](#), is responsible for leadership and infrastructure support in the project, including training, technical assistance, data collection, and resources, to the local CCR&Rs that deliver direct services for providers in their communities.





These findings support evidence that many families have little to no choice in child care providers for their infant or toddler – costs are prohibitively high, and some families spend months waiting for a space to open in a licensed program. Investment in building the supply of quality, licensed child care spaces for infants and toddlers is critical to providing working families with a safe and engaging space for their child while they go to work.

70% of CCR&Rs engage in activities to increase the supply of infant-toddler child care.

While recognizing that lack of access to licensed child care is an issue for many families, increasing the supply with unlicensed spaces is not a solution. Regular monitoring and more stringent requirements mean children are cared for in healthy, safe environments. We support investment in accessible, affordable, and quality licensed child care spaces.

Hawaii. In each of these states, CCAoA found huge gaps between the number of licensed infant and toddler spaces and the demand for infant and toddler care. Some key findings from the analysis include:

- One in five infants in [Alaska](#) do not have access to full-time, licensed child care.
- Of the more than 35,000 licensed child care spaces in [Hawaii](#), only 11 percent of licensed child care spaces are available to infants and toddlers.
- In [Mohave County, Arizona](#) only seven percent of infants and toddlers have access to licensed child care.
- In the [Wilmington, Delaware suburbs](#) 50 percent of infants and toddlers do not have access to licensed child care, even with a recent increase in the number of new child care programs.

Other states are measuring access to infant-toddler care. In Vermont, [Let's Grow Kids](#) found that more than 79% of infants and toddlers who are likely to need care do not have access to high-quality child care. Finding child care for just infants is even more challenging, as more than 85% of Vermont's infants likely to need care are unable to access high-quality child care.



Mapping Child Care during Nonstandard Hours in Massachusetts

The [Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network](#) anticipated the demand for nonstandard hour child care would increase significantly in areas of the state where new casinos were opening. Casinos tend to operate 24 hours a day, so the likelihood that employees will need child care during NSH is high. CCAoA and the MACCRR Network were able to work together to [map](#) the supply of child care open after 6 p.m. within a 10-mile radius of three casino sites. Around one of the proposed casino sites, child care providers who operate on weekends had capacity for just 54 children, while those who were open after 8 p.m. had a combined capacity of 64 children. Yet, the proposed casino plans to hire 3,000 employees; the current child care providers in this community will not be able to accommodate even a small fraction of the casino workers who likely will require child care during NSH. The story map and [digital action center](#) created through this partnership with CCAoA raised awareness for this issue and other child care supply issues. This awareness and action led to the MACCRR Network receiving an additional two million dollars in the state budget during state Fiscal Year 2019 to close gaps across Massachusetts.



Child Care Supply during Nonstandard Hours

As job markets changed with the needs of consumers for a 24/7 economy, more Americans now work during “nonstandard” hours (NSH), i.e., those outside the 8-hour workday. For many industries, like restaurants, hospitals, retail, and other shift work, NSH schedules are even more common than the “standard” hour workday. In fact, with the growth of the gig economy and the expansion of technology that allows for remote employment, NSH schedules are projected to see the most employment growth by 2020. However, the supply of child care during NSH is often unable to meet the demand during this time. One [study](#) of young workers with NSH schedules reported that 34 percent had a child under the age of six in the household. Child care during nonstandard working hours is extremely limited when available, and, often,

is unlicensed. In January 2019, CCAoA released a report highlighting the lack of child care during NSH titled [It’s About Time! Parents Who Work Nonstandard Hours Face Child Care Challenges](#).

Decline in the Number of Child Care Programs

Over the past few years, CCR&Rs and state administrators have noticed an alarming trend: a significant decline in the number of child care providers. Issues such as low wages, long hours, and the increase in licensing requirements without sufficient support to help meet them can lead to providers feeling burned out and deciding to close their doors. These issues especially resonate with family child care providers, who tend to have less support than those with larger staff.



