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Supersedes: Child Care 6-1 (5/01/05)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM 45
CFR Part 98.20 – 47

Referral Process Child Care Resource and Referral agencies assist families in locating child care. A computerized matching of the family's needs with the profiles of child care providers in the area provides an objective referral. The referral service is available to all families in the community and is separate from the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program.

Requests for referrals are accepted by toll-free telephone, by mail, by Internet or e-mail, or by walk in families. Referral services are available in all of the counties and rural communities of each CCR&R District.

Referral listings shall be distributed through a method requested by the parent, to include:

1. Mailing to the parent at no charge
2. Picking up by the parent
3. Faxing to the parent
4. E-mailing to the parent

Referral requests for immediate care (within two weeks) shall be processed and distributed to the parent within two (2) working days. Referral requests for future care (two+ weeks away) shall be processed and distributed to the parent within five working days.

Parents who rely on a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship shall not receive referrals for providers ineligible for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program.

Basic Referrals Basic referrals shall be provided to participants of and families who are eligible for the following programs:

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- Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship
- TANF Cash Assistance
- Other public assistance programs
- Child Protective Services

At their discretion, CCR&R's may include additional groups to expand the availability of basic referrals.

**No Fee for a
Basic Referral**

No fee shall be charged for basic referrals. A family eligible for a basic referral shall be given a password and the public referral URL that allows them to perform Internet searches without a fee.

**Information
Provided in a
Basic Referral**

At a minimum, a basic referral shall include the following:

1. Provider or facility name
2. Location (address is optional)
3. Telephone number
4. Age range of children
5. Facility type
6. Days/hours of business
7. The CCR&R Network disclaimer
8. Consumer education material

**Enhanced
Referrals**

CCR&R's have the option of providing an enhanced referral, with additional information and service. Families that do not meet the eligibility criteria for basic referrals and families interested in additional service may request an enhanced referral. CCR&R's may charge the parent a fee for providing an enhanced referral.

**Unbiased
Referrals**

All referrals must be unbiased. To ensure unbiased referrals, Referral Specialists use NACCRRAware to select providers who meet the majority of the family's preferences. Referral Specialists shall be trained to refine their queries so that at least 3 but no more than 10 providers come up in the query.

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An exception for a minimum number of matches will be made for hard to find care or for locations that do not have 3 providers with vacancies. An exception for the maximum number of matches can be made for specific types of care, such as infant care, when the parent requests more than 10 providers. Queries with more than 10 matches should have additional criteria such as quality level of provider or environment added to narrow the list. Queries with less than 3 should have the search broadened.

Child care referrals for families who have children with disabilities must not be discriminatory. A provider search for these families shall include the full range of child care providers available, not just those who indicate they serve children with disabilities. A parent may work with the chosen provider and Child Care Plus+ to resolve any inclusion issues or determine accommodations needed to serve the child.

**Intake – ‘Child
Care Need’
Form**

CCR&R’s will conduct an initial meeting with the parent by phone, e-mail, mail, or in person to gather information regarding the family’s child care needs and preferences. CCR&R’s should complete or have the parent complete the Child Care Need form to obtain the information needed for a referral.

Data Entry

Information from the Child Care Need form must be entered into NACCRRAware and used to match the family with a child care provider who meets their needs. Information must be complete and accurate, to ensure effective referrals and to provide accurate statistics. The Early Childhood Services Bureau and the Montana CCR&R Network will query NACCRRAware to obtain statistics needed for reports.

Additional training and information on the NACCRRAware program, queries, reports, and matches is available at the Montana CCR&R Network office.

**Parent’s
Employment
Category**

From the drop down list, pick a main category that includes the industry in which the parent is employed. For further clarification and definitions, refer to the *North American Industry Classification System*. See

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<http://www.ntis.gov/product/naics.htm> for ordering information. The Referral Specialist must choose between one of the 20 categories. Choose “not employed” or, “not employed-student” if they are a full time student. Enter the name of the business for the primary person in the “Place of employment” field. (Currently says CLI CFG 3 text field, title will change to Place of employment)

Consumer Education Material

Consumer Education Material must be professional in appearance and at a minimum include the following information:

1. Guidance on how to select a quality child care program that has a checklist of items to be aware of when selecting quality care;
2. A local phone number to check for substantiated complaints or to file a complaint;
3. Information about the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program;
4. Information on child development; and
5. Information on your Child Care Resource & Referral agency.

