

## USING CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICES

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Contacting the local Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agency is a first step to searching for an appropriate child care and development program, including requesting referrals to subsidized programs. A map with the R&R agency names, service areas and Consumer Education Line that will contact you with the appropriate agency based on where you live or work is posted on the Office of Child Care website ([www.childcare.lacounty.gov](http://www.childcare.lacounty.gov)); click on “Navigating the Child Care and Development System”.

Organizations working with families needing child care and development services are strongly encouraged to build working relationships with the R&Rs in their service area. Ideally, identify a single contact within the R&R who is familiar with the work and personnel of the referring organization so that when a staff person calls on behalf of a parent or primary caregiver\* or the parent or primary caregiver calls directly, there is a basic understanding of need and circumstances.

### ***Requesting Referrals***

If there is no one contact, ask for the R&R department when you call. You will be connected to one of several R&R specialists assigned to searching a database for child care and development programs based on the parent or primary caregiver’s stated needs and preferences.

1. Explain the particular need of the family:
  - “The parent or primary caregiver needs child care in order to continue to work”; **or**
  - “The child needs a part-day program to support his/her development”; **or**
  - “The parent or primary caregiver needs part-day, intermittent care in order to participate in counseling and support services.”
2. Tell the R&R specialist up front if the family needs referrals to subsidized child care and development services.
3. The R&R specialist will request specific information from (or about) the family:
  - Ages of the children for whom care is needed
  - Home address and zip code
  - Hours, days child care and development services are needed
  - Why child care is needed, e.g. parent or primary caregiver is attending school, working, or participating in job training or is seeking a part-day program for the child’s enrichment and school readiness or other
  - Where the services are needed, such as near home, school, or work (city, zip code)
  - Special considerations (such as a child with disabilities or other special needs, transportation issues, family’s language is other than English)
  - Type of care family prefers: center-based or family child care home, full-day or part-day

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\* Primary caregiver for the purposes of this document refers to relative caregivers, foster parents or legal guardians.



4. Based on your answers, the R&R specialist will provide you with a list of referrals to child care and development programs that will most likely have openings. Typically, you will receive the following information:
  - Name of centers and/or family child care home providers
  - For centers, the addresses and telephone numbers
  - For family child care homes, the nearest major cross streets and the providers' telephone numbers

Most referrals will be provided to you on the telephone the day you call. In some cases, the R&R specialist may call you later the same day or later in the week with a list of referrals.

5. When receiving resources and/or when contacting possible child care and development programs, ask about characteristics of the center or family child care home that may be important in working with the family. For example, ask about the training the child care provider or center staff has received in working with at-risk families. In addition, explore the willingness of the center or family child care provider to have contact with your organization for additional support in working with the child and the family. The R&R specialist may be able to provide this information, or you may need to request this information from the child care and development programs directly.
6. Ask for materials for evaluating the quality of the referred child care and development programs and providers during the telephone screening and visit.

### ***Researching the Referrals***

1. It is up to the parent or primary caregiver to contact the centers and/or family child care home providers to conduct telephone interviews and/or schedule times to meet with them and visit their programs. There are quality checklists that may be helpful in determining the best situation for the child and the family. The R&R specialist can provide the parent or primary caregiver with such materials.

If the parent or primary caregiver is not satisfied with any of the centers or family child care homes that have been contacted and/or visited, call the R&R agency for additional referrals.

2. An in-person visit, with the child, to any potential center or family child care home is strongly encouraged. If possible, a joint visit by the parent or primary caregiver, child and support organization staff may be valuable in determining the best situation and establishing a working relationship with the new center or family child care provider. Ask about staff education and training, policies on payment, absences, etc. Does the center or family child care provider conduct developmental screenings of the children? How does the program use the developmental screenings? To whom do they refer families following a screening, if needed? Ask for the name of a parent who has used the program to call as a reference.
3. When a family needs a child care and development subsidy to access any of the referred services, they may conduct the visits in order to understand their choices and what is available. If the need is critical and the family can pay the cost of child care and development services for a period of time on their own without subsidy, then they are able to move forward to enrollment.