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## **Resource & Referral Agencies: Providing the Necessary Infrastructure and Expertise in Implementing License-Exempt Health and Safety Training and Monitoring**

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One of the new requirements listed in the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act includes health and safety training and monitoring of non-relative license-exempt providers who receive subsidies from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Training topics range from first aid/CPR and infectious disease control, to emergency preparedness and preventing sudden infant death syndrome.

California must be strategic in choosing how to implement these new requirements. The agencies that provide the trainings and monitoring should already have an infrastructure with exempt providers, as well as experience in supporting them; the manner in which the providers are monitored must be sensitive and culturally competent, rather than punitive. With a lack of affordable licensed care options, many families rely on friends and neighbors to care for their children. These exempt providers are an integral part of California's child care system and are not experienced in running child care businesses, so care must be taken to make the trainings and monitoring safe and accessible to them. California's 57 resource & referral (R&R) agencies have a long history of working with informal caregivers. In 2005 the California Department of Education, Child Development Division funded the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (Network) and California's R&R agencies to develop community-based models and implement the Informal Care Training Project, also known as the Growing, Learning, and Caring Project (GLC). The ICTP was created to provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to exempt home-based providers so that the children in their care were prepared for Kindergarten. The GLC project ended in 2010 due to budget cuts.

More recently, the Network has partnered with Child Care Resources in Washington to pilot the Kaleidoscope Play & Learn project (Kaleidoscope) in California. Kaleidoscope is an evidence-informed model that supports and trains informal caregivers. Locally-trained R&R agencies in California are using the Kaleidoscope curriculum in their weekly play groups for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers and the young children in their care. Playgroup facilitators model skill-building techniques on topics such as child development, maximizing learning opportunities, kindergarten readiness, and accessing community resources. Along with providing a stimulating and fun environment for the children, an outside evaluation has found an increase in the quality of care offered by the adults. The evaluation also showed that participants find the program an invaluable resource in helping them provide responsive and developmentally-appropriate care, as well as connect with their community.

As part of the CCDBG requirements, the federal government expects that the health and safety trainings for license-exempt providers would also act as a gateway for additional professional development and higher learning opportunities.<sup>1</sup> By nature of their work, housing the health and safety trainings and monitoring within R&R agencies automatically opens doors to a multitude of additional educational and professional development activities. For example, the Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP), implemented by local R&Rs across California since 1985, provides training and technical assistance to home-based providers seeking licensure, as well as additional trainings and workshops. Exempt providers accessing health and safety trainings at the R&R would not only have access to CCIP but to additional, non-required trainings that CCIP participants also often take advantage of (food program, peer support, Strengthening Families™, trauma-informed care, etc.). Since participating in CCIP often encourages caregivers to pursue higher education, it follows that exempt providers interacting with the R&Rs will also realize and utilize similar available opportunities. With these providers accessing a wide range of trainings and learning opportunities, the young children in their care will also gain access to developmentally-appropriate care that helps them enter kindergarten prepared.

Through both GLC and Kaleidoscope, California's R&R agencies have shown an enduring commitment to supporting license-exempt, home-based providers. The fact that they also house CCIP and additional trainings makes them an even stronger fit for implementing the health and safety training and monitoring. R&R agencies have a broad reach, as they serve all families and providers, not only those receiving subsidies; the techniques used for the new health and safety requirements can be easily extrapolated to assist all license-exempt providers within the R&R's reach, thereby lifting the quality of all exempt care. The R&Rs are specialized not only at providing resources for families and providers, but at integrating themselves into their local communities and acting as community-based anchors. In the age of concern about government and other monitors whose intentions are unclear, long-standing, experienced agencies whose central mission is focused on children and families are the only organizations that would be able to sensitively enter a person's home. R&R staff, many of whom are trained in Strengthening Families™, are able to provide mentorship to the caregiver by validating their strengths while assisting them in modifying the environment to make it safer for children. The goal of the new health and safety training and monitoring is the same as the R&R mission – to create the best environments for young children so they can grow to be healthy and happy adults.

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<sup>1</sup> Draft CCDF Preprint 9-14-2015.