



STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2019



VISION

Every family in the United States has access to a high quality, affordable child care system.

MISSION

We advance a child care system that effectively serves all children and families.

The child care system supports children's growth, development and educational advancement and creates positive economic impact for families and communities.

Our work is strengthened by a national network of child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and diverse members and partners.

PRINCIPLES

We believe the earliest years of a child's life are the most critical and represent the single most important investment for communities, states and the nation, requiring significant leadership, focus and funding.

We believe families are children's most important teachers. In partnership with families, nurturing, responsive, knowledgeable child care teachers create dynamic learning opportunities and are essential to creating the foundation for children's long term success.

We believe the public and private sector must invest in and promote the quality and availability of child care programs that support children's health and development. Families and child care businesses should not bear the full cost of quality child care.

We believe - because of disparities among groups of children - programs and policies should be designed, resourced and implemented to deliver equitable outcomes for all children in all communities.

We believe that strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations are essential to proactively leverage resources, maximize expertise, and create greater gains for children and families.

We believe decision makers on child care systems, services, policies and funding must have access to clear data and strong research to inform their choices.





STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

SERVE AS A NATIONAL LEADER ON THE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY OF QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS FOR ALL CHILDREN

RATIONALE

Families can experience significant challenges accessing quality child care. Child care is a major expense in family budgets, often exceeding the cost of housing, food and transportation. The cost is formidable; the average cost of full-time care for an infant at a child care center is higher than the average cost of in-state tuition at a public 4-year college. Many families also struggle to find child care that meets their needs; high quality programs are difficult to find and typically have long waiting lists. These challenges are compounded for low-income families, those in high poverty communities, families with children with special needs, and families who need care during non-traditional hours.



Child Care Aware® of America will **develop and lead implementation of groundbreaking new solutions** to meet the needs of children, families and communities. We will:

- *Design innovative new strategies to address affordability and quality*

Convene and collaborate with national leaders to lead innovation, challenge the status quo and design new strategies to address access, affordability, quality and equity. Ensure this work is supported by strong research and data.

- *Create sustained opportunities for dialogue and problem solving*

Lead conversations of thought leaders that elevate and amplify best practices and promising new solutions to better meet the needs of diverse children, families and communities.

Child Care Aware® of America will **engage its diverse network of stakeholders** to disseminate innovative new strategies. We will:

- *Broadly disseminate innovative recommendations*

Innovative, solution-focused resources will be shared broadly through meetings with policy and program leaders, at conferences, and through diverse distribution channels.

- *Engage new partners around strategies*

Strategic seeding of these ideas will occur in non-traditional forums - such as at gatherings of business leaders, foundations, law enforcement, philanthropic foundations, and/or faith leaders - to expand the reach of the message and engage new champions.

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

LEAD DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE, EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT CHILD CARE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

RATIONALE

The child care system stands at a crossroads. After decades of advocacy by Child Care Aware® of America, its member organizations, and many partners, significant reforms have been made recently that will strengthen basic health and safety protections, better meet the needs of low-income families, and increase the focus on quality. States and local communities will be the places where these reforms will be developed and tested. It will require creativity, entrepreneurship, and a deep understanding of assets and challenges to ensure the new programs and policies meet the needs of children and families and maximize the potential of the early years.

Child Care Aware® of America will continue to serve as a **national leader on child care policy implementation and partnerships** among federal funding sources (e.g., Child Care and Development Block Grant, Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships, Pre-K, Head Start, school age funding) and related investments (e.g., health, obesity prevention, emergency preparedness). We will:

- ***Pinpoint opportunities***

Develop resources and learning opportunities to explain the different funding streams, eligibility requirements, and how these funding streams can be aligned in states and communities to improve program quality.

- ***Highlight innovative funding models***

Research best practices in funding partnerships, publish briefs and fact sheets, host webinars and sponsor other modes of publicizing innovative practices.

- ***Expand knowledge of pioneering strategies to address early childhood needs***

Research and publicize innovative practices such as health promotion, obesity prevention, and emergency preparedness initiatives that are implemented in the context of the child care system.

- ***Create forums for problem solving***

Convene leaders from the field to share challenges, learn from leaders who have developed innovative solutions, and develop new strategies through facilitated problem solving on targeted topics.

Child Care Aware® of America will research and publish **compelling reports and other resources**. We will:

- ***Develop information and resources***

Partner with national, state and local entities to identify information needs and provide resources that inform the development of policy and practice.

- ***Customize messaging and resources***

Ensure high quality resources are developed to maximize local, state and national research and data to make the reality of children and families relevant to decision makers.

- ***Expand data capacity***

Strengthen the data suite of services (NDS) to inform research, reports, and local, state and national program and policy decisions.



PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

LEAD EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE DECISION MAKERS TO DEVELOP CHILD CARE SYSTEMS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RATIONALE

Decision makers at all levels – elected officials, policy makers, department directors, and others leaders at the federal, state and local levels – need data, research, and personal stories to understand the challenges families face as they seek quality, affordable child care. Decision makers also need clear recommendations on how best to apply this knowledge to policy and program development and implementation to best serve the needs of young children.

Child Care Aware® of America will be the **go-to organization for all issues related to child care** among families, advocates, decision makers, funders and other stakeholders. We will:

- *Strategically amplify the message about the importance of quality child care*

Develop and implement diverse media strategies that effectively frame data, research and key messages that maximize the expertise, contributions and political and economic capital of CCR&Rs, foundations, public and private sector leaders, and families.

- *Collaborate with like-minded organizations*

Maximize expertise and stakeholder networks by creating and implementing shared messages, coordinated dissemination strategies, and joint statements to move forward shared priorities.

