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APPENDIX

NACCRRRA Quality Assurance for CCR&Rs: Parent Services Referral Call Checklist
KEY FINDINGS

This summary presents the results of an evaluation of the services provided by the Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) Family Center from July 2012 through May 2013. The results are based on call center records, an online survey, phone surveys and interviews, a focus group, and secret shopper call data provided by the following sources:

- CCA of WA Family Center phone and Internet customers
- CCA of WA Family Center resource specialists
- Staff members in CCA of WA regions outside of King County
- Parents with young children across Washington State

In July 2012, to increase the efficiency and consistency of statewide information, resource, and referral services, the services were moved from being regionally based at local CCA offices to being centralized at the CCA of WA Family Center. The CCA of WA Family Center child care resource and referral services are administered by CCA of King County, which is housed within Child Care Resources (CCR). They are available by phone 40 hours per week with a dedicated Spanish-language line and capacity to serve over 200 other languages and dialects through interpreters. Information and referrals are also available via the Internet in the form of a searchable database that is refreshed daily. Customers who access services by phone can choose to receive support materials via email, fax, or the US Postal Service. Materials include customized educational information on child care (e.g., quality indicators, financial assistance resources) as well as various state and local resources relevant to families. Customers who take advantage of the web option have immediate online access to the same information.

From July 2012 through May 2013, the CCA of WA Family Center provided information and referral services to 18,520 customers by phone and via the Internet. Among the 9,981 customers served by phone, 7,853 (79%) were first-time customers seeking referrals, and 1,378 (14%) were served via the Spanish line. The largest number of first-time referral phone customers were located in the King County CCA of WA region (32%); followed by the Northwest and Eastern CCA of WA regions (14% each); the Pierce County CCA of WA region (13%); and the Olympic Peninsula, Southwest, and Central CCA of WA regions (9% each).

Eleven key findings are as follows:

1. **The CCA of WA Family Center is serving a diverse population of customers statewide.**
   - One in six phone customers speak Spanish.
   - Phone customers accessed services in 16 native languages other than English and Spanish.
   - Phone customers are diverse in terms of knowledge about child care. About a quarter felt they understood what to look for in quality child care, and less than half were aware of the connection between quality child care and school success at the time of their phone call to the CCA of WA Family Center.
2. **Phone customers experienced increased knowledge of what quality child care looks like and increased awareness of the connection between quality child care and school success. They reported that both the phone calls and the materials were useful in learning about quality child care.**

- The majority of the phone-customer survey respondents (73% of 415) reported increased understanding of what quality child care looks like; almost all remaining customers reported knowing what to look for in quality child care prior to the call.

- Just over two thirds of the phone customers interviewed (N=63) named at least one indicator when asked what people might look for in quality child care; just under half named at least two, and about a tenth named at least three. Most attributed this knowledge to the service they received from the CCA of WA Family Center.

- The percentage of phone-customer survey respondents aware of the connection between quality child care and school success increased from 39% prior to the call to 83% after the call.

- Over two fifths of the interviewed customers with children younger than five years of age said the call helped them think about the relationship between child care and children’s development or readiness for kindergarten. Six of these customers made a point to say that it was the combination of the call and the materials sent that helped them learn about this.

3. **Most interviewed customers reported their eventual child care choice was their “top choice,” and the majority of their selections were based on the information and referrals they received from the CCA of WA Family Center.**

- Three fifths reported the child care they eventually found was their “top choice.”

- Almost nine tenths of the 58 interviewed phone customers who searched for care reported their choice was based at least partly on the information they received during and after the call.

- A little over half of those customers who searched for care chose a provider from the list generated by the resource specialist or used the information from the list to guide their provider search.

- Interviewed customers who searched for care were most likely to consider proximity and flexible hours.
4. **Resource specialists could improve the consistency with which they deliver the educational material, particularly in relation to two of five child care quality indicators**¹—*family relationships* (including open and respectful communication with families, genuine engagement of families, meaningful efforts to embrace diversity) and *quality improvement* (including participation in Early Achievers and accreditation).

- Interviewed phone customers were least likely to mention aspects of child care related to *family relationships* and *quality improvement*
  - *As things people might look for when selecting high-quality care* (four and seven of 63, respectively, compared to 29 mentioning aspects related to health and safety, 20 mentioning aspects related to learning environment, and 12 mentioning aspects related to staff professionalism); and
  - *As aspects they considered when searching for care for their child after the call to the CCA of WA Family Center*—none of the 58 who shared their search criteria considered family relationships and three considered participation in Early Achievers, the state’s child care quality rating system.

- Results of the secret shopper calls suggest resource specialists are least likely to explain the *family relationships* indicator of quality child care (explained in 58% of the 19 calls) and aspects of the *quality improvement* indicator; “accreditation” and “the state’s Quality Rating System” were explained in 42% and 53% of the calls, respectively.

- Among parents of young children surveyed statewide (N=400), 11% had heard of Early Achievers prior to the telephone survey. Among those who had heard of Early Achievers, 17% reported it played a role in their choice of child care (9% a “big role” and 8% a “small role”).

- In light of the CCA of WA’s role of increasing caregiver awareness and understanding of Early Achievers in its statewide implementation, these results suggest a ripe opportunity, in this early phase, to maximize the power of the CCA of WA Family Center to help fulfill this role.

5. **CCA of WA is surpassing its goal of maintaining service volume levels within local markets statewide via centralized information and referral services.**

- The overall volume of customer calls to the CCA of WA Family Center increased 18% since the centralization in July 2012.

- Increases occurred among residents of most Washington counties, as represented by the 11 pre-2013 regions, with the exception of Pacific, Lewis, Grays Harbor, Mason, and Thurston Counties, collectively (former Region B).

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¹ The other three child care quality indicators are *health and safety*, *learning environment*, and *staff professionalism and training*, defined on page 16 of this report.
6. Most of the CCA of WA Family Center calls (97%) met quality standards based on the Best Practices criteria of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies for referral calls. This exceeded the criterion for this service-quality outcome. However, results of the secret shopper calls suggest resource specialists could provide individualized information and explain post-call expectations more consistently.

7. Over 85% of CCA of WA Family Center phone-customer survey respondents reported most or all of their needs were fulfilled by the resource specialist at the time of the call, meeting the criterion for this service-quality outcome, compared to 61% of Internet customers.

8. Some regional variations surfaced in customers’ perceptions of all their needs having been met and the resource specialist understanding their area, though not in perceptions of the resource specialist understanding their needs.
   - These regional variations, along with resource specialists’ reports of inconsistencies in information exchange across regions, suggest that processes and expectations around information exchange between resource specialists and their regional contacts could be improved.