Mapping the Decline of Subsidized Child Care Providers in Arizona

Working with [Child & Family Resources](#), the CCR&R in Arizona, CCAoA was able to [map](#) the number of child care providers who have left the child care licensing system and closed their program doors. Despite a healthy economy, low unemployment rate, and providers being at their desired capacity, child care programs still struggle because of high operating costs and low wages. The analysis found that 448 licensed child care providers had closed, a 20 percent decrease, from the end of 2016 to the end of 2017. Of those 448 providers, 389 were family child care homes. Identification of these closures can help to inform advocacy for policy changes, such as increases to child care provider reimbursement rates and to funding for improved access to trainings and coaching.



Using Story Maps to Illustrate the Decline of Child Care Providers in Southern California

In southern California, [Child Care Resource Center](#) tracked and mapped family child care loss over eight years. Between 2008 and 2016, the number of family child care homes in California declined by 30 percent. In CCRC's service area (northern Los Angeles County) there has been a 20.3 percent decline - approximately one in five family child care homes - from 2007 to 2017. CCRC developed a time-lapse story map, which includes news clips and images, as well as some possible solutions to solving this problem, such as raising reimbursement rates for infants and utilizing QRIS in ways that appeal to FCC homes.

CCR&R staff are often the first to know when a child care program decides to close. They contact programs regularly to verify their information for parent referral services, and, through this process can also capture information about why the program is shutting down. Capturing this data can help the understanding of what child care providers may need to succeed, as well as help CCR&Rs address other providers' concerns or challenges with the goal of minimizing closures. Due to decreased funding and shifting priorities over time, however, many CCR&Rs reduced staffing for data updates such as these and reduced the actual amount of data they were able to collect as a result. The historic Fiscal Year 2019 increase in CCDBG funding going to states, however, opened up a tremendous opportunity to revitalize CCR&R data collection, including the data collected for program closings.

Child Care Supply and Demand Best Practice: Desired Capacity versus Licensed Capacity

CCR&Rs collect many different data points from child care providers in their service areas. A crucial data point when measuring child care supply and demand is the capacity of each program, or the number of children a child care provider is willing to accept. States and CCR&Rs traditionally use licensed capacity when calculating child care supply because it is often the only data readily available. While this measurement indicates the maximum number of children allowed in a licensed program at a given time, it may not accurately measure the actual number of children enrolled. For example, a family child care provider licensed to care for a maximum of ten children may prefer to enroll no more than nine children.





Child Care Aware® of Kansas (CCA of Kansas) has found that reporting desired capacity more closely mirrors the day-to-day reality of the challenges families face when searching for child care. While collecting this data – the number of children a provider is willing to accept – they found that a provider’s desired capacity is always less than or equal to licensed capacity, meaning that using licensed capacity to calculate child care supply may be overestimating how many child care spaces are actually available in an area. In fact, in 2018 they found that the reported desired capacity compared to the licensed capacity in Kansas differed by about 10 percent.

CCR&Rs, like CCA of Kansas, are uniquely positioned to report on supply, demand, cost, and quality because one of their essential functions is to match families with child care

programs that meet their unique needs. For this reason, CCR&Rs rely on their relationships with the child care provider community to collect and regularly update data about the features of each program, including desired capacity. CCA of Kansas reported that mailing or distributing profiles of programs at trainings and meetings helps to support their typical over-the-phone data collection efforts. They credit the regional CCR&Rs as being instrumental in gathering this data, as they have deep relationships with the child care providers in their communities.

Closing the Gaps: The Role of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies

CCR&Rs have been on the front lines increasing families' access to high-quality, affordable child care for almost 50 years. They are the primary drivers building the supply of quality child care – they recruit new programs, offer technical assistance on business practices and licensing requirements, and offer professional development and quality improvement support. They are also a trusted resource for families, helping them find child care that meets their individual needs and connecting them with an array of community resources. In addition, CCR&Rs across the nation engage with community and business stakeholders in building and sustaining effective child care systems.

