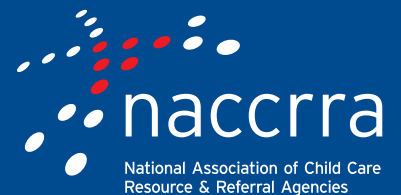




NACCRRRA

STRATEGIC PLAN

2010-2015



Vision

A nation that supports the development and learning of all children

Mission

To promote policies and partnerships to ensure access to quality child care and early learning services and to provide vision, leadership and support to the nationwide network of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies

NACCRRA

**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

2010-2015



“I envision a strong role for NACCRRA in helping to address both the supply and demand side of the child care market . . . NACCRRA seems poised to assume a leadership role in coordinating quality improvement efforts at the state and local levels.”

-Ed Zigler, *The Tragedy of Child Care in America*, 2009

Introduction

The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) has a vision that inspires all its work:

A nation that supports the development and learning of all children

In this vision, all children are in safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate settings that enrich their lives, give them the tools they need to enter school “ready to learn,” and prepare them to engage in the world as productive citizens.

NACCRRA’s mission guides its actions, provides a sense of direction and guides decision making:

To promote policies and partnerships to ensure access to quality child care and early learning services and to provide vision, leadership and support to the nationwide network of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.

Founded in 1987 as a 501(c)3 non-profit membership organization, NACCRRA works with more than 700 state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) nationwide. These agencies help ensure that families in 99 percent of all populated ZIP codes in the United States have access to high-quality, affordable child

care. NACCRRA supports CCR&Rs by providing training, resources, technical support, best practice guidance, policy analysis, national partnership opportunities and national advocacy in the areas of child care and early learning. NACCRRA leads projects that increase access to quality, affordable child care, undertakes research and advocates for child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families.

This five-year strategic plan is the result of a collaborative effort among NACCRRA board members, key stakeholders and staff. The five imperatives and the related goals and objectives will guide NACCRRA’s activities from 2010-2015 as it works to bring its vision of a nation that supports the development and learning of all children closer to reality.



“We should raise the bar when it comes to early learning programs . . . Today, some early learning programs are excellent. Some are mediocre. And some are wasting what studies show are – by far – a child’s most formative years.”

-President Barack Obama, Remarks to the NAACP, July 16, 2009

Supporting the Development and Learning of All Children

Children do not compartmentalize their lives, and they do not know, or care, who is paying for the experiences they are having during a specific hour of the day. What is important to them is the quality of those experiences – whether they feel safe and loved.

- ▶ For over 11 million children under age 5 with working parents, the child care experience is a reality of their daily life.¹
- ▶ On average, preschool-age children of working mothers spend 36 hours a week in child care or other nonparental care.²
- ▶ 25 percent of children under age 5 with working mothers are in multiple child care arrangements.³
- ▶ More women are working and going back to work sooner after having a baby. In 2008, 56 percent of mothers with infants were working.⁴

NACCRRA’s core beliefs reflect what the daily experiences should be like for these children and their parents.

CORE BELIEF: All children have a right to be cared for, both in and outside the home, in **safe, healthy and nurturing environments.**

In many locations, safe, healthy and nurturing child care is rare or does not exist. States fall short in meeting basic requirements needed to protect the health and safety of children in child care centers and in licensed small child care homes. Monitoring of child care by state licensing offices is generally insufficient to guarantee that minimum regulations are being observed.

- ▶ About half the children under age 5 in child care spend their time in a setting exempt from licensing or regulation.⁵ These settings are not illegal, but they are unchecked, which means the safety and quality of the care is unknown.



- ➔ Only 10 states require child care providers caring for at least one unrelated child to have a license.⁶
- ➔ Only half of the states require comprehensive background checks for all paid child care providers, which means parents may unknowingly be putting their children in dangerous situations.⁷
- ➔ Few states require unannounced inspections of child care settings to ensure compliance with state standards. Standards are weak, but oversight is weaker.

Research over the past 20 years has provided a clear picture of what quality child care looks like. Unfortunately for most children, these research findings are not reflected in the child care that they receive.

- ➔ Less than 10 percent of child care can be considered high quality.⁸
- ➔ Most states have licensing regulations for maximum group size or caregiver:child ratios that are higher than recommended by current research.
- ➔ Fewer than half of the states require programs to address all six areas of child development in their activities for children.⁹

The quality of the child care workforce continues to be a challenge. Many child care providers lack the education and training necessary to provide high-quality care. Most providers enter the profession with little to no knowledge of child development, basic health and safety procedures or CPR.

- ➔ Thirty-eight states do not require child care providers in centers to complete any training in early childhood development before beginning work.¹⁰



- ➔ Low compensation and high job turnover adversely affect the quality of care that child care workers are able to provide.
- ➔ There has been a decline in the level of college-educated, center-based teachers from 43 percent in 1983-85 to 30 percent or fewer in 2004.¹¹

It is unacceptable that so many children spend their days in poor-quality child care and are cared for by untrained, uneducated adults. Congress and government should take a more active oversight role in the quality of child care in the United States. Policies and regulations must be changed to lift the bar to higher quality and to ensure accountability for the billions of tax-payer dollars funding child care.