9. Resource specialists’ insights into needed supports for high-quality service suggested three “best practices” for delivering information and referral services via a centralized call center.
   - Providing resource specialists with professional development opportunities that support high-quality service provision to an expanded customer base, including how to navigate calls in which customers guide the conversation away from the educational material they are charged with covering, particularly that related to Early Achievers
   - Developing and refining systems that facilitate the provision of real-time access to information that will increase their regional understanding
   - Developing and refining systems that support regular and consistent information exchange between CCA of Washington and regional CCAs

10. One fifth of Washington parents have heard of the CCA of WA Family Center or Child Care Resources and Referral (the name of the service prior to centralization)—substantially fewer than the almost one third who have heard of Care.com (a national website that provides searchable child care listings).
    - Among the 400 parents of young children surveyed statewide, 6% have heard of the CCA of WA Family Center, and 17% have heard of Child Care Resources and Referral.
    - Awareness of the CCA of WA Family Center did not differ to a statistically significant degree by gender, age, community type, income level, race or CCA region; however, awareness of Child Care Resources and Referral was significantly higher among female caregivers compared to male caregivers, and among caregivers in households with incomes under $50,000 compared to caregivers in households with higher incomes.
The most common sources of awareness of the CCA of WA Family Center or Child Care Resources and Referral among Washington parents were social workers, family members, or friends.

11. **The Internet is by far the preferred way that parents of young children want to learn about parenting issues and child care; a toll-free number is the least preferred way.**

In light of (1) parents’ preference for accessing child-care-related information via the Internet and (2) the larger proportion of phone customers compared to Internet customers who felt their needs were met by service delivered through those respective modes, parents would be well served by better integration between phone and Internet-based service offered by the CCA of WA Family Center.
INTRODUCTION

Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) contracted with Organizational Research Services (ORS), an independent research and evaluation firm, to evaluate the process and outcomes of the CCA of WA Family Center during its first year of centralized statewide service provision. This report shares the results from online survey, interview, focus group, and “secret shopper” data reflecting services provided from July 2012 through May 2013. The report includes

- who is accessing CCA of WA Family Center services,
- how many customers are accessing these services,
- the extent to which the CCA of WA Family Center is achieving priority outcomes, and
- a brief discussion of the results.

BACKGROUND

In March 2011, CCA of WA, previously known as the Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network, led a discussion with its member council to define core child care resource and referral services. As a part of that discussion, some member council representatives proposed exploring the idea of increasing the cost effectiveness and consistency of the state’s information and referral services by moving them from the (then) 11 local child care resource and referral regions to a single statewide call center.2 The member council agreed to review the feasibility of this proposal and created a task force to explore the idea further.

A task force composed of member council representatives supported by CCA of WA staff met several times over the next six months. At the member council meeting in September 2011, the council voted 10-to-1 to recommend forwarding the call center concept to the CCA of WA Board of Trustees for a decision on whether to move forward. The following day, the board voted unanimously to direct CCA of WA staff to implement a centralized statewide call center. In January 2012, CCA of WA circulated a Request for Proposals to administer the centralized call center to the 11 local child care resource and referral regions. Child Care Resources (CCR; aka CCA of King County) was awarded the contract and began statewide administration of the call center on July 1, 2012.

2 In spring of 2013, CCA of WA redefined the CCA regions to build capacity for implementing Early Achievers by reducing the number of regions from 11 to 7.
CCA of WA Family Center Infrastructure and Services

CCA of WA Family Center child care resource and referral services are available by phone 40 hours per week and evenings by appointment. Services include a dedicated Spanish-language line and capacity to serve speakers of over 200 other languages and dialects through interpreters. Phone services are provided by eight trained resource specialists (about 5.5 FTEs), including three with Latino backgrounds who are fluent in Spanish. Services are also supported by two managers and two management information systems (MIS) managers, one at CCA of King County and one at CCA of WA. CCA of WA manages provider data quality and provides oversight, technical support, and local resource and referral agency relationship support to CCA of King County. The CCA of WA Family Center staff meets at least twice a month to discuss emerging issues and devise solutions.

Child care resource and referral service provision is based on child care resource and referral best practice standards as codified in Child Care Aware of America’s Parent Services Referral Call Checklist. Services include

- **assessment of customer education and referral needs**, including collection of “hard” data such as home and work locations and needed hours, and “soft” data such as perceptions of child care and feelings about transition to child care;

- **provision of information and education**, including what quality child care looks like (i.e., five indicators of child care quality), the connection between quality child care and early learning or school success, and options to pay for child care; and

- **provision of referrals**, including child care options to meet families’ needs and contact information for other needed services.

After the phone call, resource specialists send support materials via email, fax, or US Postal Service. Support materials include

- a **Customized Consumer Education packet** containing descriptions of different types of child care, facts about Washington State child care regulations, steps to search for care, a quality child care checklist (based on indicators of quality child care), information related to state-level financial assistance for child care, and customized educational resources specific to the family and region;

- a region-specific **Resources Handout** containing contact information for various financial and other resources in the customer’s area; and

- a **Child Care Provider Average Rates Handout** containing the average weekly cost of child care by child age and county within their region.

Information and referrals are also available via the Internet in the form of a searchable database that is refreshed daily. Those who access the services via the Internet are directed to web-based versions of the support materials described previously.

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3 See page 16 of this report for an explanation of the five child care quality indicators that resource specialists explain to phone customers.
CCA of King County, CCA of WA, and the other regional CCA offices take many measures to ensure the quality of provider referral and community resource information:

- CCA of WA regions enter and refresh provider data.
- CCA of WA regions regularly provide CCA of King County with updated community resources.
- CCA of WA manages provider data.
- CCA of WA and CCA of King County meet regularly to discuss data challenges related to service delivery.
- CCA of King County maintains regular contact with CCA of WA regional staff.
- CCA of King County ensures the CCA of WA Family Center staff members’ understanding of local contexts, needs, and resources stays current.
- CCA of King County regularly updates parent education and referral resources based on Early Achievers developments.