Today's nationwide CCR&R system offers a more robust infrastructure than ever before. In total, CCR&Rs exist in 47 states. Of those 47 states, 39 have organizations called State CCR&R Networks. State CCR&R Networks regularly convene local CCR&R agencies to provide coordination, technical assistance, and leadership for the state's CCR&R system as a means to increase quality and consistency of services.

While each state's CCR&R system varies to reflect its unique needs, the core services – help for families finding child care, training and technical assistance for child care providers, and





Investment in Availability of Quality Child Care in California

Using previously unspent CCDBG funds, the state government, in partnership with [CCR&Rs](#), invested an additional, one-time, \$5 million in California’s Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP). Established in 1985, the goal of CCIP is to increase the availability and quality of child care spaces in all 58 California counties through recruitment, training, and support for prospective and licensed family child care providers.

Historically, CCIP has demonstrated success. For example, in State Fiscal Year 2015-16, CCR&R recruitment efforts throughout California helped establish 4,816 new child care spaces, including 602 new, licensed family child care providers. CCR&Rs and partners are urging policymakers to make the recent \$5 million investment in CCIP an ongoing investment to increase the capacities of child care providers.

support for communities – remain consistent throughout the nation. Together, CCR&Rs are poised to offer effective solutions to addressing child care gaps across the country.

Using Data-informed Strategies

Not only do CCR&Rs use their extensive databases to match families with child care providers that meet their needs, but CCR&Rs can also share data with prospective child care business owners so they make informed decisions about how to better meet families’ needs.

Targeted Child Care Recruitment

CCR&Rs use first-hand insight from families, businesses, and community stakeholders to determine where a community most needs child care. With this insight in mind, CCR&Rs then work to build the supply of child care facilities to fill these needs. CCR&Rs are particularly critical to increasing the supply of quality child care for specific populations, including infants and toddlers and children with special needs. CCR&Rs are also central to recruiting child care programs to contract with states to accept CCDF vouchers or fee assistance and to participate in state QRIS. These targeted recruiting efforts benefit:

- Families, who can find the child care they need,
- Children, who can receive the best care for their development, and
- Child care providers, who can receive the correct form of payment for the children they care for.

Common Child Care Provider Data Collected by CCR&Rs

✓ Location, including coordinates	✓ Quality rating
✓ Days and hours of operation	✓ Accreditation status
✓ Ages served	✓ Participation in public programs - pre-k, Head Start and Early Head Start
✓ Types of care - centers, family child care, faith based, etc.	✓ Transportation options available for children
✓ Regulatory status - licensed Vs. exempt	✓ Languages spoken
✓ Licensed and desired capacity of child care programs	✓ Whether staff have training on supporting children with Special Needs
✓ Rates - child care fees	✓ Curriculum and program offerings
✓ Availability during nonstandard hours and emergency situations	✓ Types of financial assistance accepted - CCDF vouchers and other discounts



CCR&R's Targeted Supply Building



Creating a Pipeline of Highly-Qualified, Fairly-Compensated Child Care Professionals

Quality child care is early education. [A study](#) done by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences found that many children spend nearly 11,500 hours of their lives in child care before entering kindergarten. Considering the importance of brain development in the early years and sheer number of hours children spend in care, we cannot build the supply of quality care options without also building robust pipelines and adequate supports for child care professionals. The current compensation for the early childhood workforce is well below the required knowledge, education, and expectations of the roles they fill. Nationally, as noted in [video](#) "Why Does Child Care Cost So Much Yet Providers Make So Little?", the



Strengthening Quality Child Care through Business Partnerships in Birmingham, Alabama

[Childcare Resources](#), the local CCR&R in Birmingham, believes high-quality child care is the cornerstone of a thriving economy. Unfortunately, it found many communities in its service area have only a limited supply of qualified and well-trained child care professionals. For this reason, Childcare Resources partnered with several businesses and its philanthropic community to create model child care classrooms where aspiring child care professionals have access to hands-on learning experiences through a series of six 3-hour trainings. The goal of these model classrooms is to create a pipeline of quality child care professionals to provide service that helps Birmingham's children get the best possible start in life. Childcare Resources worked with funders in the community to build these classrooms, including PNC Bank, Borgosz Enterprises, The Daniel Foundation of Alabama, The Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation, State Farm, and The Thompson Foundation.

median hourly wage for child care providers is just \$10.72. This wage ironically qualifies many providers in most states for public assistance themselves, including child care subsidies.

