

From Patchwork to Progress:

How CCR&Rs Unite Child Care Resources

FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

Child Care Resource and Referral organizations (CCR&Rs) make child care work in communities across the country. CCR&Rs are integral to the child care system, providing services that support families, child care providers, and the child care field. But CCR&Rs are not fully understood by local, state, and national stakeholders.

Child Care Aware® of America's (CCAoA) position statement, [*Making States and Communities Child Care Strong: The Role of Child Care Resource & Referral Organizations*](#), clarifies the role and scope of practice of CCR&Rs.

Effective CCR&Rs:

- ✓ Offer full-service solutions for communities, impacting all parts of the child care system. They build the supply and quality of child care, grow the child care workforce, help families and business solve their child care challenges, and deliver on-the-ground information and solutions.
- ✓ Are rooted in their communities, respecting and honoring culture, building trust, and focusing on solutions that value all families.
- ✓ Are mission focused for the public good, offering accessible and inclusive services for everyone.

States and communities benefit from two types of CCR&Rs—community-based CCR&R organizations and state CCR&R networks. In 2024, CCAoA surveyed the CCR&R field to learn more about their activities. Survey results are from 210 responses representing 48 states.

Community-Based Child Care Resource and Referral Organizations

Effective Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) organizations deliver a core set of comprehensive and integrated services, as well as additional services to enhance their support of families and providers.

CORE SERVICES

Community-based CCR&Rs support family choice and access to quality and affordable child care services. They also help families afford child care through subsidy and financial assistance programs.

Community-based CCR&Rs build the supply, quality, and diversity of stable child care options.

Community-based CCR&Rs grow and sustain a skilled child care workforce, and provide training and on-site support (coaching, mentoring, technical assistance, training) for child care professionals.

Community-based CCR&Rs provide real-world child care data to inform community decision-making.

Community-based CCR&Rs influence child care policy and regulations and help build solutions.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Community-based CCR&Rs deliver solutions for businesses and communities.

Community-based CCR&Rs foster children's healthy development and belonging, and support families in caring for their children.

State Child Care Resource & Referral Networks

State Child Care Resource and Referral networks provide a core set of services that support and amplify community-based Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) organizations and help build strong state child care systems. State Networks providing core services may offer additional and non-child care related services and/or also deliver community-level CCR&R services in select areas.

CORE SERVICES

State Child Care Resource and Referral Networks support community-based CCR&Rs as they implement best practices and innovative ideas and solutions in every community across the state. State Child Care Resource and Referral Networks compile, disaggregate, and analyze community child care supply, demand, and quality data to inform state policy, program design, and targeted investment.

State Child Care Resource and Referral Networks support statewide awareness of and access to CCR&R services.

State Child Care Resource and Referral Networks influence child care policy and regulations and help to build child care solutions.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

State Child Care Resource and Referral Networks ensure consistent community-based CCR&R services statewide.

More than half of statewide CCR&Rs provide contractual oversight to community-based CCR&Rs.

State Child Care Resource and Referral Networks deliver direct services to families, child care providers, and businesses.

Conclusion

It is clear from our findings that CCR&R organizations provide robust services to families and child care providers in the communities they serve. CCR&R organizations serve as a bridge between families and child care, offering core services such as referrals, subsidy information, and consumer education. CCR&Rs also support providers through training, technical assistance, professional development, and enhancing child care quality. Their adaptability to community needs and collaborations at local and state levels fosters best practices, data collection, and advocacy for system improvements. Despite their contributions, many CCR&Rs operate with limited budgets and small teams, underscoring the need for continued and increased investment to scale the support they provide.

To learn more about CCR&Rs and read recommendations for stakeholders, read CCAoA's position statement, [*Making States and Communities Child Care Strong: The Role of Child Care Resource & Referral Organizations*](#).

Appendix A: How Are CCR&Rs Funded, Staffed, and Organized?

Public funding is typical: The vast majority (98%) of CCR&Rs surveyed do not charge a fee for child care referrals. They typically rely on public funding from federal, state, and local sources. The top three funding sources were:

- 85% federal public funding (e.g., CCDF)
- 66% state public funding
- 41% local public funding

Further, most (90%) CCR&Rs surveyed reported a single funding source that provided more than 50% of their funding; 59% cited the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) as that single source.

CCR&R budgets tend to be modest: Respondents reported budgets ranging from under \$500,000 to \$600 million. The organizations with the top five largest budgets are Head Start grantees and/ or have child care subsidy or grant pass-through funds included in their budgets. More than half (54%) of respondents have overall budgets of \$5 million or less; one-fifth reported budgets under \$1 million.

CCR&R staff sizes tend to be small: While respondents reported overall organizational staff sizes ranging from fewer than five up to more than 500, the majority (69%) had overall staff sizes under 50. Fewer staff are devoted to CCR&R services:

- 60% of organizations have 10 or fewer people providing CCR&R services
- 37% have five or fewer staff providing CCR&R services

To learn more about CCR&Rs and read recommendations for stakeholders, read CCAoA's position statement, [*Making States and Communities Child Care Strong: The Role of Child Care Resource & Referral Organizations*](#).

Appendix B: About the Survey

Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) surveyed a broad range of organizations nationwide who are engaged in child care resource and referral (CCR&R) work. The study included both community-based CCR&Rs and state CCR&R networks. Community-based CCR&Rs work in local communities to advance high-quality, equitable child care. State Networks amplify and bolster the work of community-based CCR&Rs.

The national survey yielded 210 responses, mostly local CCR&Rs, from 48 states. Findings revealed that the majority of CCR&Rs receive public funding (federal, state, and local) and do not charge families for child care referrals. CCR&Rs offer a very wide range of services to families, providers, and the child care field, despite many having modest budgets and small staffs. The top services offered were: provider training and technical assistance, child care referrals, community engagement, professional development for providers, child care subsidy information, and consumer and parent education.

Methodology

Participants: CCAoA staff compiled two email lists to receive the CCR&R survey. The first list was compiled from CCAoA's robust database of CCR&R contacts; the second list consisted of CCR&R organizations listed in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plans.

Survey: The survey was designed in Survey Monkey and consisted of 23 questions, covering the following topics:

- Contact information
- Type of organization
- Services provided
- Activities (data collection, coordination with other organizations, advocacy)
- Staff positions
- Languages served
- Budget & staff sizes

Initial emails were sent to the two email lists in late July 2024. Contacts who did not respond received a reminder email in late August. Finally, for the 12 states for which we did not have responses by mid-September, CCAoA staff reached out to their network of CCR&R contacts with individual emails.