CCA of King County collaborates with other CCA of WA regions on marketing for the CCA of WA Family Center:

- CCA of King County and CCA of WA regions create an annual communications plan for advertising family services on the Internet and in local media.
- CCA of WA and CCA of King County develop new materials relevant to local audiences statewide and distribute them to the regional CCA offices.
- Regional CCA offices distribute materials through local agencies and other locations accessed by parents.
- CCA of King County and other regional offices promote the CCA of WA Family Center through key parent and community newspapers and magazines, radio stations, and other media across the state; Facebook, Twitter and other social media; and Metro Bus and Google ads.
- CCA of King County works closely with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) call center to ensure their staff members have correct information about the CCA of WA Family Center.
Results address the following evaluation questions:

1. **To what extent did the centralized call center achieve priority outcomes?**

   **Parent/family outcomes:**
   - Increased knowledge of what quality child care looks like
   - Increased awareness that there is a connection between quality child care and early learning/school success
   - Of options available, families choose child care based on educational and referral information received

   **Community outcome:**
   - Increased awareness of the CCA of WA Family Center as a resource

   **Statewide service/system outcome:**
   - Maintained referral service volume levels within local markets statewide

   **CCA of WA Family Center administrative outcomes:**
   - At least 85% of calls meet quality standards (per National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies Parent Services Referral Call Checklist).
   - At least 85% of customers report their needs at the time of the call were met by the resource specialist.

2. **What criteria led to customers’ choice of care? Is there increased awareness or use of Early Achievers by parents when making choices among care options?**

3. **Did customers place children in their “top choice” child care option? If not, what were the barriers? How many customers decided to stay home with their children?**

4. **Have the CCA of WA regions provided high-quality local information, including information about providers and other community resources or events?**

5. **Do calls with customers in each region have a sufficiently local “feel”?**

6. **What are best practices for delivering information and referral services via a centralized call center?**

7. **What are the best ways to connect with caregivers who need child care information and referrals, (e.g., phone, Internet, smartphone applications)?**

8. **Did CCA of WA make the right decision to centralize information and referral services?**

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4 Results described in this report establish a baseline for this outcome.
5 Results described in this report establish a baseline for gauging progress on the latter evaluation question.
METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes data collected from a variety of sources:

- **Phone-customer survey** administered to all phone customers either online through Survey Monkey or via the US Postal Service (link to survey emailed or hard copy survey sent with stamped self-addressed envelope within a few weeks of the call; N=417)

- **Internet-customer survey** administered to all Internet service customers online through Survey Monkey (link to survey emailed within a few weeks of access; N=248)

- **Follow-up interview** conducted with a sample of phone customers, stratified by region and language (English vs. Spanish), two-to-five months after they received the service (median = 15 weeks; N=63)

- **Secret shopper calls** in which a representative of each of the six CCA of WA regions other than King County called the CCA of WA Family Center, posed as customers, and recorded impressions related to the accuracy and thoroughness of the local information provided (N=19)\(^6\)

- **CCA of WA Family Center records**, including call volumes by language, region, and number of customers accessing the Internet-based services by region

- **Family Center staff focus group** conducted in late May 2013 (one focus group of nine staff members)

- **Statewide parent survey** conducted with 400 parents of young children (five years old and younger)\(^7\) via telephone (landline and cell) for one week in mid-March 2013 (N=400)

Response rates for the two surveys and interview were:

- 6% (417) of all phone customers,\(^8\)

- 3% (248) of all Internet customers,\(^9\) and

- 66% (63\(^{10}\)) of phone customers sampled and reached.\(^{11}\)

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\(^6\) The 19 calls reflect three calls per each of the six regions other than King County, as required by CCA of WA, plus a “bonus” call by one of the regions.

\(^7\) Based on simple random sampling from a list of households in WA with a phone number and a presence of children ages five and younger that was supplemented with a list of cell numbers (quotas were set for county to ensure proportionate representation of counties across the state). The sample size of 400 provides a 5% margin of error on percentages based on the entire sample.

\(^8\) This response rate was calculated based on total number of new referrals through April 2013 since May customers had not yet received invitations to take the survey at the time of this writing.

\(^9\) Twenty-two percent of Internet customers who took the Internet-customer survey indicated they also accessed services over the phone. It is not possible to know if any of the same customers took both surveys.

\(^10\) Sixty-four phone customers were interviewed; however, one was eliminated from analysis because she called in her capacity as auditor from the WA State Department of Licensing to ensure that all referrals were for licensed providers.
Although the proportion of phone-customer survey respondents is relatively small, phone-survey respondents well represent phone customers in terms of region; however, the survey respondents slightly overrepresent King County and Pierce County region phone customers and slightly underrepresent Central WA and Olympic Peninsula region customers (see blue bars in **FIGURE 1**). The interview respondents represent all seven CCA of WA regions. **FIGURE 1** also shows that the statewide parent survey respondents also generally well represent the potential customer population as approximated by the distribution of children younger than five years old across Washington State (see green bars corresponding to this customer population proxy).

**FIGURE 1: Percentages by Region: Phone Customers and Phone-Customer Survey Respondents**

11 The denominator for this response rate calculation is the 95 sampled customers with whom interviewers spoke and invited to participate in the interview.
CCA OF WA FAMILY CENTER ACCESS VOLUME AND CUSTOMERS SERVED

Volume of Customers Served

From July 2012 through May 2013, the CCA of WA Family Center provided information and referral services to 18,520 customers by phone and via the Internet. Among the 9,981 customers served by phone, 7,853 (79%) were first-time customers seeking referrals. According to the Internet-customer survey, about just under a quarter of the Internet customers (22%) also accessed information and/or referral services via the phone.\(^\text{12}\)

FIGURE 1 also shows that each CCA of WA region is well represented in the CCA of WA Family Center phone-customer population, such that the distribution of customers by region is very similar to the distribution of potential customers across Washington State, as approximated by the number of children younger than five years old (referred to in the figure as the customer population proxy).

About the Customers

One in six phone customers received the services in Spanish.

- A small percentage (14%; n=1378) of phone customers called the Spanish-language line.
- An additional 27 customers who sought service in Spanish—when a Spanish-speaking resource specialist was not available—received services through professional interpreters.

Just over 1% of phone customers received services through an interpreter.

- One percent (114) of phone customers received services through an interpreter (including those who received services in Spanish).
- Services were provided through an interpreter in 16 languages other than Spanish: Somali (22), Amharic (10), Russian (9), Arabic (8), Farsi (8), Mandarin (8), Vietnamese (7), Tigrinian (4), Cantonese (3), French (2), Cambodian (1), Kirundi (1), Iraqi-Arabic (1), Mongolian (1), Burmese (1), and Tagalog (1).

\(^\text{12}\) All numbers are non-duplicated customer counts.
Most phone customers sought care for one child of pre-K age or younger.

- A large majority of phone-survey respondents (81%; n=334) sought care for one child at the time of their call to the CCA of WA Family Center.
- A large majority (84%; n=346) sought care for a child of pre-K age or younger:
  - 34% (141) for a child younger than 18 months old
  - 30% (115) for a child 18 to 36 months old
  - 33% (136) for a child 36 months old to pre-K age
  - 27% (109) for a child kindergarten age or older

Proportionately more Internet customers sought care for children younger than 18 months of age.