In order to ensure the workforce is strong and of the highest quality, a three-pronged approach must be taken: increasing compensation, creating access with low barriers to educational opportunities, and shifting public opinion on the value of a highly-qualified, fairly compensated workforce.

CCR&Rs understand this three-pronged approach and play a key role in ensuring all three can happen collectively. To help child care professionals provide evidence-based, high-quality child care, CCR&Rs provide a continuum of professional development services that assist these professionals from the moment they enter the workforce through the entirety of their careers. CCR&Rs are often the first connection that new child care providers have to licensing training requirements, as well as QRIS training requirements. CCR&R staff assist providers in understanding the requirements of licensing, guiding them through the process and supporting them even after the provider is licensed. Beyond that, CCR&Rs weave

opportunities to increase access to QRIS using on the ground mentoring and coaching.

82%
of CCR&Rs help child care providers understand licensing requirements

72%
of CCR&Rs offer mentoring or coaching to help child care providers move up the quality ladders in QRIS

Many CCR&Rs also operate scholarship programs and wage supplement programs so providers have access to higher education and increased wages. Even CCR&Rs without such programs are well suited to connect providers to scholarship opportunities, as well as to help them navigate higher education systems to ensure their experience and qualifications are recognized in their state's professional development registry.

Ultimately, states cannot build their child care facilities without an effective workforce and strategies to retain this workforce. Effective child care providers require fair compensation and continuing education resources that fit

Power to the Profession

[Power to the Profession](#) is a groundbreaking, national initiative whose work has the potential to transform the landscape of the early childhood field. Launched in 2017, the initiative engages CCR&Rs and other ECE partners to define the early childhood profession by establishing a unifying framework for career pathways, knowledge, and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation. Because CCR&Rs are on the front lines of delivering professional development opportunities to early childhood educators in communities, they are uniquely positioned to support the early childhood field as it evolves. [Power to the Profession](#) will not only define who early childhood educators are as professionals, but it will also provide the respect, credibility, and compensation that is missing from the early childhood field.



Community Development Specialists in Iowa

CCR&Rs in [Iowa](#) are funded through CCDBG Dollars to recruit new child care programs and to raise awareness about the community's child care needs. Prior to State Fiscal Year 2019, each CCR&R in Iowa received funding for one-half of a full-time equivalent (FTE) for a Child Care Recruitment and Retention Specialist. With increased state funding in FY 2019, each Iowa CCR&R was able to support at least one FTE per agency, which allowed them to expand this role to "Community Development Specialist" positions. In addition to recruiting and supporting child care programs directly, Community Development Specialists now work with business and community stakeholders to address the lack of quality child care in Iowa.

their needs and schedules. Ensuring families have access to high-quality child care must be coupled with ensuring child care providers are valued and receiving support in and outside of the classroom. Luckily, CCR&Rs can provide many of these supports, continuing to work towards a fully realized workforce.

Engaging with the Business Community

More and more businesses are seeking ways to better respond to their employees' child care needs. CCR&Rs are there to help – they present an array of solutions rather than simply instructing businesses to open their own on-site child care. While on-site child care is feasible for some, many businesses are not in a position to implement this option. CCR&Rs provide consultation to businesses to help them identify other strategies that match their child care needs, such as offering employees more family-friendly policies and work environments, providing financial assistance for child care, and implementing flexible and predictable work schedules. CCR&Rs also play a valuable role as community conveners and planners because of their ability to share real-time insights about the child care needs of working families.



