

KIDS NEED THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A HEALTHY LIFE.

Building your ECE Campaign Coalition and Engaging ECE Stakeholders

Successful campaign coalitions must engage specific ECE stakeholders in order to fully understand practices, priorities, and policies that affect decision-making in the ECE field.

Child Care Resource and Referral Networks are a critical first point of contact, as they have direct knowledge, influence, and access to the other essential stakeholders.

Next you must engage the two groups whose lives are most affected by regulation change—child care providers and the children and families they care for.

Finally, state agencies and staff responsible for writing, changing, and implementing licensing rules are vital stakeholders as well.

Child Care Resource and Referral Networks

Child Care Resource and Referral Networks (CCR&Rs) play a central role in the ECE landscape of every state. CCR&Rs serve working families by providing child care referrals, and other important information to families about how to identify, access, and afford child care. *They help parents identify their priorities for child care settings and then help them locate care that meets their needs.*

CCR&Rs also work directly with child care providers by offering professional development trainings, providing technical assistance, and connecting providers to resources that help them run more successful child care programs. They are often the agencies that help child care providers meet state and local program requirements—and are key in helping with rule implementation.

CCR&Rs advocate for state and local policies that benefit young children and working families. Because they work with parents and providers, they have a great sense of what needs are across the child care spectrum. Because of this, CCR&R staff and leadership frequently sit on influential advisory councils and workgroups regionally and throughout the state.

Finally, CCR&Rs collect detailed information about the supply and demand of child care, as well as contact information for child care providers. Some states have a single CCR&R that manages services statewide, while other states have network of regional or local CCR&Rs that deliver services to different parts of the state. While there is no list of all of the CCR&Rs in the country, campaigns can locate agencies using [Child Care Aware of America's searchable database](#).

Note: in some locations, CCR&Rs do one or all of the above-mentioned tasks. The Child Care Aware database links customers to the agencies that help parents look for care. These may or may not be the same agencies that are responsible for statewide training. It's best to connect with your TA provider, Child Care Aware® of America if you need to be connected to other agencies in your state.



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Who to know: Organizational leadership, lead contact(s) for policy and/or health

Child care program owners, directors, and staff

Few individuals or groups understand the ECE landscape better than those who are caring for children every day. Child care program owners, directors, and staff have a deep knowledge and understanding of barriers, facilitators, and real-world implications of child care policies. In some states and localities, child care providers have organized formal associations and collaborative groups that communicate regularly around the issues affecting their child care programs. In both urban and rural areas, Head Start/Early Head Start programs provide a significant proportion of the center-based child care available to children from low-income families. Engaging the large nonprofits or community action corporations that sponsor and manage groups of Head Start/Early Head Start centers is one way to reach this subset of the provider community. As Head Starts have standards and resources that set them apart from the larger provider community, however, outreach to non-Head Start providers is essential to understanding the practical implications of regulation change. In areas where formal provider groups are weak or absent, CCR&Rs may be able to connect campaigns with the child care provider community.

Who to know: Statewide and regional provider networks for center-based and family child care providers; Additional state and local associations (below)

Parents and families

States may not have organized groups of family advocates that campaigns can engage. To gather input and generate buy-in from families around health and wellness issues, campaigns should consider holding listening sessions. Stipends or other participation incentives are critical recruitment tools and should be included in a campaign budget. CCR&Rs will be valuable partners in recruiting and supporting logistics for these sessions.

State Agency that administers child care licensing

The state child care licensing agency is responsible for writing licensing rules, processing child care licensing applications, and monitoring compliance. It is essential to build relationships with agency leadership and understand the priorities and strategic goals of those leaders. More often than not, the head of this agency is a political appointee who is subject to change with the political winds. As such, engaging career service agency staff who are insulated from political turnover is a crucial campaign strategy. These staff wield significant influence over how regulations are written, implemented, and enforced. Career staff can also offer important

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insight into the decision-making process within the agency and can anticipate barriers to change. While government staffing differs from state to state, it is important for coalitions to engage department directors and managers who oversee specific pieces of policy implementation.

Who to know: Agency head, director of the licensing department, managers within the department (those responsible for writing rules, processing applications, and overseeing compliance monitoring); State agencies that oversee the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) (below)

Additional groups to consider including in your coalition

State Agencies

As is the case with the child care licensing agency, it is important to engage both agency leadership and career staff.

- State agency that oversees QRIS and/or voluntary recognition programs
 - [QRIS](#) are a set of quality standards for child care with tiered achievement levels. Most states have QRIS and participation may be mandatory or voluntary. Licensure is often the first tier in QRIS, and the two systems may be managed by the same department.
- State agency that administers Child Care Development Fund (child care subsidy)
 - This agency determines the eligibility of child care programs to receive federal child care subsidies and is responsible for implementing the CCDF State Plan. Eligibility is dependent upon meeting health, safety, training, and quality requirements. Some states integrated stronger HEPA standards into their [CCDF plans](#).
- Agency/organization that monitors exempt or unlicensed subsidy recipients (may be a community-based organization)
 - As CCDF recipients are not required to be licensed, the state agency or another designated organization must determine whether unlicensed child care providers meet the health, safety, training, and quality requirements to receive federal subsidy.
- Agency that oversees [Tribal CCDF](#)
 - The rules for CCDF in Tribal communities differ from the rules for states, although the emphasis on health, safety, and quality remains. Tribal CCDF is likely administered by Tribal leadership, and the size of the CCDF grant a Tribe

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receives determines the extent to which it must comply with CCDF requirements.

