

Opportunity
Council
Child Care
Resource and
Referral Program

2007 Annual Report

JULY 2008



Child Care Resource & Referral

Opportunity Council Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is one of eleven child care resource and referral programs of Washington State. These programs are part of the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (R&R Network) and have four main areas of focus including:

- Referrals for families to licensed child care and other community resources, along with information on choosing quality care;
- Training, coaching, onsite and telephone

technical assistance, referrals to families and other supports for those who care for children;

- Collaborative community partnerships to increase the capacity of the early learning system; and
- Collection and analysis of comprehensive child care supply and demand data.

R&R core services are offered in collaboration with and funded primarily through the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL).

Services to Families

Providing services to help meet the child care needs of families residing in Whatcom, Island and San Juan Counties is the highest priority for CCR&R. This has been accomplished through a variety of helpful and convenient services including:

- Serving families through a toll-free telephone hotline (staffed a minimum of 25 hours per week by trained personnel), we provide parents, family members, guardians and the general public with child care consumer education and referrals to child care and community resources. In 2007 we conducted referral searches to match 846 families with providers in their community. CCR&R not only provides high quality, family-centered child

care consumer education and individualized child care referrals, but also addresses families' overall needs by providing information, resources, education, and referrals to many programs.

Programs and services offered through CCR&R include:

- 211, food education and outreach,
- Born Learning (funded by the Born Learning campaign);
- Child nutrition program (funded by Child and Adult Care Food Program);

• Onsite parenting support and coaching;

- Community voicemail;
- Early intervention and school-age screening information (funded by Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program);
- Enhanced military referrals;
- Emergency and homeless child care (funded by United Way and DEL respectively);
- Energy assistance, home repair/ weatherization (funded by Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program);
- Head Start/ Early Head Start/ Early Childhood Education Assistance Program;
- Homeless housing/ transitional housing/ rental assistance;
- Community playgroups; and
- School supply bank.

Opportunity Council Child Care Resource & Referral (R&R) program has provided comprehensive services to Island, San Juan and Whatcom County families and child care providers for nearly 20 years.



To act as a catalyst for change, both in the community and in the lives of the people we serve

Services to Child Care Providers

CCR&R helps child caregivers provide quality care by helping them meet training requirements and competency standards. We do this by:

- Supporting child care providers with a toll-free telephone provider line currently maintained a minimum of 25 hours a week, five days a week. Provider services staff answer questions, find local trainings and connect callers with other helpful resources. In 2007 CCR&R responded to over 3,000 provider phone and email contacts.

- Providing onsite technical assistance and coaching, helping providers meet minimum licensing requirements and assisting them to enhance the quality of care. In 2007 we provided 191 hours of onsite consultation in child care programs.

- Issuing a quarterly newsletter, *Love for a Living*, featuring articles in both English and Spanish. Articles include information on topics such as advocacy, financing (including grant opportunities and helpful hints to successfully manage a business budget), child development, nutrition, professional learning opportunities (including community-based trainings and higher education courses), and events held throughout Whatcom, Island, and San Juan counties that support early care and education.

- Providing licensing application assistance in collaboration with DEL, to individuals interested in becoming providers. We provide current and potential licensees with information about R&R services through community-wide outreach, DEL sponsored orientation sessions, and professional development opportunities. In 2007, CCR&R provided license application assistance to 21 child care programs.

- Offering child care providers statistical data to help them better evaluate their business models. In order to offer this service to the best of our ability, CCR&R maintains an accurate and thorough database. In 2007 we were recognized for the second time by the R&R Network, receiving the "Quality Data Collection Award" for excellence in data collection and maintenance in a small agency.

- Maintaining a lending library, consisting of books, games, puzzles, CD's, puppets,

classroom activities, professional development videotapes, preschool theme kits, and other educational materials, available to all providers and families. CCR&R encourages providers to make appointments to visit the lending library to reserve and borrow materials. Consultants will deliver items to child care sites when conducting onsite consultation visits.

- Publishing a 2007 training calendar, describing child care trainings that met both the initial 20-hour course (offered as both an in-class session and distance learning) and the 10-hour continuing education requirement. In 2007, CCR&R directly provided or partnered with other STARS training organizations to provide a total of 20 trainings with an average attendance of 19 providers at each session.

- Partnering with local community colleges to offer Building Bridges to Higher Education Modules. The modules encompass classroom education, onsite mentoring/consultation, STARS continuing education and college credit. During winter and spring 2007 quarters, Opportunity Council CCR&R was the lead agency for all modules. Beginning fall quarter, Whatcom Community College (WCC) became the lead agency for modules taught at WCC, whereas CCR&R maintained the status of lead agency for modules taught at Northwest Indian College (NWIC) and Skagit Valley College (SVC). All courses were offered with local county educators and consultants.

- Co-hosting an annual conference, *Focus on Children*, which promotes networking among early childhood educators and invites them to attend workshops focusing on issues pertinent to early care and education.



The ultimate goal is to help ensure all children are safe, healthy, nurtured, learning and having fun in child care as they prepare for kindergarten.