Enhanced Child Care Referrals for Maryland Families

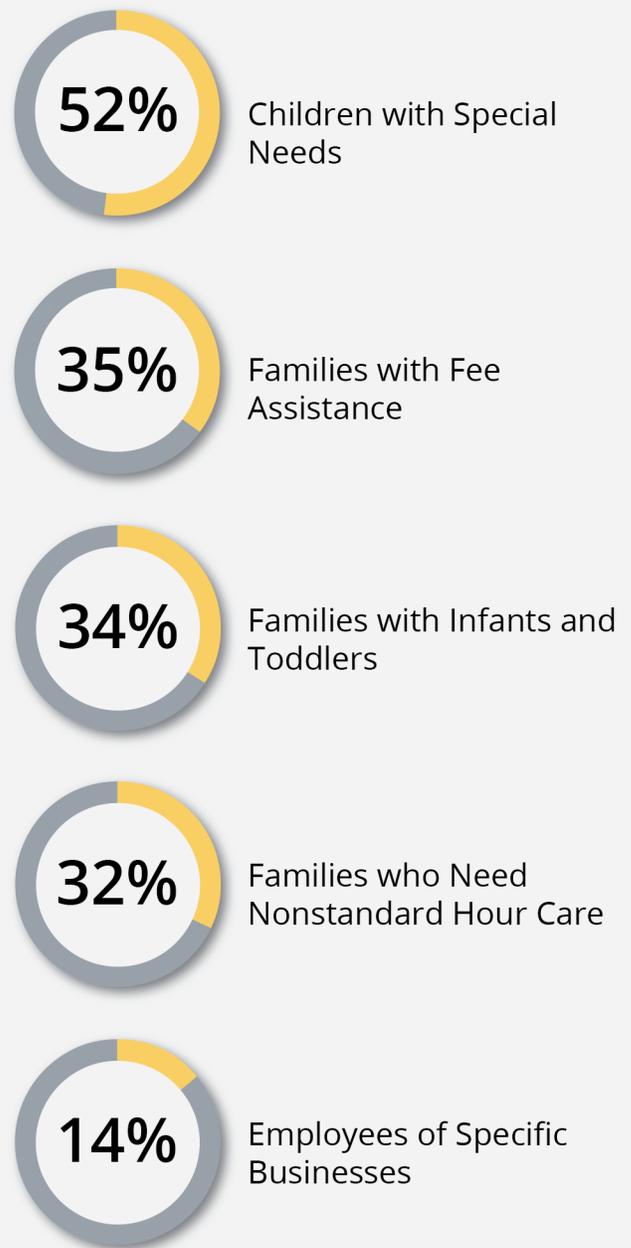
Maryland Family Network (MFN), the State CCR&R Network, offers a free Community Line Service called LOCATE: Child Care. It provides parents with a free, telephone child care counseling and referral service on weekdays, and a 24/7 online-based service. With additional funding MFN has been able to expand its basic services to include enhanced telephone counseling for parents of children with special needs; for faculty and students at two internationally recognized institutions of higher education; and for corporate clients who wish to have enhanced services for their employees. These employee telephone services include in-depth child care counseling and referrals to specific programs with verified openings. MFN follows up with all families to make sure the parents were able to find appropriate child care and to ensure the quality of the experience for parents and their children who were enrolled.

Offering Enhanced Referrals for Families

CCR&Rs know that finding child care in certain geographical areas and for certain populations can be challenging. For this reason, some state governments, businesses, and communities fund CCR&Rs to offer enhanced child care referrals for populations such as children with disabilities, infants and toddlers, families working nonstandard hour schedules, and more. Enhanced referrals allow CCR&Rs to work directly with parents to understand their needs and then to locate child care with the services, hours, and locations that work best for them.



Percentage of CCR&Rs Offering Enhanced Child Care Referrals by Population Type





Establishing Better Business Practices in Ohio

YWCA of Northwest Ohio, a local CCR&R, offers coaching to child care programs in the state's QRIS for participants needing assistance implementing strong business practices. Recognizing the widespread need for business-related support to child care providers, it started an annual Child Care Business Success Summit, focusing exclusively on helping programs improve all aspects of their businesses. Participants include child care owners, administrators, and staff. Speakers include business-related subject matter experts and other representatives from the business community. The Summit has been offered annually for the past three years and has seen a steady increase in participation each year. YWCA also offers business practice needs assessments for child care programs, and it supplies them with a variety of resources such as business templates and forms.

