



Washington State Department of  
**Early Learning**

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# Report to the Governor and Legislature June 30, 2009

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Director



**Kids' Potential, Our Purpose**



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# Introduction

I am pleased to present this report offering an update on the work of the Department of Early Learning (DEL). Inside this report, you will find sections that respond specifically to information requested in the 2008 supplemental operating budget regarding the: 1) Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network, and 2) Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS). We conclude with a review of the initiatives that move us into the 2009-2011 biennium.

DEL was created with the belief that a world-class educational system and a state's competitiveness in the global marketplace require the availability of high-quality early learning opportunities for young children and their families. It is critical to the productivity of our work force and the economic vitality of our state. Most importantly, it is the right thing to do. Further, recent research about the developing brain shows that what happens in the first few years and months of a child's life sets the stage for lifelong learning. Finally, investments in high-quality early childhood programs yield significant benefits to children and financial benefits to families and our society.

This report from DEL focuses on finding quality child care for families and supporting the professional development of early educators. Because the child care system in this country operates on a market basis, finding and affording child care is often a major challenge for parents. Because programs are largely dependent on what parents can afford to pay, wages for child care providers and teachers are generally low, resulting in high rates of turnover and limited education and training among workers.

We must address these challenges. As we move forward in these difficult economic times, we seek ways to enhance efficiencies while creating stronger outcomes for children and families, and beneficial integrations across programs. We are looking to research to make sure our work is grounded in evidence-based practices and that the programs we fund can demonstrate positive early learning outcomes for children and families.

Improving early learning outcomes requires that we embrace:

- Clear, shared outcomes for what we want our children to learn.
- Quality professional development for providers and teachers in the field.
- Supports for families.
- Ongoing accountability of our efforts to ensure we are improving the learning and support of all children and families.

This report addresses the last three of these areas and responds to the reporting requirements specified in the 2008 supplemental operating budget (Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2687) regarding:

*Administration of the State Training and Registry System, and the evaluation of the Child Care Resource and Referral Network in providing information to parents and training and technical assistance to child care providers.*

I thank you for your continued support of our children. We are confident that supporting our state's youngest learners is a worthwhile, impactful investment indeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Hyde". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth M. Hyde, Ph.D.  
Director, Department of Early Learning



# State Training and Registry System (STARS)

## I. Background

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) provides funding for the Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS), a system that offers training opportunities for early care and education professionals that prepare them to offer high-quality early learning experiences for children.

STARS has been a child care requirement since 1999. All family child care providers, as well as directors, program supervisors, site coordinators and lead staff in center and school-age programs are required to participate in STARS and meet predefined requirements. Aides, assistants, substitutes and volunteers are encouraged, but not required, to participate. DEL licensors determine the most appropriate job title for the purposes of licensing and licensing requirements. This section addresses language in the 2008 state supplemental operating budget directing DEL to present to the Governor and Legislature the following review:

*“Administration of the state training and registry system, including annual expenditures, participants, and average hours of training provided per participant.”*

## II. Administrations of STARS

STARS emerged from a need of both child care providers and families in the late 1980s for increased training and compensation to improve the quality of care for children. In 1997, the Legislature directed the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to adopt rules to require annual training for child care providers.

Currently STARS is administered by a contract between DEL and the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC). WAEYC administers STARS scholarships, trainer and training approval, and provider services. This work includes collecting and entering provider and training data into the STARS database, commonly referred to as the Registry. DEL owns and maintains the Registry. DEL licensors are responsible for regulating and ensuring licensed child care providers meet STARS training requirements. Licensors accomplish this during their regular monitoring visits to facilities.

## III. Expenditures for STARS

Funding for STARS originates from federal resources under the Child Care and

Development Fund (CCDF) block grant. DEL provided funding for STARS to the Washington Association for young children in the 2007-2009 biennium totaling \$2,438,464.