CORE BELIEF: All children should **have access to early learning experiences** that help them arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed.

Over 11 million children in the United States are in child care at least part of the day. Depending upon the program they attend, these children receive unequal early learning experiences. This is the direct result of states

“Research continues to document that the first few years of life are critical to healthy child development. Yet, public policies have not kept up with what is known about the importance of early development or what can be done to ensure its success.”

-Joan Lombardi, Beacon of Hope: The Promise of Early Head Start for America's Youngest Children, 2004

setting the bar at different levels for different programs. The state in which a child lives, as well as the family's income level, determines a child's chance of attending a program with higher quality standards.

Although all states have early learning standards, few apply to child care.

- Of the 11 million children in child care settings, only 2.3 million attend Head Start, Early Head Start, state-funded prekindergarten or military child care programs.¹²
- The remaining children, about 9 million (80 percent), spend their days in child care settings that exist in a separate silo, exempt from state early learning standards and operating contrary to the research supporting their healthy development.

Only by strengthening the quality of child care settings can we ensure that all children are in care that promotes healthy early childhood development and early learning.

CORE BELIEF: All families must have **access to high-quality, affordable child care** for their children.

Parents and grandparents believe affordable child care is a necessity, not a choice. They overwhelmingly support public policies that make child care more affordable and strengthen the quality of child care.¹³

- 94 percent of parents and 98 percent of grandparents support regular inspections of all child care programs.
- 91 percent of parents and 92 percent of grandparents support setting basic quality standards.
- 91 percent of parents and 93 percent of grandparents support improving health and safety standards in child care programs.
- 87 percent of parents and 96 percent of grandparents support requiring all types of child care programs to meet basic standards of quality.

Part of improving the quality of care relies on establishing a better financing strategy for child care in this country. Yet, the framework for financing relies on an understanding of the true cost of quality child care. In addition, there needs to be better information about how the cost of care affects parent choice.

- In 2008, the cost of child care for an infant in a child care center ranged from \$4,560 to \$15,895 a year. The cost of care for a 4-year-old in a child care center ranged from \$4,055 to \$11,680 a year.¹⁴

“Next to paying our mortgage, that’s [child care] the next highest bill in my house. My question is: Can I eat while I pay for child care? This is a huge issue for us.”

-Parent from NACCRRA’s Parent Focus Group

- ➔ The cost of center-based accredited care was even higher – up to \$16,835 a year for infants and \$11,960 for 4-year-olds.¹⁵

NACCRRA’s parent focus groups found that parents sacrifice on quality as a result of the cost and then hope for the best.

Another problem is the supply of licensed child care that families may access. In many low-income communities, families cannot access child care centers that do not exist.

In 2006, NACCRRA conducted a study of 13 economically disadvantaged inner city communities.

- ➔ Nearly half of the children under age 6 who needed child care had no access to licensed or regulated settings.¹⁶
- ➔ In some situations, parents in these communities paid as much as 70 percent of their income for full-time child care for an infant or toddler, and some paid more than two-thirds of their income for full-time care for a preschool-age child.¹⁷

CORE BELIEF: All parents must have a **choice** of appropriate and affordable learning and caregiving settings for their children.

Parents know what they need for their children. Unfortunately, what they need may not be available in their community.

The choices that parents make reflect the options that are available. Cost and supply are chief among challenges affecting parent choice.

Every state, with the exception of four — Ohio, Oklahoma, Vermont and Wisconsin — uses federal funds to pay for unlicensed care. This is significant for two reasons: first, no one knows the quality of this care or whether it complies with even the most basic of health and safety standards since it is not subject to any oversight or rules, and second, paying a substantially lower rate for unlicensed care fuels a below-market industry that undercuts the quality of all care.



Despite the important role child care providers play in child development, they are among the lowest paid occupations in the United States.

- ▶ Child care providers earn an average wage of \$9.46 an hour. With average salaries of \$19,670 a year, many individuals holding these jobs earn barely above the poverty level.¹⁸
- ▶ Because of the low pay, the child care workforce experiences an annual job turnover rate of between 25 and 40 percent.¹⁹

In addition, parents face other challenges as well. It is more difficult to find care offered during non-traditional hours for infants or for children with special needs.

- ▶ More than 3.5 million children under age 5 have working mothers who work non-day shifts.²⁰

Parents often have no real choice – much of the care is not required to meet minimum health and safety and education standards. Much of it is unregulated. Most is not routinely inspected.

Therefore, when it comes to enabling parents to have real choices among quality child care settings, the cost and the supply are part of the picture. But, the reality is that the workforce itself is part of the challenge. Child care is an industry with little education or training, low pay and high-turnover.

CORE BELIEF: Every community must have a **strong child care delivery system** that includes Child Care Resource and Referral in order to coordinate training, supply building (expanding child care capacity), planning, and policy and education efforts on child care needs.

