



April 8, 2021

Katie Hamm

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Hamm,

Child Care Aware® of America is grateful to the Biden Administration for prioritizing \$39 billion in dedicated child care relief funds in the American Rescue Plan (ARP). This historic investment will help stabilize the sector and will save thousands of providers from permanent closure and help families across the country afford child care. We are committed to working with the Administration and with states to ensure these funds not only stabilize the sector but also build back a better system for families, providers, and communities.

Child Care Aware® of America (CCAOA) is a national, membership-based nonprofit organization working to advance the affordability, accessibility, and quality of child care environments and to support the positive development and learning of all children in child care. To advance our mission, we rely heavily on our relationships with Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies. CCR&Rs are part of a nationwide system with touchpoints at the local, state, and national levels.¹ These agencies support the families in their communities by helping them navigate complicated child care systems and by leading initiatives that increase the quality, affordability, and accessibility of child care. With over 400 community-based agencies serving over 860,000 families a year, the CCR&R network is the most trusted place to find child care.

As the eyes and ears of America's child care system, CCR&Rs can play a central role in the system's recovery and ARP implementation. They have deep experience implementing relief measures. During the pandemic, CCR&Rs worked overtime to help the child care sector weather the storm. These agencies provided personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitization and mitigation supplies, and other resources, while continuing to connect parents with child care and ensure communication flowed between system leaders and providers. They continued to play a critical role in providing technical assistance and trainings to providers to navigate business sustainability and supported the distribution of funds to programs and providers. For example, a CCR&R in Washington raised funds for providers to purchase the supplies needed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. CCR&Rs in California distributed \$40 million in reimbursement allocations to providers to cover the cost of PPE and cleaning supplies last spring. In Kansas, the state relied heavily on Child Care Aware of Kansas to ensure relief funds were distributed equitably, including to providers who fell outside the state's licensing system. Further, the Kansas CCR&R is involved in a partnership with the state to ensure families have access to child care health consultants. The state of Minnesota partnered with Child Care Aware of Minnesota to help center- and home-based providers gain access to relief funds through the provision of technical assistance and support in multiple languages to ensure equitable access to funds. In addition, CCR&Rs have worked in partnership with states to help providers access the COVID-19 vaccine.

¹ Child Care Aware of America. CCR&Rs are the Eyes and Ears of America's Child Care System, 2019, [https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Policy%20and%20Advocacy%20One-Pagers/CCRRs%20Eyes%20and%20Ears%2011.6.2019%20%20FINAL%20ONE-PAGER%20\(1\).pdf](https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Policy%20and%20Advocacy%20One-Pagers/CCRRs%20Eyes%20and%20Ears%2011.6.2019%20%20FINAL%20ONE-PAGER%20(1).pdf)

In the recently published 2021 Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) 60 Day Reports for States and Territories, CCAoA was pleased to see that there are some states who will continue to rely on CCR&Rs in their relief efforts. In Colorado, they will be using their CRRSA funds to enhance child care resource and referral services to expand support for families seeking access to a high-quality provider by providing funds to conduct outreach and report real-time availability of child care slot openings. And in Iowa, the lead agency has partnered with the CCR&R to assist providers in accessing monthly stipends available to child care programs. As states begin planning for distribution of their ARP funds, these are just some examples that can be shared with state administrators on how to incorporate CCR&Rs in relief implementation. Incorporating CCR&Rs in ARP implementation will only strengthen efforts to rebuild a better child care system.

CCR&R agencies are the connectors in many communities across the country. At the local level, coordination makes a real difference. Last year CCAoA surveyed CCR&Rs across the country to collect information on how they were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.² With data collected from 163 CCR&R agencies, representing 41 states, we found that 75 percent of CCR&Rs had plans to help child care providers reopen by providing information, helping providers secure PPE and cleaning supplies, or working to recruit child care providers to repopulate local supply. Yet only 19 respondents received funding from CARES and 66 percent reported receiving no new federal or state funding during the crisis for its operations.

We hope to see more states using relief from CRRSA and ARP to support the work CCR&Rs are doing to help the child care sector recover. As cities and counties move toward reopening and rebuilding, it is critical that child care resource and referral agencies are at the table. To do this work CCR&Rs also need support. As you begin to assist states as they plan for distribution of their ARP funds, I urge you to advise states to support CCR&Rs and leverage their expertise.

As implementation of ARP begins, we know there is also funding for technical assistance on the national level. Last year, CCAoA launched the Emergency Child Care & Technical Assistance Center™ (ECCTAC) to support the entire child care community during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. ECCTAC priorities are centered around the urgent needs of the child care field and is designed to help CCR&Rs and child care providers ready themselves to succeed in a post-pandemic, re-envisioned child care system. Over the past year, ECCTAC has built on our existing services to offer: technical assistance, webinars, communities of practice, a hotline as well as live chat and email support, and digital resources. CCAoA stand ready to partner on technical assistance and outreach to ensure a smooth and impactful implementation of the ARP.

CCAoA is committed to ensuring the robust funds made available through ARP are used to not only rebuild the child care system to be stronger than before, but transforms the sector to work better for providers, families, and communities. I look forward to our ongoing collaboration on these efforts.

Sincerely,



Lynette M. Fraga, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

² Child Care Aware of America. CCR&R Response to the Coronavirus, June 30, 2020, <https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/ccrr-survey-pdf.pdf>