

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 1471 (Soria) – As Amended March 28, 2025

SUBJECT: Resource and referral agencies

SUMMARY: Revises the responsibilities of local childcare resource and referral (R&R) agencies by codifying their role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Requires the California Child Care R&R Network (R&R Network) to implement the roles and responsibilities assigned to it in the disaster plans. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Repeals state law described in 7) below;
- 2) Strikes legislative intent to allocate funds for the purposes described in 7) below annually, subject to an appropriation.
- 3) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, local childcare R&R agencies to do all of the following:
 - a) Implement the roles and responsibilities assigned to R&R programs and R&R agencies in the disaster plans;
 - b) Support childcare providers in establishing and communicating their disaster response policies, helping to build relationships with local emergency response teams, and offering training to ensure that childcare providers' emergency contact information and disaster preparedness supplies are up to date; and,
 - c) Provide relief and recovery to childcare providers, including, but not limited to, by serving as intermediaries to develop new, and support existing, childcare facilities and capacity, and by collaborating with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to streamline and improve data collection processes.
- 4) Requires CDSS, in consultation with childcare R&R agencies, to establish data collection and reporting requirements relating to disasters and disaster preparedness for childcare providers, which shall include, but not be limited to, a requirement for childcare providers to provide data relating to childcare provider status, capacity, and vacancy.
- 5) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the R&R Network to implement the roles and responsibilities assigned to it in the disaster plans.
- 6) Defines, for the purposes of these provisions, "disaster plans" mean the California Child Care Disaster Plan 2016 and California's Statewide Interagency Childcare Disaster Plan, published in October 2023.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Specifies the purposes of the California Child Day Care Facilities Act, which include streamlining the administration of childcare licensing and thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of this system; and, encouraging the development of licensing staff with

knowledge and understanding of children and childcare needs. (Health and Safety Code [HSC] § 1596.73)

- 2) States legislative intent that all families have access to childcare and development services, through R&R where appropriate, and regardless of demographic background or special needs, and that families are provided the opportunity to attain financial stability through employment while maximizing growth and development of their children and enhancing their parenting skills through participation in childcare and development programs. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 10207.5)
- 3) Defines “childcare and development services” to mean services designed to meet a wide variety of children and families’ needs while parents and guardians are working, in training, seeking employment, incapacitated, or in need of respite. These services may include direct care and supervision, instructional activities, R&R programs, and alternative payment arrangements. (WIC § 10213.5(j))
- 4) Requires the R&R Network to have the following responsibilities:
 - a) Establish and maintain a toll-free line to allow parents, employment agencies, childcare referral groups and registries, alternative payment programs, and others to determine if a provider is a trustline applicant or a registered trustline childcare provider, defined as a professional supervised visitation provider who is not required to be licensed;
 - b) Develop a statewide promotion plan, publicize statewide existence, benefits, and methods of accessing the trustline for both parents and providers, and distribute trustline applicants statewide;
 - c) Monitor and provide assistance to the childcare R&R agencies in carrying out their trustline responsibilities;
 - d) Seek private financial support of the trustline; and,
 - e) Ensure that the trustline is accessible to all persons in the state, regardless of their ability to speak English. (HSC § 1596.643(a))
- 5) Requires R&R programs, established to serve a defined geographic area, to provide the following services:
 - a) Maintain a comprehensive, regularly updated resource file of all childcare services in the area—including family childcare homes, public and private childcare programs, full-time and part-time programs, and infant, preschool, and extended care programs;
 - b) Establish a referral process that respects parental confidentiality, prioritizes access to licensed providers, and ensures broad availability through toll-free phone lines, accessible locations, and multilingual services;
 - c) Track and document all childcare service requests;

- d) Provide technical assistance to current and prospective providers; and,
 - e) Offer a childcare navigator to support foster children, children reunified with families, and those involved in the child welfare system, helping coordinate care plans, subsidy access, and applications. (WIC § 10219)
- 6) Provides that in addition to the services described in 4) above, a childcare R&R program may provide short-term respite childcare. This temporary childcare service can be provided to families referred by child protective services, to relieve stress associated with abuse, neglect, or the risk of harm, and to assist parents who are temporarily unable to care for their children due to serious illness, injury, homelessness, or other family crises. Respite care may also be used to give temporary relief to parents caring for children with exceptional needs. (WIC § 10220(a))
- 7) Requires federal funds allocated to local childcare R&R agencies to support their continued participation in COVID-19 relief and recovery to include, but not be limited to, strengthening their role in serving as intermediaries to develop new, and support existing, childcare facilities and capacity, and to streamline and improve data collection processes in collaboration with the state for use by the agencies and by the state. Additional data reporting shall include gathering data from providers and updating information on childcare provider status, capacity, and vacancy at least once a month. Data collected shall be provided to CDSS or its designee at least monthly. CDSS shall provide guidance regarding data collection and reporting requirements. (WIC § 10224.5)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Background: *Subsidized Childcare.* California's subsidized childcare system is designed to provide assistance to parents and guardians who are working, in training, seeking employment, incapacitated, or in need of respite. California's subsidized childcare is made up of a system of programs serving children from birth through 13 years of age, funded through a mix of federal and state dollars, and administered through a mixed delivery system by local educational agencies, community-based providers, and family childcare providers. Parents participating in California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), as well as families transitioning from and no longer receiving CalWORKs aid, can be eligible for childcare, which is offered in three "stages." The largest programs are: General Child Care, which includes contracted centers and family childcare homes; the California State Preschool Program, which provides developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate curriculum to eligible three- and four-year olds; and, alternative payment programs, which provide vouchers that can be used to obtain childcare in a center, family childcare home, or from a license-exempt provider.