State and local CCR&Rs provide important services to families, providers and their communities:

- ▶ They help more than 7 million families each year find and pay for child care.
- ▶ They increase the supply of quality care by recruiting new providers and helping to develop 450,000 new child care spaces a year.
- ▶ They train more than 500,000 child care providers and use adult learning strategies that reflect the complex population of child care workers.
- ▶ They help develop emergency preparedness plans and offer training classes on emergency planning to child care centers and family child care providers.

“The formal system of child care is not meeting the needs of the workforce. Centers operate from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. That’s not the reality of many people’s lives, forcing families to use care outside of regulated care.”

-Linda Smith, “The Vanishing 9-5 Job,” Christian Science Monitor, December 2008.



“Child care in America is in crisis. It is a tragedy that this crisis has been allowed to fester for so long and at the expense of so many children who have been subjected to poor-quality care.”

-Ed Zigler, The Tragedy of Child Care in America, 2009

NACCRRA: Advancing the Future of Child Care

Since its inception in 1987, NACCRRA has worked to improve the system of early learning for all children. NACCRRA continues to support and promote national policies and partnerships to ensure access to quality child care and early learning services.

NACCRRA provides vision, leadership and support to a national network of more than 700 state and community Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. CCR&Rs work with all parts of the child care delivery system – families, child care providers, educators, businesses and policymakers.

Overall, CCR&Rs serve more than 7 million parents and train more than 500,000 child care providers annually. CCR&Rs provide the critical link between child care providers and parents. They help parents navigate a disconnected array of programs that often have confusing eligibility criteria, costs, hours of operation, staffing criteria and program focus. CCR&Rs also provide essential parent education, helping both parents and community leaders understand the important role early care plays in school readiness.

NACCRRA serves two overarching functions:

1. To provide extensive program support to state and local CCR&Rs
2. To support national leadership in child care

At the national level, NACCRRA conducts a range of activities that would be impractical or impossible for the states and local communities to conduct individually:

- ➔ **Advancing the state of the field** by publishing research-based reports that focus on quality, cost and availability of child care in the United States; translating the research into what works; monitoring and reporting national demographic, social and political trends; and identifying and disseminating best practices





- ➔ **Supporting partnerships** with other national organizations to help advance national child care and early learning policies
 - ➔ **Advocating** for national child care policy and raising awareness of child care issues by engaging parents as advocates
 - ➔ **Formulating and monitoring national policies and programs** in child care and early childhood development
 - ➔ **Fundraising** to support NACCRRA's initiatives and local CCR&Rs
 - ➔ **Linking parents** from the Child Care Aware® national hot line to local CCR&Rs
 - ➔ **Parenting resources**, including the Child Care Aware® toll-free hotline and Web-based child care information; videos that show what quality care looks like; the Child Care Aware® Parent Network; Child Care Online, a tool to help parents take online tours of child care programs; and various publications
 - ➔ **Support for military families and AmeriCorps/VISTA families**, through national fee assistance programs to help families find and afford child care
 - ➔ **NACCRRA Quality Assurance**, a national, voluntary certification system for CCR&Rs and State Networks
 - ➔ **Training and technical assistance** for CCR&R professionals
 - ➔ **A national public policy symposium** that addresses critical child care issues and shares recent research, trends, best practices and policy developments
- NACCRRA continually seeks to expand and enhance the services provided to member CCR&Rs. NACCRRA supports its members with a wide range of products and services:
- ➔ **Technology**, including NACCRRAware, the Training and Technical Assistance Tracking System, Child Care Online and NACCRRA's e-Learning Solution

- ➔ **Institutes** that provide unique professional development and peer networking opportunities for CCR&R and State Network staff
- ➔ **Leadership Development Program** that provides mentoring, training and internship experiences for selected CCR&R professionals

NACCRRA's Board of Directors includes representatives from CCR&Rs, businesses and academia. With this rich mix of skills and perspectives, NACCRRA is adept at approaching problems with vision and creativity.

In advancing its vision of a nation that supports the development and learning of all children, NACCRRA's primary focus is on meeting the child care needs of parents with children birth to 8. Recognizing that there are other national organizations that support certain populations such as infants, school-age children and children with special needs, NACCRRA continues to support these partners in their efforts.





NACCRRA's Strategic Planning Process

In early 2009, NACCRRA's Board of Directors established a Strategic Planning Task Force to move NACCRRA's vision and mission forward over the next five years. They identified the following five strategic imperatives:

Imperative I: Policy and Practice Leadership

Policies and practices increase families' access to quality, affordable child care and early learning services.

Imperative II: Advancement through Advocacy

A network of advocates advances local, state and federal legislation, policies and regulation that support quality, affordable child care and early learning services.

Imperative III: High Functioning CCR&R

State and local CCR&Rs are adequately funded, staffed and supported to deliver quality, accessible services nationwide.

Imperative IV: Data, Research and Technology

Strategic use of data, research and technology informs and promotes NACCRRA's policy agenda and practices.

Imperative V: Organizational Advancement

Organizational resources, structure and governance support accomplishment of strategic imperatives.

NACCRRA staff developed measurable objectives to support each goal, and the Board adopted the final plan at its January 2010 meeting.





