

Special Review

Child Care Resource Network
Volusia/Flagler Counties

Report Highlights

The Office of Early Learning found no evidence to support the allegation that Child Care Resource Network (CCRN) is inappropriately limiting referrals of children to private child care providers in order to benefit its directly operated facilities. During the period of time reviewed, CCRN referred children to the private child care provider initiating the complaint at a rate comparable to its own facilities. In addition, the centers operated by CCRN are not serving as many children as they are currently licensed to serve under child care licensing laws (not at full capacity).

Purpose and Scope

Florida law requires the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) to monitor and evaluate the performance of each early learning coalition in administering the school readiness program and in the administration of child care resource and referral. As part of this authority, the Deputy Director for the Office of Early Learning (OEL) initiated a special review of Child Care Resource Network in Volusia/Flagler counties.

This special review is intended to focus on one aspect of several allegations made by the owner of a private child care facility in Volusia County. Specifically, the child care owner alleged that the Child Care Resource Network (CCRN) did not refer families seeking child care services to her facility. Rather, as alleged by the owner, CCRN primarily referred families to facilities owned and directly operated by CCRN. In doing so, CCRN affected the ability of the owner to financially operate her facility because she lost the opportunity to offer her services to prospective clients. In addition, the child care owner reported that she had to close the facility in question on June, 2005.

In addition, AWI's Inspector General's Office is currently conducting an investigation of possible discrimination claims made by the owner of the private child care facility in Volusia County. This issue is beyond the scope of this report.

Methodology

In order to determine the validity of the allegations made against CCRN, the OEL review team conducted interviews and reviewed various information and documentation. The team conducted interviews with the chief executive officer (CEO), the resource & referral coordinator, the family services director, a family services counselor and other employees of Child Care Resource Network for Volusia and Flagler Counties.

CCRN uses an Enhanced Field System (EFS) as the internal data tracking system throughout the organization. EFS is a distributed data system that is used by all early learning coalitions in the state to provide child care referrals to all families, enroll children in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program and other school readiness programs and to process reimbursement payments for providers of these programs. EFS is also used to store informational data about providers for the purpose of resource and referral, which is available to the public.

School readiness reports are available through EFS, with several statistical reports on enrollment, expenditures and provider types that are run monthly and posted to a public website. The following documentation, generated by EFS was examined by the OEL staff.

- The number of children referred to the private child care provider initiating the complaint from December 2003 – February 2005.

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- The number of children referred to the three facilities owned by Child Care Resource Network from November 2004 – June 30 2005.

Background

The statewide child care resource and referral (CCR&R) network was established in 1989 by authority of s. 402.27, F.S. The program is funded by the Child Care Development Block Grant and administered by AWI. CCR&R is a service provided by the local school readiness coalitions throughout the state. CCR&R is dedicated to helping families identify quality early education programs, locate providers that meets each family's needs, and provide referrals to other community services. CCR&R is responsible for informing and educating parents on all child care options, including licensed and exempt child care centers, Gold Seal centers, VPK programs, licensed and exempt family child care centers, school-age programs, Head Start, Nanny/Au-pairs, as well as, informal and non-registered child care facilities.

Local Resource & Referral agencies offer free information and referral services to all families seeking quality early care and school readiness programs and out of school time solutions. Resource & Referral (R&R) also assists in the recruitment, startup and support of providers and promotes quality, availability and affordability of services in their communities.

In Volusia and Flagler Counties, CCRN is a subcontracted service provider for the local early learning coalition and provides CCR&R services to all families in those counties. In addition to providing CCR&R services to families, CCRN also owns three child care facilities in Volusia County.

Child Care Resource Network Organization

CCRN is a private non-profit corporation providing comprehensive child care services to children and families in Volusia and Flagler Counties. The agency was incorporated in 1972 as United Child Care and became CC R N in 1999. CCRN is governed by a Board of Directors made up of local community members.

