



Department of Education - Office of Early Learning
Florida's Child Care Resource and Referral Best Practices Guide



Each year Florida's early learning coalitions and contracted service providers serve approximately 300,000 families through the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program. Coalitions assist customers in finding quality and affordable child care, community resources and financial assistance options. Coalitions are responsible for ensuring CCR&R program requirements are met for families and child care providers. *Florida's CCR&R Best Practices Guide* highlights best practices that enhance ongoing CCR&R service delivery and strengthens CCR&R partnerships with families, child care providers and communities. Historically, implementing best practices has been integral and synonymous to CCR&R service delivery. **Unlike CCR&R programmatic requirements, these best practices are optional and may not be applicable to every CCR&R's service delivery model or program needs.** Coalitions were instrumental in crafting these best practices. Coalitions may customize this guide and consider implementing these and other best practices to enhance their organization's service delivery.



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Early Learning

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ELEMENT 1	Accessibility of Information and Services
Service Outcome Requirement	Each CCR&R organization shall provide the Office of Early Learning with an annual report identifying how CCR&R services are made accessible to individuals within its service area, including individuals who have limited access to telephone services, internet services or transportation. (Rule 6M-9.300(4)(a), F.A.C)
1.1 BP	CCR&R services are offered via the early learning coalition's online system.
1.2 BP	Staff respond to non-emergency customer requests for services within one business day.
1.3 BP	Accommodations are made for families that may not be available during normal business hours (i.e., extended hours of operations, services offered on Saturdays.)
1.4 BP	CCR&R establishes an online appointment scheduling system that allows clients to schedule their own appointments online for a time that will best meet their needs.
1.5 BP	CCR&R website provides option for parents to request a date and time for a call back.
1.6 BP	CCR&R utilizes community partners' locations and facilities to offer services (i.e., Career Source, library, community resource center, etc.)
1.7 BP	CCR&R staff (i.e., live person) answers the phone for customers calling for services.
1.8 BP	CCR&R establishes appointment reminder system that notifies clients of upcoming appointments via text message (or gives options for their preferred method of contact).



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ELEMENT 2	Consumer Education
Service Outcome Requirement	Early learning coalitions or their contracted CCR&R organizations shall provide access to information and resources that enable parents to make informed choices on quality child care, including information and resources on the full-range of provider types available; child care licensing; health, safety and inspection requirements for each type of provider; child care personnel background checks and disqualifying offenses; research and best practices regarding child development; indicators of quality child care; meaningful parent and family engagement; state policies, if applicable, regarding the social-emotional behavioral health of children; and developmental screenings. <i>(Rule 6M-9.300(3)(b), F.A.C)</i>
2.1 BP	Staff are knowledgeable about Vroom and other family engagement apps and resources and provide families and child care providers with these materials and information.
2.2 BP	Consumer education materials and resources are available on the early learning coalition's website and social media sites.
2.3 BP	CCR&R creates consumer educational and programmatic materials and shares them with families and providers.
2.4 BP	Staff access the CCR&R DropBox for updated materials and resources for families and providers.
2.5 BP	Staff are knowledgeable about changes in child care laws and/or requirements and updates consumer education materials as needed.
2.6 BP	Staff are knowledgeable about publications and materials available from OEL to provide families with information on child care choices and quality such as <i>A Parent's Guide: Selecting Quality Programs for Children</i> , <i>Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs</i> and the <i>Child Care Compass</i> .
2.7 BP	Staff provide information, resources, trainings and professional development for providers and families on child development, developmentally appropriate activities, social-emotional development, health and safety, trauma informed care, inclusion, policies and procedures of IDEA and ADA, quality child care and early education, Strengthening Families framework and transitions.
2.8 BP	CCR&R staff maintain a working knowledge of nationally recognized consumer education that is available.