Strategic Imperatives, Goals and Objectives

Imperative I:	Policy and Practice Leadership
Imperative II:	Advancement through Advocacy
Imperative III:	High Functioning CCR&R
Imperative IV:	Data, Research and Technology
Imperative V:	Organizational Advancement

This section of the Strategic Plan introduces the five priority areas (called imperatives) NACCRRRA seeks to address over the next five years. Each imperative has goals that broadly define how NACCRRRA will seek to address the imperatives. The objectives that follow the goals set measurable benchmarks and serve as a basis for a detailed work plan that guides NACCRRRA’s work.

Imperative I: Policy and Practice Leadership

Rationale: Policies and practices increase families’ access to quality, affordable child care and early learning services.

Goal 1: Provide leadership in quality improvement policies and practices that demonstrate measurable increases in child care quality.

Research shows that less than 10 percent of child care can be considered high quality. NACCRRRA recognizes that quality begins with minimum requirements such as background checks for child care workers, training for the workforce, regular inspections of child care programs, and basic health and safety standards.

Furthermore, NACCRRRA believes quality improvement happens over a period of time and in a continuous fashion. States are addressing the need for higher quality care by developing comprehensive Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). These statewide initiatives are designed to continuously raise the level of quality above what is minimally required by licensing regulations and toward higher goals such as national accreditation. An integral element of a QRIS is technical assistance to help



programs move from one level of quality to a higher level. CCR&Rs are the primary – and sometimes sole – deliverers of technical assistance to all types of child care providers in their local communities.

NACCRRA uses the data of CCR&R Networks to influence policy and practice in child care quality improvement and to support its policy recommendations. NACCRRA also works on QRIS implementation with State Child Care Administrators and State Network leaders to establish and support technical assistance best practices and a Web-based tracking system. Finally, NACCRRA measures state progress toward higher-quality standards through a variety of measurements and benchmarks established in recent years.

Objectives:

1. Publish position statements on both child care technical assistance and QRIS that identify the unique role for CCR&R and elements of effective systems, and provide leadership in gaining consensus among national partners on key principles
2. Build the capacity of state and local CCR&Rs to support state QRIS and national accreditation facilitation implementation and measurably improve child care quality
3. Build the capacity of state and local CCR&Rs to provide child care training, technical assistance and shared services support
4. Measure the current business management skills of center directors and family child care providers and develop minimum standards for center director and family child care provider business management training and competencies

5. Provide leadership to the CCR&R field in promoting essential management skills needed to run effective child care businesses

Goal 2: Provide leadership in professional development policies and practices that support a prepared, qualified and diverse child care workforce able to transfer knowledge into practice.

The training and education of the workforce, including directors of programs, is a critical factor in the provision of high-quality child care services. Yet, recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce has become increasingly difficult. The number of workers entering the field with degrees is declining while at the same time the number entering the field with less than a high school diploma is increasing.

Every year, CCR&Rs train more than 500,000 child care providers – nearly half of the formal child care workforce. Because of the instability in the field, much of this training is very basic and repetitive. The rapid growth in state QRIS has brought a new focus and intentionality to training. Training that is competency-based, linked to professional development plans and structured to provide pathways to higher education is becoming expected practice. There is also increased interest in and use of online learning technology for training and formal education courses.

NACCRRA views training as a central part of our work. NACCRRA has established a strong agenda to promote, implement and track minimum initial and ongoing training requirements for all child care workers in America. Our e-Learning platform and training courses, initial training policy agenda and Web-based training tracking system position NACCRRA to provide leadership in the future direction of professional development for the child care workforce and

to link the workforce to higher education.

Objectives:

1. Promote a policy agenda that establishes minimum national standards of training for all paid child care providers
2. Working with national partners, develop a position paper on professional development requirements, competencies assessment and career pathways that support a qualified and diverse child care workforce
3. Establish a clearly defined and measurable pathway that leads from training to higher education for a diverse child care workforce
4. Ensure that all child care providers have access to at least 40 hours of defined initial training, 24 hours of ongoing training and 120 hours of training that meets the requirements for the national Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
5. Working with appropriate national organizations and CCR&R leaders, create a national template for reporting on the status of the child care workforce and measuring improvements in the preparation of the workforce
6. Define the role of CCR&Rs in state QRIS implementation and support their capacity to provide high-quality technical assistance to child care providers that measurably improves program quality and caregiver practices



Goal 3: Provide leadership in establishing national and state financing strategies that ensure quality child care is affordable to all families.

Child care is a three dimensional program. First, it allows parents to work. Second, it supports children's learning. And third, it supports business and community development. As a nation, we must resolve the issues surrounding the cost of child care in order to ensure all children have access to high-quality care. In order to do this, we must first understand what the true cost of care is, and second, determine a national strategy to share the cost between all those who benefit. High-quality child care is the foundation for better outcomes for children and families, especially those most at risk. Unfortunately, current financing strategies in the United States result in an under-funded child care system that subjects the majority of children to poor- or mediocre-quality child care.

Federal subsidy policies influence every aspect of child care quality, availability and cost. More than 40 percent of CCR&Rs are actively involved in managing subsidy programs for families with low incomes. This means they are well positioned to deliver high-quality subsidy services and to advocate for good subsidy policies. This will lead to increased access to and retention of child care subsidies by parents.