This funding supported child care providers primarily through scholarships and registration fees for professional development conferences (48 percent of funds) and for Registry participant support and data collection and entry (20 percent). Additional funds were used for trainer approval, training, training monitoring, and supporting training quality and other administration. A small percentage (less than 1 percent) supported seeking stakeholder input through surveys and/or focus groups.

#### IV. Participants in STARS

Due to limitations with the current database, it is not known how many of the providers added each year have actively maintained provider status. For example, a provider could have been added to the Registry in 2004 and then exited the field in 2007 to pursue other opportunities. This provider’s record could still count toward the cumulative numbers added to the Registry to date.

The STARS Registry tracks the number of child care providers that enter the system on an annual basis. Since 2005 the following data on participants are available.

Year	Number of Providers Added to STARS Registry
2005	7,655
2006	7,327
2007	7,229
2008	8,291

#### V. Average hours of training provided per participant

Currently, the system cannot provide the average hours of training provided per participant (see section VI below). Data relevant to this question that are available follow below.

Training Category	2005	2008
Providers completing 20-hour basic training	2,989	2,732
Providers granted educational exemption for 20-hour basic training	1,001	643
Providers completing 10 hours of continuing education	8,271	8,568



## VI. Current status of the STARS Registry

DEL acquired the STARS Registry from DSHS in July 2008. DEL identified a contractor to conduct a thorough review of the capabilities and limitations of the Registry, and to gather recommendations from stakeholders related to improving the Registry's functionality.

DEL staff worked closely with DSHS Economic Services Administration staff during the transition of the Registry from DSHS to DEL and developed improvements for the database during the transition. Even with these improvements, several challenges still exist:

- The system relies on paper documents for input and is not a Web-based platform. Inputting the data into the system from paper increases the potential for errors.
- No standard reports are available and the process for producing a report is time-consuming. For example, if we want to know how many providers participated in a specific training in 2008, we would have to hand count the information.
- Data are not validated in the system. For example, there are many different ways to enter the same type of information and the few rules that exist do not guard against duplication.
- Data are not always accurate and linkages do not exist between individual providers and facilities. For example, a provider can move from one facility to another and that information would not follow him or her.
- Due to problems with data integrity, many agencies around the state duplicate functions and data tracked by the STARS Registry. For example, local child care resource and referral agencies store independent information on trainings.

DEL has convened a STARS workgroup to identify necessary updates to the Registry, including the generation of accurate and functional reports that better serve the various users. The goal for this workgroup is to identify elements that can be immediately improved to increase functionality and clarity for STARS Registry users. Additionally, the STARS workgroup will identify specific reporting elements that various users require, including DEL child care licensors, providers, trainers and training organizations.

## VII. The Registry role in a professional development system

A functional and integrated STARS Registry is a key component of the larger



professional development system. The primary users of the STARS Registry are child care providers, child care directors, licensors, and trainers and training organizations.

Child care owners and providers require tracking and documentation of individual training and education, as well as the ability to search for training throughout the state. Licensors need to be able to monitor compliance with state requirements. Training organizations need the ability to post offerings and report participation. Ultimately, parents will be able to identify options that respond to their specific child care needs and questions.

In addition to primary users, stakeholders and policy makers use Registry data for policy and systems planning. For example, stakeholders may want to access data to determine training trends over time, or determine which training organizations are providing the majority of training in a local area.

Currently, the Professional Development Consortium, a subgroup of DEL's Early Learning Advisory Council, is reviewing what our state requires to build an integrated professional development system.

## **VIII. What's next for STARS**

A robust Registry could provide many functions, including capturing and storing essential workforce information and establishing defined pathways that tie to licensing. The data could identify trends in training participation, achievement of degrees and other advancement that link to other foundational professional development elements including core knowledge areas and career pathways. These data can inform policy decisions regarding investments related to work force development.

Also, registries can serve the purpose of verification and quality assurance. A Registry with automated functions would better allow monitoring and improving training quality. A system of verification for individual trainings is critical to ensure that the content delivered is current, accurate and linked to state standards. The STARS workgroup will provide recommendations to DEL by August 31, 2009. This will upgrade and ensure that many of the current challenges are addressed. However the recommendations for a full and integrated Registry would not occur until the Professional Development Consortium recommendations are due in December 2010.