Resource & Referral Agencies & Network. R&R agencies serve as a bridge between families seeking childcare and the network of licensed providers across the state. R&R agencies help parents understand their childcare options, provide referrals tailored to family needs, and offer other consumer education topics such as program quality, licensing standards, and financial assistance.

Beyond supporting families, R&R agencies also play a critical role in the development and sustainability of the childcare workforce. They assist childcare providers with licensing navigation, business development, training and professional development, and ongoing quality improvement. R&R agencies often serve as the first point of contact for individuals entering the childcare profession and offer ongoing support to help providers maintain operations and meet regulatory standards.

Located in every county, and often operating through contracts with nonprofit organizations or county offices of education, these agencies are well-positioned to understand the localized needs of childcare providers and families. Their deep community ties, trusted relationships, and existing infrastructure have enabled them to be effective intermediaries in the delivery of public investments and emergency resources, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and recent natural disasters.

According to CDSS, from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, California's 69 R&Rs responded to nearly one million service requests. During this period, R&R agencies handled over 413,000 requests for childcare referrals and more than 535,000 inquiries for additional childcare-related information.

The R&R Network is a statewide nonprofit organization that plays a coordinating role in supporting local R&R agencies. Established in 1980, the R&R Network represents a number of R&R agencies and serves as a policy advocate and technical assistance provider, ensuring that families, childcare providers, and local R&R agencies are connected to the resources and the support they need to strengthen early care and education systems.

R&R Agencies in Emergency Contexts. California faces an increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters—from wildfire and floods to extreme heat and earthquakes—compounding the ongoing risks posed by public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have underscored the fragility of the childcare system and revealed the need for a stable, coordinated infrastructure to protect children, support providers, and sustain access to care during emergencies.

When disasters strike, childcare providers—many of whom are small, home-based operators—often lack the resources, training, or support systems to respond effectively. Power outages, evacuations, or facility damage can force prolonged closure, while families struggle to find safe, alternative care. In many cases, the absence of reliable and real-time information about provider availability and status further disrupts service delivery and hampers emergency coordination efforts.

California's childcare R&R agencies have increasingly served as frontline partners during emergencies and disasters, leveraging their community relationships and logistical infrastructure to support both families and providers in times of crisis. While their core mandate centers on helping families to access childcare and supporting provider development, recent events have highlighted the critical role they can play in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, R&R agencies were rapidly mobilized to disseminate public health guidance, distribute essential supplies, and connect providers with emergency funding opportunities. They served as critical communication hubs, relaying up-to-date information between state agencies, providers, and families. In many regions, R&Rs also helped track which

childcare providers remained open to serve essential workers, often under rapidly changing health and safety protocols.

Their emergency role was further demonstrated during California's wildfires in January 2025, extreme heat waves, and power outages. In these instances, R&R agencies have helped coordinate temporary closures, support provider relocation, and guide families through emergency childcare options. However, many of these efforts were ad hoc or dependent on temporary funding and guidance. The absence of a formal, codified framework has limited the state's ability to consistently rely on R&Rs during emergencies.

Recognizing this gap, *this bill* aims to establish the responsibilities of R&R agencies in disaster scenarios as a permanent statutory function. By positioning R&R as intermediaries in emergency planning and recovery, *this bill* affirms their importance not only as navigators of the childcare system, but also as essential partners in California's broad emergency response network.

Childcare Disaster Plans. The *California Childcare Disaster Plan (2016)*, developed in alignment with federal Child Care and Development Block Grant requirements and as an annex to the broader State Emergency Plan, provides a comprehensive approach to emergency preparedness, response, and recovery within the early care and education system. It outlines strategies to improve communication among childcare providers, families, and emergency responders, and it recommends best practices for evacuation planning, emergency drills, and supply management. The plan also clearly assigns roles and responsibilities across a wide range of state agencies, including CDSS and Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), as well as federal partners and the R&R Network to ensure safe evacuations, continuity of operations, health and safety monitoring, and access to funding and recovery services.