Since the 1990 Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) legislation, vouchers have been the primary strategy for financing child care in America. As currently structured, vouchers do not contribute to child care quality and in many cases undermine it. Vouchers do not offer a stable source of funding to child care programs and rely on a child's attendance. Because most states value vouchers at well below the actual cost of quality care, the result has been a continual decline in quality.



NACCRRA is uniquely positioned to provide leadership in subsidy policy, administration and child care financing strategy. NACCRRA administers an exclusive national child care subsidy program on behalf of the Military Services and National Corporation for Community Service (AmeriCorps/VISTA). NACCRRA has developed best practices criteria for subsidy management and has established recommendations for strengthening subsidy policies. NACCRRA is also leveraging lessons learned from its partnerships with the military to demonstrate how the military has effectively made quality an integral part of the funding for child care, rather than an “add-on” or “set-aside” as it is currently structured in funding for civilian child care. Finally, NACCRRA is leading efforts to calculate the true cost of providing quality child care and recommend strategies to fund it.

Objectives:

1. Determine the need for child care by state and estimate the total cost to meet the need for care by age of child and setting
2. Determine the appropriate share of the cost for parents and the public
3. Develop a national policy agenda that clearly requires a federal and state plan to ensure all families have access to quality care

4. Provide leadership in establishing a national advocacy agenda for subsidy policy by convening a national panel of experts to identify shared priorities and strategies
5. Establish model best practices in subsidy policy and management that include effective practices to integrate subsidy management with other CCR&R parent, provider and community services

Imperative II: Advancement Through Advocacy

***Rationale:** A network of advocates advances local, state and federal legislation, policies and regulation that support quality, affordable child care and early learning services.*

Goal 1: Inform, engage and support CCR&R, child care and other early learning professionals in advancing legislation, policies and regulations that improve child care and early learning services.

Child care is routinely viewed as an adjunct to other issues such as welfare, school readiness and employment support issues. As a result, child care seldom receives the focus, debate and funding needed to improve the quality, affordability and availability of care.

NACCRRA public policy initiatives, publications, advocacy engagement efforts and leadership development programs provide CCR&Rs and other early education professionals with the information and tools they need to initiate and respond to federal, state and local legislation and regulation that improve child care and early learning services.

Objectives:

1. Develop a rapid response technical assistance strategy that supports CCR&Rs' capacity to influence federal and state

policies and regulation and react quickly and effectively to state and national policy developments

2. Improve the effectiveness of the advocacy community by establishing and strengthening relationships with other national organizations that have state affiliates in order to coordinate national and state level policy agendas and advocacy efforts
3. Using NACCRRA's Public Policy Committee and Membership and State Network Councils, create a 50-state strategy to enhance advocacy capacity and mentor CCR&R staff and new advocates
4. Support collaboration efforts with State Child Care Administrators, Head Start Collaboration Offices, and state licensing agencies at the state and local levels that ensure CCR&Rs have a voice in child care and early education policies

Goal 2: Inform, engage and support parents, grandparents and other family members to advance legislation and regulation that improve child care and early learning services.

NACCRRA's national surveys show that parents and grandparents are concerned about the cost and quality of child care, believe that state and federal government should be more involved in child care and early learning, and are willing to pay more in taxes to improve child care quality. This strong interest and support make parents and grandparents key allies in efforts to improve child care and early learning services. Families armed with information and advocacy tools are the most effective advocates for their children.

CCR&Rs are leaders in supporting and partnering with families to ensure all children reach their maximum potential.



CCR&Rs provide information and referrals to more than 7 million families each year. But today's parents are stressed, short on time and resources, and are increasingly reliant on the Web for information. To stay relevant, CCR&R services need to be responsive to changes in consumer expectations and new technology.

NACCRRA provides leadership in best practices for serving families. NACCRRA's Child Care Aware® provides phone and Web-based child care information and referrals to local CCR&Rs to over 1 million parents annually. The Child Care Aware® Parent Network and Parent Central provide parents and grandparents with resources to build interest and support for child care issues. Members of the Network also have opportunities to connect to policymakers, educators, child care providers and other parents through online communities. NACCRRA also provides established best practices standards for CCR&R family services and offers an integrated software solution to CCR&R members that allows them to track parent and provider data, provide parent referrals via phone and Web, and allow parents to take online tours of child care programs.

Objectives:

1. Establish NACCRRA's parent advocacy network as the most influential parent voice for child care policy and regulation reform at the state and national level
2. Develop and market new training and resources that increase parents' knowledge of child care and capacity to advocate for their own children
3. Establish a national advisory council of parents who inform NACCRRA's parent engagement efforts and serve as national spokespersons
4. Provide training and resources to CCR&Rs to support their capacity to inform and engage parents as advocates

Goal 3: Inform, engage and support media, business, government and nonprofit leaders to advance legislation and regulation that improve child care and early learning services.

High-quality child care benefits more than children and parents; it impacts all segments of the community. The role of community leaders as advocates in improving the overall state of child care has great potential. Businesses, financial institutions, legal and health care professionals, and the philanthropic community bring a collective expertise to child care issues that until recently has been missing from the national discourse over child care policies. Community leaders can be strong and influential advocates for high-quality child care.