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ELEMENT 3	Community Resources
Service Outcome Requirement	CCR&R organizations shall offer information regarding and access to consumer education and community resources to all individuals requesting CCR&R services. Each CCR&R organization shall maintain a current directory or access to community resources. (Rule 6M-9.300(7)(a)(b), F.A.C)
3.1 BP	CCR&R maintains a list of community resources on the early learning coalition's website.
3.2 BP	Staff ensures that the community resources are up to date and updated at least every three to six months.
3.3 BP	Staff use "family-friendly" language when assisting families in locating community resources.
3.4 BP	Staff utilize a family needs assessment methodology to assist in meeting customers where they are.
3.5 BP	Staff ensure resources are specialized and are applicable to multiple demographics.
3.6 BP	Staff offer other CCR&R services to customer upon addressing their current need.
3.7 BP	Early learning coalitions connect with agencies providing services within their communities to remove silos and avoid duplication.
ELEMENT 4	Community Engagement
Service Outcome Requirement	CCR&R organizations will provide information that can help families identify financial benefits and services to support their economic stability. Building CCR&R community engagement and partnerships is a critical function of CCR&R, which help to connect families with various community resources and assistance programs. (CCDF State Plan 2.2.1 and 2.2.4)
4.1 BP	Staff initiate, develop and continue relationships with leaders, organizations, committees and/or task forces in targeted communities to ensure that the needs of families and child care providers are considered when planning community services.
4.2 BP	CCR&R participates in community events to ensure that families, providers and the public are aware of CCR&R services and the importance of accessible, affordable and quality child care.
4.3 BP	Staff make presentations to community organizations, agencies and leaders about CCR&R services and engage them in promoting child care issues.
4.4 BP	CCR&R hosts community events to engage families and providers.
4.5 BP	CCR&R maintains a list of all community partners with current and future ways to build collaboration.



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4.6 BP	CCR&R invites community partners to speak with early learning coalition staff about their services.
4.7 BP	CCR&R engages in and hosts various community outreach activities and events throughout the year.
4.8 BP	CCR&R staff periodically attend ongoing meetings with community partners.
4.9 BP	CCR&R connects with community partners that share additional resources that CCR&R may otherwise have not been aware of.
4.10 BP	CCR&R staff participates in community networking opportunities (i.e. professional associations, leads groups, chamber of commerce activities, etc.).
4.11 BP	Staff participate in community meetings and initiatives that are in the interests of children and families.
ELEMENT 5	Customer Service
Service Outcome Requirement	The CCR&R organization shall ensure all CCR&R staff are trained in customer service, consumer education, community resources, financial assistance programs for families, and available types of child care and early learning providers and programs, specific to their service area, within four (4) months of employment as a CCR&R specialist. (Rule 6M-9.300(9), F.A.C)
5.1 BP	The CCR&R telephone and automated voice system is simple and user friendly.
5.2 BP	Staff greet customers using a friendly tone of voice. Staff provide their names and the name of the early learning coalition or contracted agency.
5.3 BP	Staff ask customer if he or she has used CCR&R services in the past.
5.4 BP	Staff explain that CCR&R is a free and confidential service that provides computer generated child care listings based on a match between the family's needs and providers in the CCR&R database.
5.5 BP	Staff inform customers at the beginning of offering CCR&R how long the service may take to give customers the option to call or come back later at a convenient time for the customer.
5.6 BP	Staff explain to customers that the child care listing provided is not a recommendation.
5.7 BP	Staff use active listening skills to address the customer's specific needs, restate or paraphrase what the customer has said, and structures the conversation to best serve the needs of the client.



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5.8 BP	When providing services to a customer in person, staff make eye contact and are aware of their nonverbal communication such as body language and gestures.
5.9 BP	Staff address customers by their name to build rapport and show courtesy. Staff dialogue with customers is conversational and not scripted.
5.10 BP	Staff avoid jargon and acronyms to ensure the customer understands the information provided.
5.11 BP	Staff tailor information to meet the needs of the family, taking into account cultural sensitivity, language of parent and readability.
5.12 BP	Staff complete training on how to assist customers considered hostile/difficult and de-escalating difficult situations.
5.13 BP	Staff summarize the information that will be sent to the customer and ask customer if they wish for CCR&R to follow up regarding their services.
5.14 BP	Staff ask all customers if they would like to complete a customer satisfaction survey.
5.15 BP	CCR&R locations include family-friendly spaces with pictures, resources and materials that affirm and welcome all families.
5.16 BP	Staff remember to ask if any additional assistance is needed, provides contact information and invites the customer to contact if they have any questions in the future.
5.17 BP	CCR&R staff utilize trauma informed practices when interacting with customers.
ELEMENT 6	Family Engagement
Service Outcome Requirement	Family engagement supports children's school readiness, promotes their school success and prepares them for life. It is important for all children and essential for those who have experienced trauma and other types of challenges. Family engagement is a shared responsibility of the Office of Early Learning, early learning coalitions, early learning programs and providers to engage families in meaningful ways to actively support their children's learning, development and wellness. (CCDF State Plan 2.2.6)
6.1 BP	CCR&R shares overview of the strengthening families/protective factors approach with existing and new providers.
6.2 BP	CCR&R conducts training on Strengthening Families and Protective Factors for all CCR&R staff.
6.3 BP	CCR&R offers parent engagement resources and training opportunities, such as Mind in the Making.