- A large majority of Internet survey respondents (81%; n=198) sought care for one child at the time of their CCA of WA Family Center Internet access.
- A large majority (88%; n=216) were seeking care for a child of pre-K age or younger:
  - 55% (134) for a child younger than 18 months old
  - 29% (69) for a child 36 months old to pre-K age
  - 20% (49) for a child 18 to 36 months old
  - 19% (47) for a child kindergarten age or older

Prior to the call, about a quarter of phone customers felt they understood what to look for in quality child care, and less than half were aware of the connection between quality child care and school success.

- Twenty-five percent (103) of phone survey respondents reported they already knew what to look for in quality child care at the time of the call to the CCA of WA Family Center.
- Forty percent (162) reported they already knew there was a connection between quality child care and school success.

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13 Percentages do not sum to 100% because several respondents were seeking care for more than one child.

14 Percentages do not sum to 100% because several respondents were seeking care for more than one child.
CCA OF WA FAMILY CENTER EVALUATION RESULTS

PARENT AND FAMILY OUTCOMES

Customers reported increased knowledge of what quality child care looks like based on the educational resources received.

Up to two months after accessing the service, the majority of phone-customer survey respondents (73%) reported they better understood what to look for in quality child care as a result of the call (see FIGURE 2). Almost all remaining customers reported knowing what to look for in quality child care prior to the call.

FIGURE 2: Percentage of Phone Customers Who Better Understood What Quality Child Care Looks Like as a Result of Call (N=415)

Customers’ knowledge of the following five child care quality indicators was also assessed in the interviews:15

- **Health and safety**, including cleanliness, emergency preparedness, organization, and age appropriateness of related resources
- **Learning environment**, including having a daily schedule, attending to learning styles, and supporting development of the whole child
- **Staff professionalism and training**, including caregiver education and training and staff turnover
- **Family relationships**, including open and respectful communication with families, genuine engagement of families, meaningful efforts to embrace diversity
- **Quality improvement**, including participation in Early Achievers and accreditation

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15 Assessment was based on responses to the open-ended question “What types of things might people look for when selecting high-quality child care?” and the follow-up question “Did you learn about [that] from the call or materials sent to you?” The child care quality indicators are explained by resource specialists in each call and also documented in the quality child care checklist as part of the Customized Consumer Education packet sent to customers after the call.
Of the phone customers interviewed two to four months after accessing the service (N=63), over two thirds were willing and able to describe at least one aspect or indicator of a quality child care setting, and most attributed this knowledge to the service they received from the CCA of WA Family Center (43 of 63). About one tenth of interviewees named three indicators (7 of 63); just under half named at least two (28 of 63). Among the five indicators of quality child care included in the CCA of WA Family Center educational resources,\textsuperscript{16} most commonly mentioned were aspects pertaining to health and safety and learning environment, followed by staff professionalism and training and quality improvement; only a few mentioned aspects relating to family relationships (see FIGURE 3).

FIGURE 3: Number of Phone-Customer Interviewees Who Described Aspects of Quality Child Care and Attributed Knowledge to the CCA of WA Family Center Service (N= 63)

Phone customers were least aware of family relationships and quality improvement indicators of quality child care.

When asked what types of things people might look for when selecting high-quality child care, phone-customer interviewees were least likely to mention aspects related to family relationships and quality improvement, the latter including participation in Early Achievers and accreditation. These findings are largely consistent with results of the 19 secret shopper calls in which “family involvement” was explained by the resource specialist in only 58% of the calls, and “accreditation” and “the state’s Quality Rating System” were explained in 42% and 53% of the calls, respectively.

During the focus group, staff explained they were not surprised by the customers’ lack of retention of some quality child care indicators, specifically the quality improvement and family relationships indicators. They were in agreement that people in general are likely to remember what that they value most, which in the case of most callers relates to safety and learning. Staff also explained that the quality improvement and family relationships indicators are last on the list of five, and often calls have to end before covering those or discussions verge away from the indicators toward other things of importance to the customers; it is challenging to steer the conversation back to the indicators. One staff member suggested varying the order of covering the quality child care indicators, which is guided by a script that resources specialists use during the calls.

\textsuperscript{16} Aside from licensing, complaints, and references
When looking for care, phone customers were most likely to report considering proximity to their home/work or transportation; flexible hours was the second most frequently cited consideration.

Of the 58 interviewed phone customers who explained the criteria they considered in their search for child care after calling the CCA of WA Family Center, about one third (20) cited factors related to proximity and transportation, and over a quarter (16) cited flexible hours. In the focus group, staff also spoke about customers’ interest in child care proximity to transportation. In addition to provider lists based on a geographic radius relevant to customer residence or workplace, they suggested that many customers would appreciate a list based on a provider search radiating from the transportation route they take between their home and workplace (versus from one particular location) for which the referral software does not currently have the functionality.

Just over a fifth of the interviewees mentioned cost or whether or not the provider accepted child care subsidy (12), and just under a fifth mentioned learning environment (10) as major considerations. Health and safety (6) and licensing (3) were also noted as considerations as were factors related to quality improvement (e.g., staff-to-child ratios) (3). One interviewee mentioned special needs for her child. The following quotes illustrate the search criteria phone customers cited.

“I was looking for someone that was close by and someone that was private pay, very inexpensive.” ~Phone customer

“We were looking for a smaller daycare provider that was licensed and close by.”
~Phone customer

“I was really focused on their learning style. . . . At home he does his own activities, and I want him to keep up with those activities in school, not fall behind. . . . There were a few I did not go with because I could see they were just letting the kids run around, and kids need that daily routine and structure.”
~Phone customer

“How clean it was on the inside. I don’t like my children interacting with animals—especially dogs—because of my son’s asthma, so that has to be a big plus for me. How neat it is.” ~Phone customer

In this early phase of Early Achievers implementation, few parents are aware of the quality rating system for child care providers, and even among those who are aware, under one fifth report it played a role in their choice of child care.

Among parents of young children surveyed statewide, 11% (45) had heard of Early Achievers prior to the telephone survey. And among those who had heard of Early Achievers, 17% reported it played a role in their choice of child care (9% a “big role” and 8% a “small role”). 
Low prevalence of considering Early Achievers was also observed among CCA of WA phone customers: three—about one twentieth—of the 58 interviewed phone customers who looked for child care after calling the CCA of WA Family Center mentioned Early Achievers as a consideration in their choice of child care.

**Customer awareness of the connection between quality child care and school success increased markedly as a result of the call.**

The percentage of phone-customer survey respondents aware of the connection between quality child care and school success increased from 39% (162) prior to the call to 83% (342) after the call (see **FIGURE 4**).

**FIGURE 4: Percentage of Phone Customers Aware of Connection between Quality Child Care and School Success as a Result of Call (N=332)**

Over 40% (20) of the interviewed phone customers with children younger than five said the call helped them think about the relationship between child care and children’s development or readiness for kindergarten. Eight of these customers made a point to say that it was the combination of the call and the materials sent that helped them learn about this.

Several interviewees mentioned they had called the Family Center in search of child care for school-age children, they understood the connection already, and/or they were interested only in the referrals.

“No, we didn’t talk about that at all. I was very short and quick on the phone. I didn’t really use the lady for that sort of thing. It was more of a request for information on providers.” ~Phone customer

“I’m a very involved parent. . . . I know what to look for and questions to ask. Maybe she tried and I cut her off, but I’m a veteran. I am very nitpicky about [my expectations for child care].” ~Phone customer

“No, I wasn’t focused on that--my kids are 8 and 11, so I was pretty much looking for a babysitter one night a week.” ~Phone customer
A majority of customers reported their child care choice was based on the information and referrals they received from the CCA of WA Family Center.

All of the interviewed phone customers who searched for child care after their call to the CCA of WA Family Center had found child care by the time of their interviews (n=58). Over 85% (50) reported their choice was based “a lot” or “some” on the information they received during and after their call (see FIGURE 5), and over 40% (25) chose a provider from the list generated by the resource specialist.

**FIGURE 5:** Phone Customers Attribution of Child Care Choices to Information They Received (N= 58)

A few of those who did not choose a provider from the list spoke about how the information provided informed their choice indirectly:

“*The list helped a lot. I did call and do interviews and visits with the list. Without the list I wouldn’t have been able to make a good decision.*” ~ Phone customer

“*It helped me think about things I wouldn’t have thought of but did not directly inform my decision.*” ~ Phone customer

“*[My choice] was not on the provider list. I actually contacted someone else on the list who referred [me to] her.*” ~ Phone customer

When asked what they found most helpful about the call, many interviewed phone customers spoke of the referral lists:

“*[The resource specialist] had quite a few options, and she emailed them to me so that I could check them out at my leisure.*” ~ Phone customer

“*Having the phone numbers right away. They sent it to me and I was able to call the same day.*” ~ Phone customer

“*I just remember her being very helpful in producing a list of providers. She gave me everything I needed.*” ~ Phone customer
Others spoke about the high quality of their conversation with the resource specialist, which included both useful information about child care and help in a time of need:

“The lady I spoke to asked me certain questions like ‘would a center be better or a home?’ I didn’t quite know the difference, and she explained everything including child-teacher ratios. She explained it really well to me, and we thought family-home would be best. The one-on-one over the phone was the most helpful.” ~ Phone customer

“I got a list of nearby daycare centers, which was the most helpful. But we also spoke about what to look for in a day care, which was also very useful. This is my first child you see. I had no idea what to look for in a home for my kid so this was also very important.” ~ Phone customer

“They were here for me and tried to keep me from panicking when I needed day care for 24 hours. My daycare provider closed, and they gave me notice at 5 p.m., and I needed it at 6 a.m. to continuously watch child.” ~ Phone customer

“She gave me the listing over the phone as well as over email so I could refer back to it. She wasn’t rushed or irritated. It was very helpful—the lady asked questions and probed when questions were needed—she was very engaging.” ~ Phone customer

**Interviewed customers were most likely to have placed their children in a licensed child care center, followed by a licensed family child care home.**

Of the 58 phone customers interviewed who looked for and found child care after calling the CCA of WA Family Center, a little under 40% (22) reported they placed their child in a licensed child care center, and about a quarter in a licensed family child care home (15). Eight used a family member, friend or neighbor, and three had employed a nanny.

**Almost two thirds of interviewed customers who searched for and found child care reported it was their “top choice.”**

Of the 58 phone customers interviewed who looked for and found child care after calling the CCA of WA Family Center, just under two thirds (37) reported the child care they found was their “top choice.” Some remarked the referral turned out to be better than anticipated:

“It ended up being [my top choice for my child]. Originally we did not think of doing it in-home, but we ran into problems finding licensed care centers [with openings]—we went to four or five with no positions open. . . . In the end we were happy with what we selected.” ~ Phone customer

“This was better than what I could have expected to find—I’m very satisfied. [The provider is] awesome; I’m surprised she doesn’t have a huge [waiting] list.” ~ Phone customer
For CCA of WA Family Center phone customers who were not able to place their children in their “top choice” child care option, the most common barriers included capacity and/or cost of the providers:

“No [it was not my top choice] . . . Most in my area did not take part-time or did not have room for my child.” ~ Phone customer

“All the major KinderCares did not account for afterschool activities, or they were too full. The only option I had was an in-home. I would prefer them to be in a center, but given the options I had, I think I made the best choice from the provider list.” ~ Phone customer

“Our top choices had no infant openings.” ~ Phone customer

“Because of the cost, I couldn’t afford it.” ~ Phone customer

“There are no family home centers in my area, and the child care centers are not in my family’s budget.” ~ Phone customer

Transportation was mentioned by two customers as a barrier to placing children in their “top choice.” Other barriers mentioned were the particular “top choice” option (Head Start) not having availability midyear (when the family moved to Washington) and the top choices not being open when needed:

“There were no 24-hour day cares in my area. Also, from the list she provided me, none were open past 6 p.m.” ~ Phone customer

There is only one 24-hour child care center in the Tri Cities, and they couldn’t take my child to school.” ~ Phone customer

Nine of the customers interviewed who looked for and found child care after calling the CCA of WA Family Center decided to stay home with their children, primarily for budget reasons:

“Couldn’t find affordable child care with my work schedule.” ~ Phone customer

“It was 1800 a month so out of our price range.” ~ Phone customer

**Community Outcome**

*One fifth of Washington parents have heard of the CCA of WA Family Center or Child Care Resources and Referral—substantially fewer than the almost one third who have heard of Care.com (a national website that provides searchable child care listings).*

Among the 400 parents of young children surveyed statewide, 6% have heard of the CCA of WA Family Center, and 17% have heard of Child Care Resources and Referral (the name of the service prior to centralization)—a total of 20% have heard of either (or both). This level of awareness of the information and referral service is substantially lower than awareness of Care.com, which is 32%.
Awareness of the CCA of WA Family Center did not differ to a statistically significant degree by gender, age, community type, income level, race or CCA region; however, awareness of Child Care Resources and Referral was significantly higher among female caregivers compared to male caregivers, and among caregivers in households with incomes under $50,000 compared to caregivers in households with higher incomes.17

**The most common sources of CCA of WA Family Center or Child Care Resources and Referral awareness among Washington parents were social workers, family members, or friends.**

Among the Washington parents of young children who had heard about the CCA of WA Family Center or Child Care Resources and Referral (82),

- 20% heard about it from a social worker,
- 20% from a family member or friend,
- 11% through an Internet search,
- 6% saw it in an advertisement,
- 4% saw it on a poster, and
- 4% heard about it from a pediatrician or doctor.18

**STATEWIDE SERVICE SYSTEM OUTCOME**

CCA of WA is surpassing its goal of maintaining service volume levels within local markets statewide via centralized information and referral services.

The overall volume of customer calls to the CCA of WA Family Center increased 18% since the centralization in July 2012 compared to the same eleven months in 2011 and 2012. Increases occurred among residents of most Washington counties, as represented by the 11 pre-2013 regions, with the exception of Pacific, Lewis, Grays Harbor, Mason, and Thurston Counties (former Region B) and Pierce County (see FIGURE 6).

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17 Independent z-tests for percentages comparing positive responses across demographic and regional characteristics and scale frequencies across regions, were statistically significant at the .05 level. <- this isn’t making sense to me. Is the “e” supposed to be an “and”?
18 The remaining 35% heard about it from another source, could not remember, or did not provide a response.
CCA OF WA FAMILY CENTER ADMINISTRATIVE OUTCOMES

Almost all CCA of WA Family Center calls met quality standards, exceeding the criterion for this service-quality outcome.

From August 2012 through May 2013, supervisors of resource specialists monitored 73 calls—a median of seven calls per month and seven calls per resource specialist—or one call per month per resource specialist. Most of the monitored calls (97%) met quality standards based on the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies’ (NACCRRA) Best Practices criteria for referral calls—a score of 32 or more on the NACCRRA Parent Services Referral Call Checklist—greatly exceeding the outcome achievement target of 85%. Individual checklist scores ranged from 26\(^1\) to 43, with an average of 36 (maximum score is 47). (See APPENDIX for the NACCRRA Parent Services Referral Call Checklist, including scoring criteria.)

Results of the secret shopper calls suggest resource specialists could provide individualized information and explain post-call expectations more consistently.

\(^1\) The supervisor who monitored the lowest scoring call noted that the customer was not interested in hearing about the indicators of child care quality.
Results of the 19 secret shopper calls confirm the quality of the following aspects of the customer call experience: accessibility, greeting, clarification of needs, referrals, use of communication techniques, and flow of the call. In addition to providing better explanations of child care quality indicators as mentioned above, evidence from the 19 secret shopper calls suggests room for improvement in other areas:

- Individualized information including average cost of care for callers’ children, public child care subsidies, and other financial assistance programs (each mentioned in fewer than half of the 19 calls)
- Anticipation of what is to come, including
  + informing caller of the CCA of WA Family Center complaint policy (mentioned in less than one quarter of calls);
  + informing caller of provider complaint policy (mentioned in less than 40% of calls); and
  + mentioning evaluation will be forthcoming and its importance to the Family Center (mentioned in approximately half of calls).
- Other local resources, including
  + additional support services in the community (mentioned in just under half of the calls); and
  + availability of training and workshops for parents and related contact information (mentioned in 5 of 19 calls).

Over 85% of CCA of WA Family Center phone customers reported that most or all of their needs were fulfilled by the resource specialist at the time of the call, meeting the criterion for this service-quality outcome.

Reflecting on their needs at the time of the call to the CCA of WA Family Center, 86% of phone-customer survey respondents reported most (31%) or all (55%) of their needs were fulfilled by the resource specialist, fulfilling the outcome achievement criterion of “at least 85%” (see FIGURE 7). A larger combined percentage felt the resource specialist understood all (79%) or most (18%) of their needs, suggesting that in some instances resource specialists were unable to meet customer needs despite understanding them.
Dovetailing with the results of the phone-customer survey, over three quarters (48) of phone customers interviewed (63) reported their needs were met at the time of the call. When describing their needs, customers stated broadly they were looking for child care, and many (15) mentioned very specific timeframes. For customers whose needs were not met, the reasons were very case-specific (e.g., one never received a call back from the resource specialist, another did not qualify for subsidized child care with DSHS).

The majority of phone customers interviewed did not need anything else related to finding child care after the call (52 of 63). Two customers described wanting more information about the quality of the child care options on the referral list to help guide their search:

"You know how Yelp has mini-reviews of providers? It would help people shop and save time [if you did something like this]. I know you are stretched thinly, but if you could do a follow-up call, provide a space online, or send a follow-up email asking to give a quick review of the [provider] list. . . . I was running on a short deadline, and I still made time to meet people, but that would have narrowed my list even more." ~ Phone customer

"There was something akin to a complaint registry available online [that the Family Center referred me to]. When there are formal complaints to the state [about] the facility, [they] are logged in some way. I looked into this [for one facility and] found there had been [a complaint] registered once." ~ Phone customer

Phone customers interviewed made a point to express appreciation for the call center. Ten of them mentioned specifically the high quality of customer service provided by the resource specialists:

"I found it extremely helpful: I would definitely recommend it to anybody in the same position as myself." ~ Phone customer
“[The resource specialist] was very thorough...I think they did a very good job. I asked for something that is not easy to come by, which was an evening daycare center, and she did a good job finding me several of those.” ~Phone customer

The majority of the CCA of WA Family Center web customers (61%) reported that most or all of their needs were fulfilled by information they received.

Reflecting on their needs at the time of accessing CCA of WA Family Center Internet services, 61% of Internet-customer survey respondents reported most (30%) or all (31%) of their needs were fulfilled by the information they received (see FIGURE 8). This is substantially lower than the percentage of phone customers who felt their needs had been met.

FIGURE 8: Percentage of Web Customers Who Felt Their Needs Were Fulfilled by the Information They Received (N=243)

EVIDENCE BEARING ON PROCESS EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In addition to the anticipated benefits of information and referral service centralization, such as increased efficiency and consistency of service provision, CCA of WA understood there might also be challenges maintaining the quality of service provision across all regions within Washington State inasmuch as quality service depends on depth of regional understanding. To gauge such quality, ORS examined regional differences in customers’ perceptions and analyzed the secret shopper call assessment data.
More phone customers in some regions felt all their needs were met

Percentages of customers who felt *most* or *all* of their needs were met did not range widely across regions—from 81% in the Southwest Region to 96% in the Central Region; however, more substantial variations emerged across regions in the percentages of customers who felt *all* of their needs had been met at the time of the call (see **FIGURE 9**). Customers in the Central Washington region were most likely to feel *all* their needs had been met (83%) while customers in Pierce County were least likely to feel that way (39%), though 82% of Pierce County customers felt *all* or *most* of their needs had been met. Notably, phone customers’ feelings about whether their needs were understood by the resource specialist were not related to the region in which they resided.

**FIGURE 9:** Percentage of Phone Customers by Region Who Felt Their Needs at the Time of the Call Were Fulfilled by the Resource Specialist (N=395)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>met all needs at time of call (83%)</th>
<th>met most needs (16%)</th>
<th>met some needs (4%)</th>
<th>did not meet any needs (13%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympic Peninsula</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resource specialists seemed to understand some areas better than others.

The percentages of customers who felt the resource specialist understood the area in which they lived *mostly* or *very well*, ranged from 78% in the Olympic region to 93% in the King County region. Percentages of customers who felt the resource specialist understood the area in which they lived *very well*, ranged from 51% in the Eastern Washington region to 76% in the King County region (see **FIGURE 10**).

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20 A chi-square test comparing response scale frequencies across regions was statistically significant at the .05 level.
21 A chi-square test comparing response scale frequencies across regions was not statistically significant.
22 A chi-square test comparing response scale frequencies across regions was statistically significant at the .06 level.
In general, across regions, customers who believed the resource specialist understood the area where they lived were more likely to feel their needs had been met at the time of the call.\(^23\) Interestingly, however, customers in the Central Washington region were among the least likely to feel the resource specialist understood the area in which they lived, yet were the most likely to feel that all their needs at the time of the call were met by the information they received. This may be at least partly because belief that needs were understood was more strongly related to feeling that needs had been met than it was to belief that the resource specialist understood the place in which the customer lived, and belief that needs were understood did not differ across regions to a statistically significant degree.\(^24\)

**Increased sharing of information with customers about local resources relevant to parents and young children would increase the “local feel” of the calls.**

As described on page 25, fewer than half of the secret shopper calls included information about additional support services in the community, and just over a quarter included information about training opportunities for parents. It is not yet clear whether the omission of sharing such information is due to resources specialists not having the information to share or not sharing what they have, but one secret shopper implied the latter:

“There was not information referenced on the call about trainings and workshops for parents; however, there was a link provided [in the follow-up email]: https://resources.parenthelp123.org/service/parenting-skills-classes. [Sharing] the Family Center Newsletter insert that we provide to the Family Center might be helpful for those families that are located in areas that don’t

\(^{23}\) There was a statistically significant correlation between perceived understanding of area in which they lived and feeling that needs were met at time of call ($r = .47, p < .01$).

\(^{24}\) The statistically significant correlation between feeling needs had been met and perceived understanding of needs ($r = .55, p < .01$) was bigger than the correlation between perceived understanding of area in which they lived and feeling that needs were met at time of call ($r = .48, p < .01$).
have a lot locally as [families from some areas] often go to [other areas] for a variety of services.” ~Secret shopper caller

Information provided by resource specialists suggested three best practices for delivering information and referral services via a centralized call center that could be better implemented.

Best Practice #1: Resource specialists have professional development opportunities that support high-quality service provision to an expanded customer base

Resource specialists took pride in the high quality of services they provide; however, they still commonly experienced call situations they could more effectively navigate with additional professional development:

- **When customers are upset** because the resource specialist is unable to find providers that meet their location, price, or availability needs

- **When customers have somewhat atypical needs** such as homeless parents, military parents, or seasonal worker parents, this may be addressed by training or a more formalized avenue for learning about region-specific issues related to the different groups

- **When they have reason to believe the customer’s child has “special needs,”** training should include how to inquire about the child’s specific needs in a sensitive manner

- **When Internet customers call because they are frustrated with the online search function,** training would help resource specialists explain efficiently and clearly how to do a search so that customers are less likely to encounter frustration, such as when customers check all the provider parameters they would prefer (versus the parameters they require) and effectively rule out all providers in their area

- **When the callers communicate disinterest in learning about indicators of child care quality, the link between quality child care and school readiness, or anything unrelated to particular providers referrals,** resource specialists wish to fulfill the CCA of Washington expectation to communicate all the key educational and local resource information, but they also want to be respectful of customers and communicate understanding of customers’ particular needs

  “They tune us out at some point.” ~Resource specialist

  “You can hear it in their voice.” ~Resource specialist

  “[Many] of the callers don’t want to be educated...I’m not sure about the number, but it’s high.” ~Resource specialist
**Best Practice #2:** Systems are in place to provide real-time access to information that will support high-quality service provision

System limitations recognized by resource specialists suggest many potential system improvements. Expressed needs are as follows:

- **Quality information about provider vacancies in more densely populated areas:** A substantial portion of staff time is invested in the current system for maintaining provider vacancy information in the database. (A small proportion of Washington State providers voluntarily call the CCA of WA Family Center to share their current vacancies, and a resource specialist updates the database accordingly.) The vacancy information generated by the current system is not perceived as reliable by resource specialists and is therefore not shared with customers. Valuable staff time might be better expended on maintaining more reliable, up-to-date information about vacancies for the customers who will best utilize it: those who live in densely populated areas with lots of providers who would use the information to increase the efficiency of their search.

- **Quality information about provider transportation options:** Resource specialists have encountered many instances where the information in the database about schools that provide transportation to providers was out of date.

- **A way to override Internet-customer passwords so resource specialists can help frustrated online customers access an account for which they have forgotten their password.**

- **A way to better match children who have special needs with providers that have expertise in caring for children with those particular need(s):** In addition their need for additional training in sensitively inquiring about special needs (described under Best Practice #2 on the previous page), resource specialists feel they could provide better information to parents of children with special needs if the provider database included more granular information about provider expertise or qualities (e.g., wheelchair accessibility, giving insulin shots, managing children with ADHD) and offered the functionality to search for providers by these qualities or areas of expertise.

**Best Practice #3:** Systems are in place to support the information exchange between CCA of WA and regional CCAs that are regular, consistent, and aligned with CCA of WA priorities

The flow and accuracy of information between the regional CCAs and the CCA of WA Family Center could be improved through providing more formal expectations and processes regarding both check-in frequency and the particular types of local resource information that should be shared (e.g., different types of trainings or workshops, different types of local community events). Check-ins could incorporate running through a checklist of the different types of local information desired to prompt updates, additions, and deletions since the last check-in. Quality information exchange would also be supported by resource specialists visiting the CCAs annually.
“Communication has been challenging. I would like to find a way to make better contact [with my regional center].” ~Resource specialist

A website is by far the preferred way that parents of young children want to learn about parenting issues and child care; a toll-free number is the least preferred way.