CCR&Rs play a significant role in bringing child care and community leaders together. They educate policymakers at all levels of government on child care related issues.

NACCRRRA provides leadership in engaging media, business, government and nonprofit leaders to bring national attention to child care issues. State Networks and local CCR&Rs can leverage that attention by adding their data and information to make the news relevant in their states and communities. NACCRRRA also works with national partners to create and disseminate strong and consistent public policy messages that shape public perception about the importance of child care.

Objectives:

1. Build and sustain strategic alliances with nontraditional partners to expand NACCRRRA's ability to influence policy change
2. Build and sustain strategic media relationships to increase media coverage of child care issues and build public support for improved child care policy, regulation and funding
3. Establish a national advisory council of business leaders who inform NACCRRRA's business engagement strategies and serve as national spokespersons
4. Build and sustain relationships with policymakers, government officials and other partners to engage candidates for public office in the child care debate

Imperative III: High Functioning CCR&R

Rationale: State and local CCR&Rs are adequately funded, staffed and supported to deliver quality, accessible services nationwide.

Goal 1: Ensure there are adequately funded State Network and CCR&R systems in all 50 states.

CCR&Rs play an important role in helping parents find and afford child care, increasing the quality and supply of child care, and supporting business and community development. Adequately funded CCR&R systems deliver high-quality, accountable services that meet the needs of families and measurably improve state and local child care policies and services.

Strong State Networks ensure consistent, high-quality local CCR&R services and contribute to building and implementing state child care systems. State Networks provide training and technical assistance to CCR&Rs and coordinate statewide data collection and reporting. They are the delivery mechanism for statewide initiatives such as QRIS, infant-toddler and mental health specialist networks, and training and compensation programs for providers. State Networks also conduct public awareness and marketing efforts and advocate for good child care policies and funding.

NACCRRRA promotes the value of CCR&Rs and State Networks in all of its policy, practice, research and public engagement efforts. NACCRRRA works to establish support for CCR&R and State Network services and to identify new revenue and





cost-sharing opportunities such as its military partnerships and e-Learning initiative.

Objectives:

1. Develop and support executive level management training on financial management and governance for CCR&R leaders that ensure executives have the tools needed to appropriately manage CCR&Rs
2. Establish a national marketing strategy to increase the brand recognition of CCR&Rs and create a clearly identifiable link between NACCRRA, State Networks and local CCR&Rs
3. Establish national fund development goals and corporate sponsorship strategies that support high-performing state and local CCR&Rs
4. Develop and implement strategies to demonstrate the value-added of funded State Networks and actively promote funded State Networks in states without them

Goal 2: Build a continuous quality improvement system for State Networks and CCR&Rs.

NACCRRA has provided national leadership in establishing best practices for CCR&Rs and State Networks and creating a national certification system (Quality Assurance) to measure CCR&R and State Network quality.

NACCRRA's Quality Assurance program guides agencies towards continuous quality improvement and excellence in service delivery. CCR&Rs and State Networks need training and support to develop and sustain best practices and to achieve a high level of performance. Just as state QRIS are designed to help child care programs make measurable, incremental steps in program development, NACCRRA must continue to develop its best practices, Quality Assurance program, and training and technical assistance services to position CCR&Rs and State Networks as essential parts of the child care infrastructure in an increasingly competitive market.

Objectives:

1. Establish a national task force to evolve the current Quality Assurance program into a tiered quality improvement system for CCR&Rs and State Networks with defined components and levels
2. Identify incentives and a recognition program for CCR&Rs and State Networks that motivate them to move from one level of quality to the next
3. Establish a national baseline of CCR&R and State Network quality and an evaluation plan that measure the progress toward higher levels of quality service and penetration of use of CCR&R services

4. Develop and implement strategies to build State Child Care Administrator and other funding support for CCR&R and State Network participation in NACCRRA's tiered quality improvement system

Goal 3: Build a diverse and qualified CCR&R workforce.

CCR&Rs must promote and achieve a diverse workplace in order to attract and retain the best staff and provide effective services to communities with diverse needs. The CCR&R field has struggled to achieve adequate staff diversity at all levels of leadership and to articulate a clear career pathway for CCR&R professionals. The reasons are numerous: the child care field is primarily female; the history of CCR&R development attracted certain groups of women; and CCR&Rs and State Networks differ so dramatically across the country that it has been difficult to establish a core set of staff roles and competencies.

As the primary organizations in their states and communities that relate to all parts of the child care system, CCR&Rs must adequately prepare and diversify the workplace to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base. Current leaders in the field are nearing retirement; new technology continues to impact our way of doing business; and new organizations are competing to deliver services traditionally provided by CCR&Rs. The success or failure of CCR&Rs depends on our ability to successfully compete to satisfy our diverse customers.