- State agency that administers [1305 funds](#)
 - This CDC funding stream supports chronic disease projects, and physical activity in child care is a current funding focus. Agency staff may be aware of ongoing ECE initiatives and opportunities to overlap with other chronic disease prevention programs and advocacy.
- State agency that oversees [state-funded Pre-K](#) programs
 - State-funded pre-Kindergarten programs are often exempt from child care licensing and managed through separate channels. The standards required for state-funded pre-K are different than those required for licensed child care programs.
- State agency responsible for [IDEA Part C](#)
 - Part C funds programs that serve infants and toddlers through age 2 with or at high risk for developmental delays. Part C administrators and funding recipients can provide information about creating inclusive environments and promoting developmentally-appropriate physical activities for very young children.
- State agency that administers [ESSA](#)
 - Inclusion of early childhood in ESSA state plans is at the discretion of the lead agency. ESSA highlights the opportunities that exist for strengthening the transition from ECE settings to elementary school and states may use ESSA funds for early childhood initiatives.
- State agency that administers [CACFP](#)
 - The Child and Adult Care Food Program reimburses child care providers for the cost of providing nutritious meals to children who meet income eligibility requirements. State agency staff may lead nutrition trainings or offer technical assistance to child care providers.

State and Local Associations

- State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Care and Education
 - Formed under the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, each state has an advisory council to guide development of comprehensive early childhood systems for children from birth to school entry. The level of coordination and influence that these councils exhibit varies widely from state to state, but influential members of the ECE community may sit on the council.
- Statewide Head Start Collaboration Office

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- Every state has a Head Start Collaboration Office that serves as the interface between Head Start providers and state government, promoting collaboration to benefit children from low-income families.
- Statewide and/or regional provider networks and associations (centers and family child care)
 - In some regions, child care providers come together formally to discuss the issues that affect their child care programs. While these groups often focus more on practice- and facility-level changes instead of advocacy, they present an excellent opportunity for outreach and relationship building with an engaged group of providers.
- State Alliance of YMCAs
 - YMCAs are prominent providers of ECE and out-of-school time care. The state alliance may be actively involved in health-related and/or ECE advocacy at the state level. Outreach to the state alliance may also facilitate connections to local YMCA ECE providers.
- State and local Association for the Education of Young Children affiliates (AEYC)
 - The [National AEYC](#) is an accrediting body for ECE centers and advocates high quality standards nationally. State and local AEYC affiliates engage early childhood educators, support quality improvement, and offer networking opportunities for ECE providers.

Community-Based Organizations

- Child care professional development and technical assistance providers
 - While CCR&Rs provide a substantial amount of training to child care professionals, there may be other organizations that offer training and technical assistance to child care providers. University Cooperative Extensions, local public health agencies, and other community-based agencies offer health-related trainings and support to child care providers. Accessing the statewide or local professional development calendar can be a helpful way of identifying which groups offer HEPA-related trainings.
- CACFP sponsor organizations
 - CACFP sponsors are community-based organizations that oversee CACFP in family child care homes and centers. These organizations promote CACFP, support providers in meeting the program requirements through training, and monitor compliance. They have a keen understanding of what it takes to meet CACFP requirements and the implementation barriers that exist in various child care settings.

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- Statewide or local foundations that fund early childhood and/or health initiatives
 - These funders understand and often have relationships with key organizations, coalitions, and influencers in the state or local early childhood and/or health community. They also understand ongoing and emerging trends in those communities and past/current initiatives to address those trends.
- Organizations involved in farm-to-preschool initiatives (may include state agency)
 - These groups may be involved in food access and food policy advocacy while also having an interest in and understanding of issues specific to ECE, such as: procurement, food costs, CACFP reimbursement for local foods, gardening, and nutrition education.
- University Cooperative Extension
 - Extensions health educators may develop and deliver HEPA-related professional development to child care providers. They tend to have a strong focus on agriculture, gardening, and nutrition. They may also have strong working relationships with state agencies and academics.
- Local Head Start/Early Head Start sponsor organizations
 - Large nonprofits and community action corporations sponsor networks of Head Start and Early Head Start centers. In some cases, sponsor organizations fund Head Start or Early Head Start slots in community-based child care programs. In both urban and rural areas, sponsored Head Start networks provide a substantial amount of the high-quality care available to children from low income families.
- Home visiting organizations (e.g. Parents as Teachers)
 - These organizations work with parents and very young children in their homes to support positive early development. Home visiting programs may operate through school districts or as stand-alone organizations.

Other

- Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC)
 - These medical professionals, typically nurses or doctors, provide health-related training and consultation to child care providers. CCHCs may be employed by local public health agencies, community-based organizations, or may operate as independent consultants. Some states require regular CCHC visits to child care programs, although this is not true everywhere.
- State child care accrediting body

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- States may offer their own form of child care accreditation independent of national accrediting organizations. State accrediting organizations have relationships with high-performing child care programs and may be involved in quality advocacy.
- University, college, community college, and vocational schools that have ECE degree or credentialing programs
 - These programs train the state's early childhood workforce. Faculty are likely involved in ECE-related research and frequently sit on advisory committees for ECE issues.
- WIC
 - The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal nutrition program that provides nutrition education, health referrals, and food to low-income mothers and young children who qualify as at nutritional risk. WIC staff understand the nutritional needs and systemic barriers that children in low income families face.