Additional information must be available on request including:

1. Local market rate information;
2. Licensing and registration requirements;
3. Information about Child Care Tax Credits;
4. Guidance about standard child care business practices such as contracts, rates and fees, etc.; and
5. Information about transportation policies of facilities.

Consumer education material must be available in a variety of formats that allow the material to be faxed, attached as an e-mail in PDF or Text format, or viewable through a link to the Child Care Aware website.

Publications

The Montana Resource and Referral Network developed a professional brochure titled “Tips for Choosing and Using Quality Child Care” that incorporates all of the required information except the checklist. The brochure can be modified with local contact information and logos. Contact

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the Network office at (406) 549-1028 for more information.

Child Care Aware has several professional brochures on selecting quality child care available for a modest cost. Publications include a checklist, infant and after school specific brochures and brochures for children with special needs. Publications can be ordered through Child Care Aware at (800) 424-2256 or at www.childcareaware.org.

**Star Quality
Brochure**

The Early Childhood Services Bureau publishes a brochure outlining the attributes of the Star Quality program and tiered reimbursement. Parents should understand they might be able to afford a higher quality program, when a Star program receives a quality bonus with the scholarship payment.

**Network
Disclaimer**

The network disclaimer must be printed on each referral and must read as follows; “Thank you for calling a member of the Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network. The information on the child care providers you receive is a referral and does not imply an endorsement for a particular child care provider or facility. It is your responsibility to screen and evaluate the child care providers on your list. It is recommended that you follow the guidelines outlined in the enclosed pamphlets when interviewing and make your decision based on those findings.”

**Licensed &
Registered
Providers**

All registered and licensed providers shall be entered into NACCRRAware. The Referral Specialist shall keep provider profile information current (within 1 year) and maintain up-to-date information on child care openings.

Future plans include a CCUBS interface that will populate provider demographic fields in NACCRRAware. Providers who do not wish to participate on the referral program should be checked as “No Referrals” and “No Web Referrals” in the *Referral* section.

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**No LUP
Referrals**

Legally unregistered providers (LUP/LUI) do not qualify for referrals. Providers who convert to LUP/LUI status must be coded 'Inactive' on NACCRRAware.

**Non-licensed
Providers**

Non-licensed, legally operating programs *may* be added to NACCRRAware at the CCR&R's discretion. These programs include legally operating facilities in which no licensing standards exist:

- After-school programs that are exempt from licensing
- Drop-in care
- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- Preschools
- Sick-child care
- Summer programs

**Provider
Updates**

CCR&R's are responsible for maintaining and updating the NACCRRAware database. Common updates include changes in vacancies, demographic information, adding new providers, and changing a provider's status. Provider information in NACCRRAware should be as current and accurate as possible. Accurate provider information is critical for providing good referrals, generating statewide statistics and making on-line referrals a success. Parents need to be able to retrieve the same information from the database as referral counselors without knowing all the details of the provider information.

Providers must submit the Child Care Referral Program Provider Information Form annually to their local CCR&R. Providers who do not submit the Child Care Referral Program Information Form shall be listed as "No Referrals" and "No Web Referrals."

Providers who have elected to participate in the referral program must be contacted for updates. Providers who consistently do not have vacancies, maintain an internal waiting list, and indicate that they will contact the Referral Specialist when they have a change must be contacted a minimum of two times per year to update information and waiting list status. Completion

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of the annual Child Care Referral Program Provider Information form may count as one of the two updates. CCR&R's must indicate providers who meet these criteria in the comment section of the Provider General screen.

CCR&R's shall make inquiries to providers who have indicated that they have vacancies or who periodically have vacancies a minimum of every quarter. Updates may be conducted by phone, e-mail, and mail or through personal interviews. The CCR&R must make a consistent good faith attempt to obtain updates but is not responsible if the provider does not respond to the inquiry. Vacancy information for slots that are in great demand, such as infant vacancies, needs to be updated more often. Updates need to be documented in the action log. The action log can be queried to see which providers have received a recent update.

Providers are encouraged to contact their CCR&R whenever they have a change in their vacancy status.