NACCRRA will continue and intensify its efforts to support CCR&Rs and State Networks in preparing and diversifying its workforce. NACCRRA's organizational core competency best practices establish guidelines for effective staff recruitment and retention. NACCRRA's conferences, training and Leadership Development Program provide unique opportunities for CCR&R staff

development. The outcome of these and new efforts will be a diverse group of leaders who will help shape the future of CCR&R at the local, state and national level.

Objectives:

1. Conduct a national survey of the current CCR&R workforce, core positions and salaries paid in state and local agencies
2. Convene a national task force to draft standardized position descriptions, core competencies, professional requirements, caseload recommendations and salary ranges for each core position
3. Identify states or local areas where there is a lack of qualified and diverse candidates to fill positions and develop strategies to recruit or provide professional development opportunities to ensure a diverse and qualified workforce
4. Develop a targeted e-Learning program that provides senior-level management training specific to the needs of CCR&R and community-based organizations

Imperative IV: Data, Research and Technology

***Rationale:** Strategic use of data, research and technology informs and promotes NACCRRA's policy agenda and practices.*

Goal 1: Use CCR&R and other data to establish a national baseline on child care supply, potential need and cost, and other early learning services, and demonstrate measurable national progress.

Policymakers, program administrators and researchers need thorough, accurate data on child care and early learning services in order to make intelligent decisions about policies and funding.

CCR&R data is the core of CCR&R services. CCR&R is the only system that has nationwide data on child care supply and demand, the child care needs of families and the ongoing training needs of the child care workforce.

NACCRRA's research over the past several years has effectively harnessed CCR&R data to produce reports documenting the need, cost, quality and availability of child care in the United States. NACCRRA has also produced reports ranking state licensing regulations and polled parents, grandparents and the public to understand their perceptions of child care. NACCRRA will continue to build the body of knowledge about child care by publishing research-based reports documenting changes in quality, cost, availability and need.

Objectives:

1. Identify the supply and demand for child care and early learning services specifically identifying gaps in care for various age groups and populations and publish ongoing reports that track availability, cost, licensing and regulation, and make recommendations for future directions
2. Build the capacity of CCR&Rs to generate high-quality statewide data reports that use CCR&R and other data to describe and analyze child care supply, potential need and demand for higher quality care (nationally accredited or QRIS-rated) at the community and state level
3. Establish a baseline of the scope and characteristics of publicly subsidized unregulated and license-exempt care in each state relative to state subsidy policy and child care licensing and provide recommendations for how public dollars can best be invested to support children's early learning and healthy development
4. Examine the need for specific types of care and early learning services including nontraditional hour care, care in rural communities, infant-toddler care, care for children who come from non-English speaking families, and care for children with special needs and develop strategies to encourage the regulated care market to provide this care
5. Establish a rigorous agenda for developing and evaluating NACCRRA's programs, products and services and use findings to inform future policy, program and research efforts

Goal 2: Use original and existing research to demonstrate the value of and public support for quality child care and early learning services.

NACCRRA has positioned itself as the primary "go-to" source for child care information. Our reports have garnered significant media attention and spurred efforts to strengthen federal and state child care policy and regulation. NACCRRA's biannual ranking of state licensing requirements for child care centers and small family child care homes has helped to convince legislators to review and change regulations in several states. NACCRRA's annual reports documenting the high cost of child care have encouraged discussion about child care financing. Our national polls of parents and grandparents have shown the stark disparity in parents' beliefs about child care (they overwhelmingly think that caregivers are trained in child development and safety, undergo a background check, and that child care programs are inspected) and the truth – that our nation's child care policies and regulations most often do not protect children's basic health and safety. The polls have also proven that the majority of parents and grandparents are willing to pay more in taxes for public support of child care.

NACCRRA's research agenda will continue to be guided by our policy priorities. Our research will inform and support efforts to ensure that all children and families have access to safe, affordable, high-quality child care.

Objectives:

1. Refine ongoing licensing and cost of care reports to examine child care supply, demand and cost relative to quality indicators such as national accreditation or state QRIS
2. Support a research agenda that examines the stability of the child care supply and the retention over time of child care programs and develop strategies to stabilize the turnover of child care providers and programs
3. Examine the supply of care in low-income and rural communities and publish a report describing barriers to providing care and recommendations to increase the supply including financing strategies to ensure adequate child care facilities in these communities
4. Publish public opinion research that tracks changes in knowledge of and attitudes toward child care and early education issues over time

Goal 3: Use current and new technology to position NACCRRA and the CCR&R field now and for the future.

Technological advancements are happening daily and make information-sharing, personal networking, and data collection and reporting increasingly easy and sophisticated. Busy consumers look for information and services that they can access online and on demand. The challenge to CCR&Rs is to use emerging technologies to expand, rather than lose, our customer base of parents and providers

and build public recognition and support of CCR&R services.

NACCRRA is actively working to create solutions that meet the ever-changing needs of our field. NACCRRA's "Suite of Data Services" assists CCR&Rs with their core service of collecting and sharing data about parents and providers. NACCRRA's e-Learning Solution supports CCR&Rs' efforts to provide accessible, sequential training to the child care workforce. The Child Care Aware® Parent Network and Parent Central facilitate social networking and information sharing.