The current STARS Registry addresses some of our state's needs, such as an approval process for trainers and training organizations. However, more work is needed to integrate system elements and to ensure that quality trainings based on defined standards are offered around the State of Washington and linked to the larger professional development system with clear career pathways. If after careful deliberation and discussion, the STARS registry cannot be modified to meet these purposes, a different tracking system will need to be pursued.



# Child Care Resource & Referral

## I. Background

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) contracts with the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R Network) to deliver several core services throughout the state to support quality child care options for families.

This section addresses language in the 2008 state supplemental operating budget directing DEL to present to the Governor and Legislature the following review:

*“An evaluation of the child care resource and referral network in providing information to parents and training and technical assistance to child care providers.”*

It should be noted that in Washington, both federal and state funds support child care resource and referral services. Federal rules require that a minimum of 4 percent of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funds be used to improve the quality of child care and offer additional services to parents. In addition, CCDF provides targeted funds for specific activities, including child care resource and referral. These resource and referral services specifically related to child care can be operated directly by the lead agency or through the provision of CCDF dollars to another allowable entity.

DEL meets this requirement by partnering with the CCR&R Network. During the 2007-2009 biennium, DEL supported the CCR&R Network with \$7,071,614 in CCDF funding (\$6,371,614 for the core research and referral services, \$700,000 for the Washington Scholars program). In addition, \$452,000 of state general funds targeted to culturally relevant supports were contracted by DEL to the CCR&R Network for Play & Learn groups. The State Legislature also provided \$1.7 million in state funding through DEL to support the CCR&R Network. The CCR&R Network uses various funding sources to:

- Help families clarify their care needs, identify quality settings, and find child care through matching referrals.
- Provide training and resources to licensed and license-exempt caregivers.
- Work with nonprofit, government, and business partners in local communities to build the capacity of the child care system.
- Collect and disseminate child care supply and demand data.

DEL and the CCR&R Network work together at the local, state and regional levels. Through a contract with DEL, the CCR&R Network helps support DEL’s mission of helping ensure safe, healthy, accessible child care options

around the state. The two entities also work together to offer common messaging to parents and providers about the importance of parents as a child's first teacher, the hallmarks of child care quality, the role of licensing in ensuring child safety, and the importance of provider professional development.

The CCR&R Network includes 11 regional CCR&R programs plus the statewide CCR&R Network office, which collectively employ about 100 staff (55 FTEs). These staff members provide core services statewide. CCR&R staff serve in 20 locations around the state, ensuring a community-based presence.

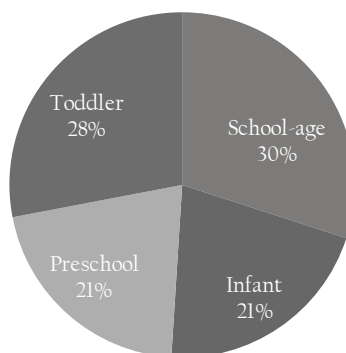
In a 2008 child care market rate survey, DEL found that 166,480 children (15 percent of the total number of children in Washington) were enrolled in child care. A total of 46,806 children (28 percent of all children in care) received state-funded child care subsidies through the Working Connections Child Care program.

The CCR&R Network found that in 2008, 19,627 (61 percent) of the children they served live in low-income households (earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level). All low-income families are served free of charge.

## II. How does Child Care Resource & Referral provide information to parents?

In 2008, more than 20,000 families who received referrals also received consumer education information about how to choose child care. The CCR&R Network Web site and each of the 11 CCR&R program Web sites include child care consumer education. The CCR&R Network is one source that DEL uses to provide families with information and connections to appropriate local and state resources as required under the federal CCDF rules.