In response to ongoing lessons from the pandemic and climate-related disasters, the *Statewide Interagency Child Care Disaster Plan (2023)*, as required under federal law as part of the Child Care and Development Fund, was released to promote greater cross-agency coordination. Developed by CDSS and with input from state departments, local emergency planners, and childcare stakeholders, the 2023 Plan clarifies the roles of state and local agencies in ensuring continuity of childcare before, during, and after emergencies and disasters.

In the preparedness phase, licensed childcare providers are required to maintain emergency plans that include evacuation procedures, shelter-in-place protocols, communication systems, and accommodations for children with disabilities or medical needs. State regulations also mandate training in pediatric first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and infectious disease prevention, with drills conducted at least twice a year. During an emergency, CDSS coordinates with local and state partners to issue timely communications via bulletins, licensing notices, and Everbridge mass notifications. R&R agencies serve as key local hubs for real-time updates on provider status, childcare availability, and relocation needs. Licensing staff use automated systems to track operational status and communicate with providers in evacuation zones. In the recovery phase, the plan ensures that providers are not penalized for closures due to emergencies and may continue receiving subsidies during periods of temporary closure. Emergency waivers, technical assistance, and support for temporary childcare arrangements help restore services quickly.

This bill codifies the responsibilities defined in the plans—such as supporting provider emergency planning, collecting disaster-related data, and coordinating with emergency management partners. It also ensures that both local R&R agencies and the statewide R&R Network are explicitly tasked with fulfilling their roles under these existing plans, contingent on

state appropriations. *This bill* also requires CDSS to develop, in consultation with R&R agencies, standardized data collection and reporting protocols to improve real-time visibility into the availability of childcare services during and after a disaster.

While *this bill* updates the roles and responsibilities of R&R agencies, it does not require state or local agencies like CalOES or other responder entities to partner with R&R agencies to implement the provisions of the bill.

Author’s Statement: According to the Author, “California has suffered many devastating disasters in recent years, and the effects of climate change mean we can only expect future disasters to become more frequent and dangerous. Children, especially infants and toddlers, have unique needs that emergency responders may not always be equipped to address. To address this, California has developed a Child Care Disaster Plan, which outlines communication and coordination protocols for disaster-affected childcare systems and providers.

“However, California's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, who connect families with childcare providers according to their specific needs and coordinate information sharing in quickly changing situations, do not have clearly defined roles and are not provided adequate resource to fulfill the range of responsibilities they must deal with during emergencies. [This bill] defines the role of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in disaster preparedness and response, ensuring families can find safe childcare when they most urgently need it. The needs of California's children should not be forgotten in the wake of disasters, and [this bill] ensures families can be connected with the childcare resources they critically need during the most chaotic and stressful disaster conditions.”

Equity Implications: Historically, emergencies and natural disasters have disproportionately impacted low-income families, communities of color, rural areas, and non-English-speaking households—populations that often face the greatest barriers to accessing reliable childcare, emergency resources, and recovery support. *This bill* directly addresses these disparities by codifying the role of R&R agencies in not only supporting the childcare infrastructure during crises, but also doing so in a way that is inclusive and community-centered.

Furthermore, by supporting the modernization of data collection systems in partnership with the state, *this bill* enhances transparency and accountability in how resources are allocated and which communities are being served. This creates a more responsive and just infrastructure that prioritizes the needs of the most vulnerable. *This bill* helps ensure that California’s disaster planning and recovery efforts in the childcare sector are coordinated and equitable.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 131 (Ting), Chapter 116, Statute of 2021, allocated \$10 million in one-time funds to support the MyChildCarePlan.org website for R&R agencies.

SB 1154 (Liu) of 2016, would have updated, clarified, and codified duties and responsibilities of childcare R&R programs. *SB 1154 was held on the Senate Committee on Appropriations suspense file.*

AB 2463 (Brownley) of 2010, would have codified and updated the activities and responsibilities of childcare R&R programs. *AB 2463 was held on the Senate Committee on Appropriations suspense file.*

AB 753 (Escutia), Chapter 843, Statutes of 1997, transferred the jurisdiction of Trustline (the registry of childcare providers) from the Department of Justice to CDSS.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (Sponsor)
Child Action, INC.
Community Action Partnership of Madera County, INC.
Community Child Care Council (4Cs) of Alameda County
Del Norte Child Care Council
Plumas Rural Services
Pomona Unified School District
Santa Cruz County Office of Education
Sierra Nevada Children's Services
TOOTRiS

Opposition

None on file.

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