Community partnerships

Opportunity Council CCR&R maintains strong, enduring, collaborative relationships. Housed in a Community Action agency, we have consistently partnered with community members, and have incorporated the philosophy that no one organization can work in isolation, as the following examples show.

Whatcom County Early Learning Systems Network Business Leadership Luncheon

—Since 2007, CCR&R has facilitated the early learning coalition planning team for an event featuring Mr. Bill Gates Sr. as keynote speaker. Opportunity Council was the fiscal agent and lead agency in the development of the Whatcom Business Leaders for Early Learning model.

Communities in Schools—CCR&R Coordinator co-chairs the Program Committee and serves on the founding board of directors.

NW Early Learning Advisory Panel—The CCR&R Director was elected as a founding co-chair to facilitate this five county (Island, San Juan, Whatcom, Snohomish and Skagit) early learning coalition. As a result of this partnership, a

Kids Matter Framework/logic model was developed for the 5 county region and each individual county as well as a Business Plan (supported by a Build/Kids Matter Venture Grant) to be used as a tool for both county and regional early learning coalitions.

Community Colleges (Northwest Indian College, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and Skagit Valley College Whidbey Island Campus)

—CCR&R partnered with these colleges to offer STARS credit, Bridges Modules, and other professional learning opportunities for child care providers.

Health Departments and School Districts—CCR&R partnered with the two entities in order to provide fee-for-service onsite consultation to support families in meeting their child care and child development needs.

City and County Libraries—CCR&R collaborated with libraries in our three-county area in order to provide curricula via preschool theme kits for child care providers and parents/families.

DSHS/CSO—CCR&R partnered with Opportunity Council's co-located financial worker to create a

one-stop enrollment model for families to access state supports including the Working Connections Child Care Subsidy.

Department of Early Learning—Not only does Opportunity Council's CCR&R meet with DEL licensing staff and supervisor on a quarterly basis, but also has created a network in order to receive referrals from licensors concerning child care providers who would greatly benefit as a result of our onsite consultation services. CCR&R also partners with DEL to help coordinate monthly Whatcom Center Director Association meetings.

Department of Children and Family Services—CCR&R partnered with DCFS in order to provide immediate child care and other referrals for children who were either removed from their families or reunited with them.

Working with our community partners, we strive to reach all children and continue developing interconnected systems to provide access, marketing and support of services to families and caregivers to support school readiness.

Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network

The Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (R&R Network) is a statewide 501(c)(3) organization created in 1989 to establish a strong, community-based infrastructure for integrated early childhood and school-age care and education support services in Washington State. The R&R Network is a public/private partnership and system of local child care resource and referral member programs established in statute by the Washington State Legislature in 1986.

While the local R&Rs provide direct services to families, caregivers and community partners, the R&R Network office supports the R&R programs and host organizations through:

- Supporting local R&R programs to implement best practices;
- Managing the local R&R core services contracts;
- Collecting, compiling and disseminating data on early learning to inform policy and program development;
- Raising funds for the early learning system in Washington State;
- Advocating for state and federal public policies that improve the well-being of children and families, and
- Promoting professional development opportunities for caregivers, through the WA Scholarships for Child Care Professionals program, among other initiatives.

Contact the WA State
Child Care Resource
& Referral Network:
www.childcarenet.org
(800) 446-1114

Looking Ahead

On August 1, 2008 the R&R Network transformed from 18 to 11 R&R programs across the state to better leverage statewide and local resources. Opportunity Council's CCR&R program continues to serve Whatcom, Island, and San Juan counties.

CCR&R has conducted community partner surveys and focus groups and reviewed community assessments that have identified parent and family needs for child care and parenting information and services. With this information, Opportunity Council's R&R will work directly to address future family and child needs by:

- **Conducting additional community needs assessments**—for our existing three-county region, in order to gain a better understanding of the best way to direct and leverage resources.
- **Adapting current services**—CCR&R will adjust its current services, based on the aforementioned community needs assessments and



responding to expressed parent/family and provider needs in order to ensure the most effective use of its limited resources.

- **Expanding involvement in early childhood collaborative efforts throughout our three-county region**—Opportunity Council is the fiscal agent and lead agency in the development of the Whatcom Business Leaders for Early Learning model. The Whatcom County Business Partnership for Early Learning will share this model, and its developing business plan, with Island and San Juan Counties early learning coalitions as they plan their next step, reaching out to business and community policy makers.
- **Securing additional resources**—Opportunity Council's R&R has a strong record of seeking and securing financial

resources to address documented community needs. Past efforts have led to the development of additional programs including, but not limited to: emergency and homeless child care, Collaboration for Children, and a substitute bank for child care providers.

- **Seamless services**—Exploring ways to ensure that services for families and providers are offered seamlessly with neighboring child care resource and referral programs.
- **Developing a communication hub**—for parents and child care providers in our service delivery area that will provide short and long-term resources, training, and information. This will be completed via a combination of technology and on the ground support, utilizing experts from each of the three counties that we serve.
- **Moving into implementation of innovative programming**—to support the family, friend and neighbor caregivers who serve the diverse populations of our three-county area.

In order to learn more about and actively influence public policy pertaining to quality child care and early learning, contact your Washington State legislature. You can find your legislature online at: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx>