

Date of Hearing: May 7, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill codifies the roles and responsibilities assigned to local childcare resource and referral (R&R) agencies and the California Child Care R&R Network (R&R Network) in the California Child Care Disaster Plan 2016, and California's Statewide Interagency Childcare Disaster Plan.

This bill also requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to establish data collection and reporting requirements relating to disasters and disaster preparedness for childcare providers.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Repeals existing law requiring federal funds allocated to local childcare R&R agencies to support their continued participation in COVID-19 relief and recovery to be used to strengthen their role in serving as intermediaries to develop new, and support existing, childcare facilities and capacity and to streamline and improve data collection processes, as specified. Deletes corresponding intent language to allocate funds for these purposes.
- 2) Instead 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.
 - 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 CDSS to streamline and improve data collection processes.
- 3) 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. These requirements must include, but not be limited to, a requirement for childcare providers to provide data relating to childcare provider status, capacity, and vacancy.

- 4) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the R&R Network to implement the roles and responsibilities assigned to it in the disaster plans.
- 5) Defines, for the purposes of these provisions, “disaster plans” to mean the California Child Care Disaster Plan 2016 and California’s Statewide Interagency Childcare Disaster Plan, published in October 2023.

FISCAL EFFECT:

CDSS estimates the following:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of approximately \$18 million annually to support staffing, program operations, and overhead for local R&R agencies to carry out the disaster-related roles and responsibilities outlined in the bill.
- 2) Ongoing GF costs of \$577,000 in the first year and \$563,000 annually thereafter for three positions in its Community Care Licensing Division to develop regulations, coordinate and collaborate with R&Rs on disaster planning and emergency response, and to provide ongoing technical assistance to support the implementation of disaster plan components.

The author has submitted a budget request for \$20 million annually ongoing to support R&R agencies and \$500,000 for the R&R network.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network. 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 R&R agencies 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 R&R agencies in disaster preparedness and response, ensuring families can find safe childcare when they most urgently need it.

- 2) **Background. Resource and Referral Agencies.** R&R agencies are state-funded community-based programs located in every county that 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.

The R&R Network is a statewide nonprofit organization that plays a coordinating role in supporting local R&R agencies. 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.

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. The plan outlines strategies to improve communication among childcare providers, families, and emergency responders, and 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 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.

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. The 2023 plan clarifies the roles of state and local agencies in ensuring continuity of childcare before, during, and after emergencies and disasters.

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.

According to the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network:

[This bill] builds upon existing structures to ensure that child care R&R agencies and providers are fully integrated into disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. By codifying the role of child care CCR&Rs and the R&R Network in emergency management, this bill significantly improves current practices which require “reinvention of the wheel” with every emergency.

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