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6.4 BP	CCR&R management implements a plan to have stronger relationships between families and program staff along with increasing family engagement at child care programs.
6.5 BP	CCR&R works with the early learning coalition administrators to create a family advisory leadership council whose purpose is to advise CCR&R's work and advocate for early learning services for children.
6.6 BP	CCR&R utilizes community assessment, self-assessments, related surveys and ongoing relationships with families to understand the opportunities and challenges related to parent connections, peers and community.
6.7 BP	CCR&R conducts needs assessment for parents on child care listings, education about child care, child development and parenting workshops. The assessment includes preferences for accessing parent services.
6.8 BP	CCR&R utilizes programs such as "Youth Strive" with the Strengthening Families approach to meet the needs of the entire family.
6.9 BP	CCR&R conducts outreach events throughout the year to inform families of the resources and services for families available through the early learning coalition, including outreach to homeless families, foster families, military families, grandparents as parents and other non-traditional families.
6.10 BP	CCR&R utilizes the OEL Family Engagement Toolkit and other resources and apps to engage families in their children's learning and development.
6.11 BP	CCR&R takes into consideration the cultural and linguistic differences in the providers and families served by the early learning coalition when planning trainings, meetings, special events, and ways to communicate and provide information. When possible, CCR&R hires diverse staff that reflect the diversity of the communities being served by the early learning coalition.
6.12 BP	CCR&R utilizes their community resources to offer trainings at convenient locations throughout their service area.
6.13 BP	CCR&R collects data on families' requests for assistance not provided by the early learning coalition or current community partners and recruits additional partners and agencies to support the needs of families.



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ELEMENT 7	Inclusion and CCR&R
Service Outcome Requirement	Families of children with special needs and challenges need resources and information to support their children's growth and development. CCR&R staff assist these families by providing information and resources as well as referring the families to other agencies. CCR&R staff collaborate with the inclusion coordinator to assist families and providers in supporting the growth and development of children with special needs and challenges. <i>(CCDF State Plan 1.4.1)</i>
7.1 BP	Staff offer to generate a list of child care providers with experience working with children with disabilities and special needs.
7.2 BP	Staff support families and providers by offering assistance, information and resources on social-emotional learning, positive behavior supports and early childhood mental health for families of children with special needs.
7.3 BP	Staff connect families to local and state resources for children with disabilities and special needs and educate the families on the developmental screening process.
7.4 BP	Staff refer families to the inclusion coordinator at the early learning coalition when unable to answer customer questions and/or parent is concerned about his or her child's development.
7.5 BP	Staff follow up with families to ensure resources are helpful for the family and to provide additional resources, as needed. Staff create a database of resources for parents concerning child's development.
7.6 BP	Staff follow up with the family to ensure screenings and evaluation resources are utilized by the family.
7.7 BP	Staff ensure families know about their rights under federal and state laws, such as their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).
7.8 BP	CCR&R incorporates inclusion information into the potential provider packet and ensures that providers are aware of the need for inclusive practices.
7.9 BP	Staff support families and providers by providing assistance, information and resources on social-emotional learning, positive behavior supports and early childhood mental health.



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ELEMENT 8	CCR&R and Blended Services
Service Outcome	Many CCR&R organizations deliver a blended service delivery model. CCR&R staff, who determine eligibility and process services for the School Readiness and VPK programs, may incorporate best practices that will help to enhance how customers receive and understand program guidelines and options.
8.1 BP	Verify child's schedule and discuss with parents the different early care and education options.
8.2 BP	Share with parent the quality indicators of child care programs and explore family child care needs.
8.3 BP	Complete a Family Needs Screening as part of the eligibility interview to determine if community resources are needed.
8.4 BP	Offer ongoing training regarding CCR&R being offered to all families.
8.5 BP	Offer training for communicating with families when they are determined ineligible for services and develop personalized resources for this scenario.
8.6 BP	CCR&R staff are available to assist with school readiness and/or VPK applications.
8.7 BP	Staff identify reasons for provider transfers and assist customer with making an informed decision for their next enrollment.
8.8 BP	Staff screen customers for other coalition's services and programs available during interviews.
8.9 BP	Staff identify the existence or absence of protective factors within a family and offer supports accordingly.
8.10 BP	Each family specialist has a portion of the alphabet, which helps staff build a rapport with families and better understand a family's needs. Case management also makes it easier to follow up with the family.
8.11 BP	The coalition will make multiple attempts to notify families, in advance, of any changes made to the coalition's school readiness recertification process.