### Children referred by age group, 2008





In SFY 2009, the CCR&R programs coordinated FFN planning and service delivery for communities in 25 of Washington’s 39 counties. More than 2,500 parents and FFN caregivers participated directly in these services in SFY2009, including Play & Learn groups, community cafés, home visits, and school readiness activities. The diverse population served included parents, grandparents, neighbors, and relatives, who consider themselves to be Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander and/or Native American.

*What do parents tell us about the usefulness of the information they’ve received from CCR&R?*

The CCR&R Network contacted more than 1,900 parents who used CCR&R services in 2007 to participate in a survey. A total of 552 responded, for a response rate of 29 percent.

Survey data indicated that the majority of parents (88.5 percent) who contacted their CCR&R by phone received the information they requested and 90 percent were satisfied with the services received. In addition, 94.7 percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the CCR&R staff responded helpfully to their questions and concerns.

Parents were asked to rate their knowledge on seven aspects of child care before and after their contact with the CCR&R. For each of the seven aspects, parents reported an increase in knowledge after contacting their CCR&R.

<b>Child care knowledge</b>	<b>BEFORE</b>	<b>AFTER</b>
I know the steps I need to take to find child care	52.3%	91.3%
I know about different child care options (types of care)	55.9%	86.0%
I know what a quality child care provider looks like	66.9%	88.2%
I know what my family needs from a child care provider	80.9%	94.3%
I know how to find a child care provider that meets my family’s needs	54.1%	85.8%
I know about options to help pay for child care	36.2%	49.0%
I know where to get information about child care rules and regulations	41.5%	73.5%

*Percent saying they definitely or mostly had the information, before and after receiving CCR&R services.*

These findings are consistent with prior year evaluations conducted in 2003 and 2005. In light of these results, the CCR&R Network intends to work with referral counselors to enhance the services they provide for families. These plans are discussed in Section IV.

### III. How does Child Care Resource and Referral provide training and technical assistance to child care providers?

In SFY 2009, the CCR&R Network delivered 5,333 hours of onsite consultation to child care facilities (currently licensed and license applicants) through its contract with DEL. About 10 percent of those hours addressed DEL-identified licensing concerns (DEL had referred the facility to its local CCR&R program for technical assistance). The other 90 percent of the hours were provider-initiated, for assistance in becoming licensed and for quality enhancement. Approximately two-thirds of the hours were delivered in family child care homes; the remaining one-third were provided to centers and school-age care programs.

DEL contracts with the CCR&R Network to deliver at least 940 hours of state-mandated State Training and Registry System (STARS) training to licensed child care providers each year. By leveraging state and local partnerships in calendar year 2008, the CCR&R Network provided more than 2,500 hours of STARS ongoing training, covering topics across all 11 of the STARS core competency areas. In addition, the CCR&R Network provided 1,140 hours of initial STARS 20-hour training requirements.

#### *What do providers tell us about the usefulness of the training & technical assistance they've received from Child Care Resource and Referral?*

The CCR&R Network contacted a representative sample of 3,561 licensed child care programs to participate in a survey. A total of 986 providers responded from around the state, for a response rate of 29.9 percent. More than half (54.7 percent) of the providers reported having worked in the child care field for more than 10 years. Three-quarters (76 percent) of the providers were from western Washington.

The majority of survey respondents (65.1 percent) were child care business owners (most owning a family child care business). Another 24.1 percent were child care center directors, and 6.2 percent were program supervisors or teachers.

Respondents indicated they had received the information or service they were seeking when they contacted the CCR&R program, with 73.2 percent responding "yes." When asked what changed for them as a result of their contact with the CCR&R program, most mentioned that they were getting more calls from families looking for care, they were able to find resources to help their enrolled families, and they accessed training classes and materials.

About 91 percent indicated that they were satisfied with the services they received from their CCR&R program, and 94.4 percent reported that the CCR&R staff responded helpfully to their questions and concerns.