Promoting Better Child Care Business Practices

CCR&Rs lead many initiatives to promote quality and sustainability within the child care workforce – some examples include leading state Professional Development Workforce

Registries, QRIS, and scholarship programs to support higher education attainment. As child care providers are themselves small businesses, CCR&Rs also play a vital role in addressing the business-related needs of child care programs.



How Policymakers Can Help Fill the Gaps: Recommendations to Congress

The work of CCR&Rs must be accompanied by statutory changes at the national level. We suggest the following federal policy steps to help CCR&Rs meet the needs of working families.

Authorize and appropriate higher levels of funding for CCDBG

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is our nation's most significant public investment in quality child care and serves as a critical funding source for CCR&Rs at the state and local levels. **We recommend a \$5 billion increase above FY 2019 levels so that:**

1. More low-income families can gain access to high-quality, affordable child care through subsidies;
2. States can fully implement systems to increase access to quality child care, such as QRIS, health and safety training, and background checks; and
3. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) can further invest in data collection efforts to understand what the child care field needs, and to identify where resources should be targeted.
4. CCR&Rs can:
 - Expand child care provider recruitment, retention, and professional development through targeted outreach, training, technical assistance, and resources;

- Expand delivery of child care consumer education and referrals to families, particularly to those with heightened difficulty finding quality child care;
- Strengthen their ability to bring together business and community stakeholders to make impactful investments that support working families; and
- Capitalize on the promise of State CCR&R Networks – state-level intermediary organizations poised to increase quality, consistency, leadership, and accountability within child care systems.

Support legislation that invests in the child care workforce

Child care providers are the backbone of our economy, yet are often paid near poverty-level wages. It is impossible to talk about recruitment and retention of child care providers without mentioning that many providers need to use public assistance programs like SNAP, WIC, and TANF to survive. Supporting legislation that ensures child care providers receive compensation on par with public elementary school teachers and provides additional supports and incentives for child care providers to obtain the training they need can help recruit new providers and retain existing ones.

Wondering why parents spend so much on child care, but providers earn so little? Check out this [brief video](#) for more information.



Support family-friendly policies that allow parents to work and their children to thrive

Federal policies can also help businesses be more family-friendly for their employees. Incentives for businesses to include family-

friendly work practices that embrace child care solutions for their employees, such as [child-friendly worker scheduling](#), job-protected paid leave, and employer contributions and subsidies for child care, are wins for both families and employers.



Early Childhood Tax Credits in Louisiana

In 2007 Louisiana enacted a package called the [School Readiness Tax Credits](#) to assist the child care workforce, child care providers, and low-income families who would like to access high-quality child care. The package of tax credits provides approximately \$16 million in annual funding for early childhood programs and serves as a state match for federal CCDBG funds. These tax credits have incentivized child care providers and staff to become better trained, have incentivized local investments into early childhood care via tax credits, and have supported small business child care centers. For example, because of the tax credits between 2008 and 2015, the number of Louisiana early childhood teachers and staff achieving a Teacher Level 1 credential saw a 374 percent increase; the number of teachers who attained higher credentials (at Pathway Levels 2, 3, and 4) increased almost eight-fold. For more information on Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credits, see the “Gaining Ground in Louisiana” pullout in the [2018 The US and the Cost of Child Care report](#).

Recommendations to State and Local Governments

CCR&Rs and like-minded organizations are solutions-oriented thought leaders in states and communities. They work tirelessly to expand access to quality, affordable child care, listen to the voices of parents and providers, and analyze child care data to make informed decisions to spur expansion. In order for CCR&Rs to continue this work, CCAoA has the following recommendations for state and local governments.

Fully fund State CCR&R Networks to increase quality, consistency, and accountability

State CCR&R Networks lead local community-based CCR&Rs in 39 states. State CCR&R Networks provide training and technical assistance to local CCR&Rs, while also collaborating with state governments to establish consistency and accountability measures for local CCR&R service delivery. Often State CCR&R Networks lead special projects or initiatives and play a critical role in establishing data collection and

reporting standards – essential functions for making sound decisions about prioritizing investments to build child care supply.