The drive for complex, integrated data to demonstrate results and accountability will continue to grow over the next several years. At the same time, consumer expectations for how easily they can access and control information will continue to rise. NACCRRA will use its expertise and partnerships to leverage new technology resources that provide CCR&Rs with a competitive advantage in an increasingly demanding environment.

Objectives:

1. Establish a multi-disciplinary national advisory committee that guides the direction of NACCRRA's technology strategy
2. Update Data Services Applications to support the capture of historical data and allow for data warehousing and shared data relationships
3. Enhance Data Services Applications to improve the user interface experience for internal and external users, facilitate real time data reports and enable multiple user groups to update their own records

4. Establish unified data definitions for all Data Services Applications to facilitate national reporting on key data elements
5. Engage the field in determining the feasibility and implications of establishing a national child care referral database and defining local, state and national utilization parameters

Imperative V: Organizational Advancement

***Rationale:** Organizational resources, structure and governance support accomplishment of strategic imperatives.*

Goal 1: Establish and make measurable progress toward reaching goals that ensure adequate and diverse funding for NACCRRA, model fund development best practices and build the capacity of CCR&Rs to develop diverse and sustainable funding.

CCR&Rs and State Networks provide vital services in their states and communities, and have an important role in advocating for better child care and other early care and learning services. Continued funding is critical to the achievement of NACCRRA's organizational mission and goals. The continued stability and viability of NACCRRA and the CCR&R system depend on strong financial management practices and a diverse funding base.

NACCRRA provides CCR&Rs with guidance on best practices in fund development and offers training and support to help CCR&Rs and State Networks better market and raise funds. NACCRRA is committed to building positive relationships with potential and current funders and with stakeholders who have a share in influencing child care funding and has successfully partnered with federal agencies, foundations

and national organizations. NACCRRA will continue to explore new partnerships and funding opportunities that benefit NACCRRA and CCR&Rs – with special emphasis on new business development opportunities that can provide sustained, unrestricted revenue to NACCRRA and its CCR&R members.

Objectives:

1. Using NACCRRA's Board Fund Development Committee, establish measurable objectives for fund diversification and best practices for NACCRRA, state and local CCR&Rs
2. Broker national partnerships that produce revenue sharing opportunities for NACCRRA and its member CCR&Rs
3. Develop financial models for all NACCRRA initiatives and model best practices for CCR&Rs
4. Provide fund development training and technical assistance to CCR&R members

Goal 2: Establish and implement policies and practices that ensure a qualified and diverse Board of Directors, staff and Membership and State Network Councils.

Qualified and diverse staff, Board of Directors, and Membership and State Network Councils ensure that NACCRRA's policies and practices are relevant, competitive and address the needs of diverse consumers.

To fulfill NACCRRA's mission of ensuring access to quality child care and other early learning services and supporting CCR&Rs, we need the expertise of representatives from a broad range of sectors and perspectives, including CCR&R, parents, providers, business, financial, legal, technology, media, policy and philanthropy. We also need representatives from diverse cultural

backgrounds who offer knowledge about the cultural contexts of the communities they serve. The success or failure of our field depends on our ability to successfully compete to satisfy our diverse customers.

Objectives:

1. Establish a talent recruitment and development program for NACCRRA and the CCR&R field
2. Establish and implement a Board plan for ensuring the diversity of skills and backgrounds needed to position NACCRRA for advancement
3. Develop a matrix of skill sets needed to operate an effective CCR&R and create model CCR&R recruitment, hiring and retention policies
4. Establish and implement a plan to ensure the appropriate structure and composition for engaged and effective Membership and State Network Councils

Goal 3: Establish and implement policies and practices that create brand identity and fidelity across the nationwide system of CCR&R.

The CCR&R field has benefited from its flexibility in conforming to state or local needs. As a result, CCR&Rs vary widely in structure, size and service provision across the country. Individual CCR&Rs or State Networks within the CCR&R system are well known within their communities and have established a brand identity: their consumers are aware of their services and have a clear image of them. Yet, as a field, CCR&R in many ways continues to be a “best kept secret.” Inconsistent branding (most CCR&Rs do not use “child care resource and referral” in their names) and inconsistent types

and levels of services inhibit our ability to establish a national identity that is widely recognized and valued by consumers.

In order to remain competitive, NACCRRA must work with its CCR&R members to drive consistency in branding and high-quality service delivery. NACCRRA will continue to enhance and grow its Quality Assurance program to support and promote a nationally recognized standard of high-quality CCR&R and State Network services. We will develop partnerships with CCR&R members to establish branding consistency and continue to provide national leadership in garnering media attention to the key role that CCR&Rs play in addressing critical child care issues.

Objectives:

1. Create unique value proposition statements for CCR&R approved by the Councils and the Board and develop and implement a communications and marketing plan for promoting the value of CCR&R that includes national, state and local strategies
2. Establish criteria for allowing state and local CCR&Rs to use the Child Care Aware® brand and develop and implement a communications and marketing strategy for promoting Child Care Aware® as the public face of CCR&R
3. Develop national to state to local business models that provide revenue sharing opportunities for CCR&Rs moving to higher levels of quality and tied to a national brand recognition strategy

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Endnotes

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