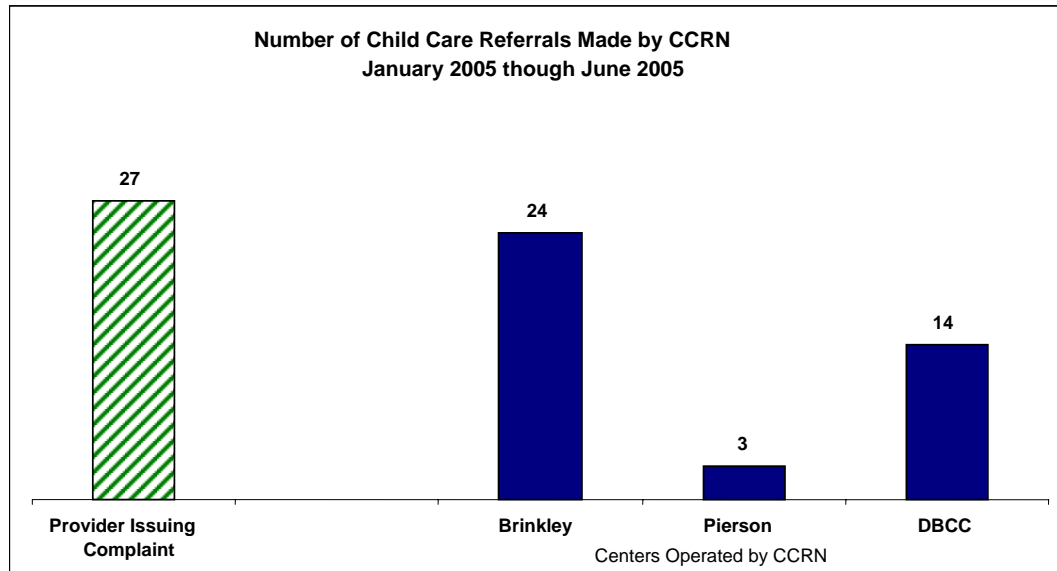
CCRN employs four full-time family resource specialists and 13 family service counselors to perform resource and referral services. The resource and referral coordinator explained that the specialists and counselors have different responsibilities. The specialists provide resource and referrals (R&R) for families by providing families with a computer generated referral listing of providers in the area that most closely match their search criteria, as well as, any community referrals that the families may need. The specialists and counselors who provide R&R help guide families in choosing a facility, by educating parents on the types of facilities available and providing tools to help them evaluate programs that they are considering. The counselors can assist families by performing both R&R and eligibility functions. During an interview process, either in person or over the phone, parents provide documentation that assists the counselor in generating child care referrals and verifying that a family is eligible for child care assistance if this is requested.

Findings

The OEL review team found no evidence to support the allegation that CCRN is inappropriately limiting referrals of children to private child care providers in order to benefit its directly operated facilities. The team reached this conclusion based on a review of the following information:

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- CCRN referred children to the private child care provider initiating the complaint at a rate comparable to its own facilities. Interviews with staff of CCRN and reviews of documentation indicated that children were referred to all providers in the counties, and parents were given referrals for child care services suitable for their needs. The chart below represents the number of actual referrals for the centers operated by CCRN and the provider issuing the complaint for a six month period beginning January 2005 through June 2005. During this period, the center owned by the provider initiating the complaint received 27 referrals from CCRN, while the three centers operated by CCRN received a total of 41 referrals combined.¹ The highest number of referrals received by an individual center operated by CCRN was 24.



- The centers operated by CCRN are not serving as many children as they are currently licensed to serve under child care licensing laws (not at full capacity). As of August 2005, all three centers operated by CCRN were not at full capacity, providing further evidence that CCRN was not limiting referrals of children to other providers in order to benefit its own facilities. For example, while the Carl Brinkley Family Education Center is licensed to serve (licensing capacity) 36 children, it only had 26 children enrolled in the center in August 2005.

Name of Center operated by CCRN	Licensing Capacity	Number Children Enrolled as of August 2005
The Carl Brinkley Family Education Center	36	26
Pierson Montessori Center	10	1
Daytona Beach Community College Child Development Lab School	18	17

¹ Provider issuing complaint closed one facility in June 2005 and opened a new facility in July 2005

Conclusion and Summary

The Office of Early Learning found no evidence to support the allegation that Child Care Resource Network (CCRN) is inappropriately limiting referrals of children to private child care providers in order to benefit its directly operated facilities. During the period of time reviewed, CCRN referred children to the private child care provider initiating the complaint at a rate comparable to its own facilities. In addition, the centers operated by CCRN are not serving as many children as they are currently licensed to serve under child care licensing laws (not at full capacity).

It is determined at this point that no other recommendations or further action will be conducted from the OEL.