Child Care Aware® of America will **develop community and national networks** of stakeholders that can be efficiently activated to maximize opportunities to inform policy. We will:

- *Create and activate strong advocacy networks at the community, state and national level*

Provide support to CCR&Rs and other partners to effectively engage and strategically mobilize families and other diverse stakeholders to inform decision-making at the local, state and national level using relevant data and research.



MEMBERSHIP

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO EXPAND THE ROLE OF STATE AND LOCAL CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL (CCR&R) SERVICES

RATIONALE

There are significant new opportunities for CCR&Rs to exert leadership in the quickly evolving child care landscape. Identifying best practices and strategic opportunities, creating and facilitating communities of practice for CCR&Rs to learn from peers and expand their business models, and developing resources will help CCR&Rs maximize these opportunities effectively and efficiently.

Child Care Aware® of America will **foster an intentional and coordinated national CCR&R network** that supports CCR&Rs serving as community hubs and serving as leaders in state and local systems development and alignment. We will:

- *Facilitate the strengthening and evolution of CCR&Rs*

Support state and local CCR&Rs as they identify, define, articulate, and exemplify the “value add” in the quickly evolving child care and early learning system.

- *Create resources and support to expand consistently high quality CCR&R practices*

Develop resources and provide supports that expand practices related to continuous improvement, cross-sector collaboration, professional development, consumer education, family support, data collection and analysis to inform decision making and make the case for child care investment.

- *Create resources and support to expand CCR&R leadership on systems development and alignment*

Identify best practices, develop resources, and create opportunities for CCR&Rs to learn from peers who are leading system development and alignment in diverse and innovative ways.

- *Provide efficient and responsive quality assurance support*

Accelerate the quality assurance work to efficiently strengthen practices in a more user-friendly way, particularly related to provider and parent services and consumer education.

Child Care Aware® of America will **broaden and deepen supports for professional development**. We will:

- *Strengthen professional development resources*

Based on local and state needs, expand access to quality professional development for child care providers, with vehicles such as Training Academy, strengthen child care professional development systems with tools such as training quality assurance and coaching and technical assistance tools, and build the skills of CCR&R staff through resources such as Symposium and other experiences.



MEMBERSHIP

EXPAND THE NETWORK OF LEADERS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION, INCLUDING CCR&RS AND DIVERSE OTHER PARTNERS, COMMITTED TO CHILD CARE SYSTEMS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BY OFFERING CLEAR MEMBERSHIP VALUE

RATIONALE

There are diverse stakeholders that are outside the CCR&R network that are committed to the vision, mission and values of Child Care Aware® of America . By expanding the network of members that support the organization, new voices will engage, the network will strengthen, and the power of more voices will coalesce to strengthen local, state and national child care systems.

Child Care Aware® of America will implement a **membership structure that provides value and engages diverse leaders** effectively. We will:

- *Expand membership base*

Engage new members who have an investment in our mission to expand our impact and effectively harness the power of more voices. New members could include families, providers policy makers, philanthropic foundations, CCR&Rs and other like-minded organizations.

- *Form innovative partnerships*

Broaden and deepen stakeholder influence by creating partnerships with other organizations and sharing membership opportunities with other related organizations.

- *Identify and create member benefits*

Refine member benefits, including resources specific to CCR&Rs, to ensure they have value for each constituency group, such as targeted products, learning opportunities or advocacy information or engagement opportunities.



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SERVE AS THE LEADING SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES ON HOW TO SELECT AND FIND QUALITY CHILD CARE

RATIONALE

Families need information that helps to inform their child care decisions through effective and efficient communication vehicles. This information needs to be carefully designed to answer their key questions, be available when they most need it, be easy to understand, and in a format they will use.

Child Care Aware® of America will **develop resources and provide consumer education that meets diverse family needs**. We will:

- *Complete consumer research*

Determine what information families want and how they want to receive it; identify common elements of successful consumer education campaigns to inform similar efforts.

- *Develop tools*

Create digital and/or other tools that states can customize to efficiently and effectively provide information to families about licensing and, as appropriate, Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS), to inform their child care choices.



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF CHILD CARE AS A KEY ELEMENT OF COMMUNITIES THAT SUPPORT FAMILIES AND CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

RATIONALE

Child care is essential to supporting children's development and enabling parents to be productive members of the economy. Quality, affordable child care is particularly important to vulnerable children. Too often children experience dramatically disparate educational and health outcomes based on their race, income or other demographics; these gaps can be closed through targeted investments.

Child Care Aware® of America will increase understanding among decision makers of the need for child care **programs that produce equitable outcomes**, particularly for the most vulnerable children, and develop innovative solutions that facilitate these outcomes consistently and sustainably. We will:

- *Develop targeted messages and resources*

Maximize the growing research base on the word gap and other disparities children face based on income, race, and other demographics to reinforce the need for access to quality, affordable child care.

- *Expand understanding of promising practices to produce equitable results*

Document promising practices in tools like briefs or case studies. Create forums for expanding understanding of these promising practices and developing new strategies based on emerging programs and policies serving the most vulnerable children, to include those who are living in poverty, are New Americans, have special needs, are dual language learners or who are facing inequitable opportunities for other reasons.

Child Care Aware® of America will identify and support opportunities to **elevate family and community engagement** in child care programs and strengthen relationships between child care teachers and families. We will:

- *Identify and disseminate promising practices on family engagement*

Complete literature reviews and summaries of innovative strategies in family and community engagement.

- *Increase CCR&R capacity to support family engagement*

Develop and disseminate training and other materials to build CCR&R capacity to support family and community engagement.

- *Expand relationships around family engagement*

Work with national and state partners and families to raise awareness surrounding family engagement and jointly develop a family and community engagement agenda around shared priorities.



Acknowledgements

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To learn more about Child Care Aware® of America , please visit us at usa.childcareaware.org

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