EXAMPLE: A large well-established center participates in the referral program but has a lengthy waiting list and is insistent that they will call the CCR&R if, and when, they have a vacancy. They have indicated that they would like to be listed on referrals as a facility with a waiting list if they meet the family's other criteria.

The CCR&R referral worker has noted this in the comment section of the Provider General screen. The CCR&R receives the Child Care Referral Program Provider Information form annually and contacts them at least once per year to be in contact and ensure that they still maintain a waiting list. The CCR&R usually completes this update mid-summer in anticipation of the busy back to school referral season.

EXAMPLE: A provider has periodic vacancies. Month #1: The CCR&R sends out postcard to each provider asking them to contact the Referral Specialist if they have a vacancy or have filled a vacancy. The provider does not contact the Referral Specialist to notify of any changes. Month #2: The CCR&R calls the provider and there has been no change in the vacancy information. Month #3: the provider calls the CCR&R to report that they have filled their vacancy.

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The CCR&R documents updates in NACCRAware when they have made a contact with the provider on the action log screen. The CCR&R keeps a log of when the postcard mailings and mass distribution e-mails were distributed to providers.

EXAMPLE: A provider called two weeks ago to let the Referral Specialist know that they have a full-time infant vacancy and a full-time vacancy for a 2+ year-old. The child care provider is located in an area that has limited vacancies and very few infant slots. The CCR&R has listed the provider on over 10 referrals in the last two weeks, but does not know if the vacancies have been filled.

The CCR&R shall contact the provider to ensure that they still have both vacancies, even though the CCR&R recently updated the provider's vacancies. If the vacancies have been filled, the CCR&R shall remind the provider to contact them when they have filled their vacancies.

Status Providers who have closed their child care business either temporarily or permanently should be listed as inactive *as of* the date they closed or became inactive. The reason for closure must be listed in the comment section and may be used to conduct research on provider turnover.

Community The community section in NACCRRAware is configured to collect data on business and community outreach. Businesses and agencies can be listed in the community section. Interactions with the businesses and agencies can be recorded in the action log to provide a permanent and thorough history.

NACCRRAware NACCRRAware is the software program used by the State of Montana to conduct child care referrals. The NACCRRAware Program is located on a state server and can be reached through the Internet at the following address:
<http://naccrraware.hhs.state.mt.us/naccrraware/servlet/naccrra.servlets.LoginS>

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NACCRRAware has a comprehensive on-line help feature available on the left-hand tool bar. Help features specific to the screen are also available on each screen when applicable. Items listed in this manual are items that are specific to the configuration and business practices of Montana's NACCRRAware database.

**Montana
Specific
Configuration**

NACCRRAware utilizes Standardized Fields for national data collection. The Standardized Fields cannot be changed by users and include extensive definitions about what data should be used in the field. Montana CCR&R's are required to follow the Standardized Field definitions.

To download the Standardized Field definitions go to
<http://www.naccrraware.org/ProductInfo/fields.htm>

Items not specifically mentioned in this manual are covered extensively in NACCRRAware help features or in training material. Occasionally the Referral Specialist may find field definitions in NACCRRAware help that are not visible in our current configurations; these fields have been hidden because they are not applicable to Montana CCR&R's business practices.

Please contact the MCCR&R Network Technology staff person to request additional configurations, to add or delete users, to change a password or for additional assistance. CCR&R members should not contact the NACCRRAware help desk; all requests to the help desk must go through the MCCR&R Network Technology staff person.

Mapping

Mapping software must be downloaded from NACCRRRA's Website and installed on every computer used to do referrals. All providers must be geomapped first, and then the family's address can be geomapped and used to make a match. Please contact MCCR&R network office for assistance with the download:

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http://www.naccraware.org/cgi-bin/Authenticate.cgi/Downloads/secure_downloads.htm

Geographic Area Use this section to define geographic locations that are specific to the local CCR&R district. For example, some areas cannot be adequately described by one zip code, city, or elementary school area, yet are common known identifiers for the area. These could include descriptors like “North Side,” “University Area” or “Grant Creek.” Each CCR&R can define up to 10 areas and use them as a matching feature. Each individual CCR&R will need to keep a local list of its local geographic areas and the corresponding number.

If CCR&R’s choose to use the locally defined geographic area field, they will need to include their local areas on the Provider Information Sheet and on the Child Care Need form. If the CCR&R does not use this field, then it should be removed from the form.