

Prepared by: Pathways LA for the
Empowerment Congress Education Committee Panel Discussion
Early Education: Promise, Partnership and Policy
Access to High Quality Early Education, Referral and Resources
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A. How can families access information about early learning opportunities?

The local Resource & Referral (R&R) agency provides families of all backgrounds and needs with vital information about early learning opportunities. The R&R serves as a one stop shop for families. The R&R conducts an intake of the family's specific needs, provides them with valuable information about choosing quality early care and education settings, and provides them with a variety of options that best fits their needs. The R&R also assesses the family's potential eligibility for payment assistant programs such as the CalWORKs programs, Alternative Payment programs, Family Child Care Home Education Networks, Early Head Start, Head Start, State Preschool, Los Angeles Universal Preschool, 21st Century Learning Centers, and After School Enrichment Programs. In addition, the R&R has an extensive database of licensed center-based and family child care programs to utilize when offering family's referrals to meet their needs.

B. What kind of activities would ensure children and working families in the 2nd District have consistent access to high-quality early learning?

- Ensuring that the community is aware of and connected with their local Resource & Referral (R&R) agency.
- Supporting the development of the early care and education workforce through professional development opportunities, advocacy regarding increased and sustainable wages, in order to increase and sustain the viability and longevity of quality programs.
- Supporting Community Care Licensing in their efforts to increase and enforce program monitoring and correction.
- Encouraging parents to participate in Community Voices, a countywide advocacy project which offers a safe and supportive environment for parents or anyone who cares about children, to learn to use their voice to fight for our children and create change amid the issues.

C. What would a diverse delivery system of access and affordability look like?

A diverse system of accessible and affordable services should be based on strategic partnerships which focus on the integration of programs and strategic outreach in order to ensure that families are aware of the various services available to them and that program staff can link them appropriately and effectively. This delivery system should be inclusive of all families and children and be able to accommodate the unique individual needs of a family. Part-day care, odd hour care, care for children with special needs, care for infants and toddlers as well as

preschoolers, augmented by government subsidy when needed, are a reflection of a diverse delivery system.

D. Explain the current system of referral and resources for families and special needs children.

The Resource & Referral (R&R) agencies support parents and legal guardians in making individual choices for early care and education. We provide accurate and objective information, that is updated on a quarterly basis, on all of the available licensed and legally license exempt early care and education options, as well as on the various programs available in the community. We provide parents with education and resources regarding selecting a setting that best suits their needs. This service is available to all persons regardless of income level or other eligibility requirements. Services are available by phone, in-person, or on-line through the R&R's website. The R&R works closely with parents in determining the needs of their family. Staff use information gathered through a brief intake with the parents to determine the most suitable environment. All information received from parents is confidential. Referral services are provided in a manner which is representative of the diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic needs of the family.

Through the intake process families with children with special needs are referred to either the local Regional Center, or to LAUSD, whichever applicable, for assessment and determination of eligibility for services. If they have already received an assessment and have been deemed not eligible for services appropriate community resource referrals are shared with the family. All early care and education settings should accommodate children of all needs and abilities. The R&R agencies provide training and education, resources, and technical assistance to all providers regarding the inclusion of children with special needs. We strive to equip all providers to provide the highest quality regardless of a child's abilities and needs.