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ELEMENT 9	Quality Assurance
Service Outcome Requirement	CCR&R organizations are required to help families identify and select quality child care, consumer education, community resources and financial assistance options. CCR&Rs are also required to provide CCR&R to child care providers. CCR&R organizations shall ensure all CCR&R staff are trained in customer service, consumer education, community resources, financial assistance programs for families and types of child care specific to their service area, within four (4) months of employment as a CCR&R specialist. <i>(Section 1002.92, F.S.; Rule 6M-9.300(9), F.A.C.; Grant Agreement, Exhibit II, section B.4)</i>
9.1 BP	New CCR&R staff members shadow experienced staff.
9.2 BP	CCR&R provides ongoing training for all staff providing CCR&R services.
9.3 BP	CCR&R cross trains early learning coalition/sub contractor's staff providing CCR&R.
9.4 BP	Staff attend state and national early learning conferences, trainings and webinars.
9.5 BP	CCR&R staff conduct periodic quality assurance assessments internally.
9.6 BP	CCR&R establish a process to communicate with other units to ensure all families are offered CCR&R services.
ELEMENT 10	Provider Services
Service Outcome Requirement	CCR&R organizations provides technical assistance to existing and potential providers of child care services. This assistance may include: 1. Information on initiating new child care services, zoning, and program and budget development and assistance in finding such information from other sources. 2. Information and resources which help existing child care services providers to maximize their ability to serve children and parents in their community. 3. Information and incentives that may help existing or planned child care services offered by public or private employers seeking to maximize their ability to serve the children of their working parent employees in their community, through contractual or other funding arrangements with businesses. <i>(Section 1002.92(3)(d), F.S.)</i>
10.1 BP	Staff share demographics of the area where the potential provider is considering opening a business and inform potential provider of geographical gaps in child care.
10.2 BP	Staff offer needs assessment to potential or non-subcontracted providers and share findings in order to recruit new providers.



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10.3 BP	CCR&R monitors geographical gaps in child care and limited space for various ages. CCR&R develops strategies to increase care and slots (i.e., meeting with potential and current providers about adding classes). CCR&R collects data regarding search issues in locating child care providers and establishes a plan to promote new potential providers.
10.4 BP	CCR&R offers a provider resource room to providers that includes early learning materials, supplies and resources.
10.5 BP	CCR&R offers professional development opportunities and trainings to potential and current child care providers.
10.6 BP	CCR&R facilitates provider support and/or educational groups where providers can share their concerns.
10.7 BP	CCR&R staff keep a packet available for potential providers to use as a resource regarding what to expect.
10.8 BP	CCR&R staff are familiar with the provider portal and are available to assist providers and provider staff.
10.9 BP	CCR&R trains providers on how to use the family portal.
10.10 BP	Staff provide information, resources, trainings and professional development for providers and families on child development, developmentally appropriate activities, social-emotional development, health and safety, trauma informed care, inclusion, policies and procedures of IDEA and ADA, quality child care and early education, Strengthening Families framework and transitions.
ELEMENT 11	Provider Updates
Service Outcome Requirement	Prior to the CCR&R organization's last business day in May, each CCR&R organization shall ensure that provider information is updated annually in the statewide information system maintained by the Office of Early Learning for each legally operating child care/early learning provider licensed or registered by the Department of Children and Families and each provider receiving state or federal funds within the CCR&R organization's service area. (Rule 6M-9.300(8)(a), F.A.C)
11.1 BP	CCR&R staff attempts to contact providers in writing (i.e., provider update form, letter, email, provider announcements, newsletters, etc.) and/or via telephone at least five times to participate in the provider updates and/or provider services portal.
11.2 BP	CCR&R initiates an invitation for providers who are not licensed, registered or subcontracted (i.e., licensed exempt, before and after school programs, summer recreation and summer day camps, recreational facilities, and nanny and au pair agencies) to participate in the provider updates and/or provider services portal.
11.3 BP	CCR&R staff begin updating providers at the start of the new fiscal year.
11.4 BP	CCR&R staff work with coalition identified staff to make sure updates are received and provider information is accurate.