Ultimately, however, a State CCR&R Network’s role and impact varies greatly based on funding levels. In fact, some State CCR&R Networks are led solely by volunteers from the local CCR&R community. Providing sufficient funding for State Networks to conduct the services that their state needs is crucial to their success. Learn more about State CCR&R Networks in this brief paper, [Child Care Resource & Referral in America: State CCR&R Network Models](#).

Ensure CCR&Rs are funded for targeted recruitment, retention, and community engagement activities

Due to funding limitations, states have historically been forced to choose between investing in building the supply of child care or increasing the quality of existing child care.

With Congress' bipartisan commitment to child care and an unprecedented awareness from the business community about how the availability of quality child care impacts their bottom line, there is a significant opportunity for states to re-evaluate their own investment in supply-building activities without necessarily compromising their investments in quality. The majority of CCR&Rs indicate they work to build the supply, yet less than half actually receive public funding for their work. Re-evaluating CCR&R contracts may uncover gaps in supply building and quality-enhancing deliverables that can easily be incorporated.

Expand state and local investment in high-quality child care by tiering CCDF reimbursement rates to quality rating

QRIS serve as a benchmark for quality early learning and development systems. Child care programs that participate in QRIS often make voluntary commitments to provide the highest levels of care to children. Because quality child care is expensive, state and local governments can reinforce the value of quality by reimbursing QRIS participants at a higher rate. This solution must be implemented, though, in conjunction with additional approaches so it will support child care programs that may not be eligible to participate in state QRIS.



Tiered Reimbursement Rates in Iowa

In Iowa, CCDBG Dollars made tiered reimbursement rates based on a program's participation and rating in their voluntary child care Quality Rating System (QRS) possible. Prior to this decision in January 2019, some child care programs reported there was no incentive for them to participate in the voluntary QRS or to work towards the highest quality levels. With this change, the [Iowa CCR&Rs](#) are at the forefront of child care provider outreach efforts, ensuring programs are aware of the opportunities to increase their quality and be subsequently rewarded with higher compensation through increased reimbursement rates.

Increase funds to support data collection and analysis within CCR&Rs

State CCR&R Networks and local CCR&Rs typically house a large amount of child care-related data. They are uniquely positioned to use their data to identify gaps in child care supply and demand and to help their communities increase the supply of high-quality child care.

Collaborate with state and city planners to re-imagine land use and zoning laws

Policies and regulations determine not only the quality of child care delivery, but also the physical locations where child care businesses may operate. Evaluating land use and zoning laws can help determine what barriers prevent child care businesses from opening. Collaboration between state and city planners and CCR&Rs can tear down barriers to increasing child care supply in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Improve compensation for the child care workforce

Quality child care is early childhood education. CCDBG outlines a bold new vision for a national child care system comprised of a professional workforce with the necessary training and educational qualifications to ensure children are safe, healthy, and learning. This investment, in turn, can pay dividends in the form of improved school readiness, improved employee productivity, and improved long-term health outcomes. When child care professionals make an investment in their careers, they should receive equitable compensation and incentives in line with similar professions. If child care providers are supported and paid adequately, this may help to reduce the recent decline in the number of child care programs available, ultimately saving the child care system money.

Conclusion

CCR&Rs provide invaluable services to their states and communities by linking families to child care programs, providing technical assistance and outreach to child care providers, and collecting and reporting data on their state's unique child care landscape. However, many of these agencies are underfunded and lack the necessary resources to effect the required change to truly impact communities. Through careful planning by the government at the federal, state, and local levels, we can ensure that quality, affordable child care settings are available for working parents in every community.

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[Childcare Resources \(Alabama\) - Joan Wright](#)

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[Child Care Resource Center \(California\) - Dr. Michael Olenick and Dr. Susan Savage](#)

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[Massachusetts Child Care Resource & Referral Network - Kim Dion](#)

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