## IV. Proposed next steps—Support for parents

In light of the survey results, the CCR&R Network intends to work with referral counselors to:

- Ensure that they have extensive knowledge of options to help pay for child care, including local subsidized options.
- Explore ways to ensure children are receiving quality care if parents cannot afford a formal child care setting.
- Provide additional information to families about child care rules and regulations.
- Provide additional information to families about opportunities available in local communities.

These findings also offer ways in which DEL and the CCR&R Network can collaborate to strengthen the child care system through selective investments that would support parents, such as increasing the training available to providers in order for families with children with special needs to have more child care options.

## V. Proposed next steps—Support for providers

The same survey asked providers what services they would like their CCR&R to offer to parents. Providers' responses were similar to those of parents:

- Information for parents about what to look for when choosing child care.
- Information about education, experience, program, ratio, licensing regulations, accreditation and other licensing-related issues.
- Information to help parents of children with special needs find care.
- Increased access for parents to parenting classes, child development information and ways to support healthy child development.
- More information for parents on how to get assistance paying for child care.

For themselves, providers suggested the following services:

- More advanced level of STARS training classes.
- More support for providers in rural areas.
- Grants or loans to support their businesses.
- Peer mentoring and networking opportunities.
- Help navigating the subsidy system.

Providers also ranked how important several services would be if they were available through CCR&R programs. On a three-point scale, the services ranked in order of importance are:

- Equipment for playground upgrades (2.70).

- STARS training opportunities (2.62).
- Loans for remodeling to meet WAC requirements (2.28).
- Support for going through accreditations (2.26).
- Service of a substitute back—a locally maintained list of available trained and licensing approved substitute teachers/child care workers that can be called upon to temporarily fill a staff position (2.19).
- Expanded hours of telephone service assistance (1.96).

DEL has asked for more information from the CCR&R Network about the extent and frequency of consultation and the topics covered by consultants. In SFY2010, the CCR&R Network will work with DEL to phase in implementation of software to document technical assistance. This will integrate seamlessly with the CCR&R Network's current data collection and referral software.

Also in SFY 2010, with private funding, the CCR&R Network will launch a new research-based training framework called the Early Childhood Academy. The goal of the Academy is to increase the quality, effectiveness, and accessibility of comparable training available through the CCR&R system statewide. The Academy framework includes both breadth and depth of offerings for providers as well as trainer support and will intentionally align with the work of the Professional Development Consortium convened by DEL.

## **VI. Proposed next steps—Systems change**

In addition to services for families and providers, the CCR&R Network focuses on strengthening community partnerships.

Over the years, DEL, the CCR&R Network and other major partners have been engaged in a strategic planning and transformation process to improve the quality of the State's early learning system.

The CCR&R Network supports the work of DEL by serving as an information center for early childhood stakeholders at the local, regional, statewide and national levels. CCR&R participates in all the early learning coalitions and promotes parents' perspective and a community voice.

DEL and the CCR&R Network are developing a mutual Memorandum of Understanding with the intent of expanding the partnership to increase the number of and extend the availability of trainings for providers.



## Next steps for DEL

DEL appreciates and welcomes the interest in its progress, accomplishments, and challenges. We view our future with great anticipation for success and outcomes. Our areas of focus for the 2009-2011 biennium include the following:

- Develop, in partnership with constituents, a statewide system for quality programs and services for children, birth through age 5.
- Assess “real life” outcomes and promote accountability for children, families and providers in all DEL contracts and partnerships.
- Review and revise the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks and ensure they are officially in place statewide.
- Describe competencies/skills expected of early educators and develop a system for supporting statewide professional development.
- Expand P-3 partnerships with OSPI.
- Expand and renew public/private partnerships with Thrive By Five Washington and others.
- Expand infant and toddler child care services and account for results.
- Expand integration of services for children with disabilities and other special needs.
- Work cooperatively OSPI, higher education, the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program, and the state Department of Information Services to develop a longitudinal data system for children.
- Increase the visibility of early learning for the general public, funders and the media.
- Reorganize DEL around the three core constituents we serve—children, families and early childhood educators and caregivers.





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