The majority (56%) of parents surveyed statewide want to learn about parenting issues and child care through a website, followed by through a face-to-face interaction at an agency (32%), paper materials (28%), mailed materials (26%), and a mobile app for smartphones (13%) Parents are least likely to prefer accessing such information through a toll-free number (9%).

**FIGURE 11: Preferred Ways to Learn About Parenting Issues and Child Care (N=400)**

Parents in the King County region were mostly likely to prefer a website (66%), and parents in the Tacoma/Pierce County region were most likely to prefer paper materials left at places like the library or a doctor’s office (45%).

**All evaluation-based evidence supports CCA of WA’s decision to centralize information and referral services.**

Evaluative results show that—across regions—customers are receiving quality service and achieving priority outcomes related to increased awareness of child care quality indicators, as well as the link between quality child care and school readiness. Results also show that call volume levels since centralization have surpassed pre-centralization call volumes. This evidence of high-quality service and increased reach suggest quite strongly that CCA of WA made the right decision to centralize the call center.

Resource specialists agreed unanimously with this positive assessment of centralization. They noted improved “access and availability” of the service through increased hours of the day that are staffed, which is in stark contrast to some regional centers where staffing was so light callers were sent to voicemail as a matter of course. Staff also noted that families living close to regional boundaries benefited greatly from being able to access a centralized center that could easily access information from neighboring regions.

“Having a centralized place to call [as a parent] is a great service to families”
~Resource specialist
IMPLICATIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

The evaluation results provide strong evidence that centralized provision of information, resource, and referral services through the CCA of WA Family Center is on the right track:

- Service volume levels are up across almost all local markets and customers.
- Majorities of customers report increased knowledge of what to look for in quality child care and increased awareness of the connection between quality child care and school success.
- Majorities of customers feel resource specialists understand and fulfill their needs.
- Majorities of phone customers report using the information, resources, and referrals from the calls to choose their “top choice” child care.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CCA OF WA FAMILY CENTER ADMINISTRATION

Evaluation results also provide direction regarding particular areas of investment that would further support quality service delivery.25

- Maximize the power of the CCA of WA Family Center to help fulfill CCA of WA’s statewide role of increasing caregiver awareness and understanding of Early Achievers—and effectively address parents’ tendencies to place a higher premium on convenience than on a professionalized standard of care when selecting a child care facility.
  - Enhance the discussion of quality indicators, including Early Achievers.
  - Provide training to resource specialists on how to navigate challenging calls.

- Better integrate service provision via the Internet—the widely preferred mode among Washington parents of young children for receiving child care information—and service provision via the telephone—which results in proportionately more customers who feel their needs were met—so that all customers can receive benefits from the unique service aspects of both.
  - Develop and incorporate into the Internet-customer interface guidance to help them determine if they would be better served by accessing the service via the telephone (e.g., a decision tree, a screening checklist).
  - Pilot a “live chat” function that will incorporate the educational and personal aspects of phone-based service.
  - Build into the CCA of WA Family Center budget support for resource specialist follow-up with Internet customers whose records show that they did not complete their search.

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25 Note: Many of these ideas were generated by CCA of WA and CCR staff during a discussion debriefing the interim evaluation report
Change the database so that resource specialists can provide account access to frustrated Internet customers who conducted searches then forgot their log-in information.

Provide training to resource specialists that will help them better support Internet customers’ navigation and use of the searchable child care database and related resources (including, for example, messages regarding how the search narrows with each parameter selected).

Explore ways to give resource specialists real-time access to information that would improve their regional understanding and their ability to meet customer needs.

Incorporate into the referral search interface, a functionality that would allow for the search to radiate from a transportation route between a customer’s home and workplace (versus only from a particular location).

Incorporate into the referral search interface, a Google Maps function that would show drive times associated with particular referrals.

Make accessible bulleted town profiles that describe key aspects of communities that might affect access to particular child care options (e.g., people do not like to cross the West Seattle Bridge).

Develop a detailed template or checklist clarifying expectations for the types of local information that resource specialists and their regional contacts should be exchanging on a regular basis, and populate, maintain, and improve the accessibility of this information in the database for use in real time.

Develop a process whereby resource specialists receive feedback based on secret shopper calls in a timely manner.

Explore additional ways to give resource specialists real-time access to information that would allow them to communicate better regional understanding during conversations with phone customers.

Incorporate into the referral search interface, a Google Maps function that would allow for reference to child care locations in ways that more likely match how locals would do it (e.g., “down the road from the gas station at Spruce and Oak”).

Include in the bulleted town profiles, key aspects of communities that would increase their understanding of customers and their communities, (e.g., population includes high proportion of seasonal farm-working families).
Explore possibilities for better marketing and branding of the CCA of WA Family Center.

While increasing quality access to child care information over the Internet is an obvious priority, the neediest families are more likely to access phone-based service due to Internet access and/or language barriers.

CCA of WA may consider partnering with the Early Learning Regional Coalitions to help micro-target these populations, and engage in two-way information sharing around regional needs.

Make use of CCA of America logo and branding materials so that customer base is more aware of the CCA of WA Family Center service and less likely to confuse it the with related (and possibly inferior) services in their respective regions.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CCA OF WA FAMILY CENTER EVALUATION**

The evaluation described in this report was designed to address questions generated by CCA of WA and CCA of King County to inform their first year of centralized information and referral service administration. As they develop evaluation activities for the coming year, CCA of WA and CCA of King County will want to consider changes or additions to the evaluation questions and methods.

- Develop methods that will address questions related to the unique value-adds associated with service access via the phone and/or the Internet, for example,
  - revise the Internet-customer survey so that questions about increased understanding of quality child care indicators and increased awareness of link between quality child care and school readiness are identical to parallel questions in phone-customer survey; and
  - consider incorporating into the resource specialist script a small set of questions for people who accessed services over the Internet and still felt the need to call (this may ultimately help build an argument for investing in reforms to NACCRAware, the referral search engine the CCA of WA Family Center uses.

- Revise the post-secret-shopper call survey to ask about resource specialists’ coverage of child care quality indicators in ways that better match the clustering of child care quality aspects into the five indicators, and include a request for specific advice regarding how the resource specialist could have better communicated local understanding.
Engage in a targeted effort to increase response rates to phone-customer and Internet-customer surveys by making sure resource specialists

+ understand the value of the survey-based information for optimizing services and social impact for continuous improvement efforts and activities related to obtaining sufficient funding to provide the highest quality services possible, and

+ communicate to all customers that they should expect a request to complete a survey by email/post within a few weeks and how valuable their responses are for ensuring that the best services possible are provided to parents and guardians in Washington State.

Consider developing an accurate estimate of the customer base statewide so the CCA of WA Family Center can speak to market saturation across the state and by region.
CONCLUSION

Some of the evaluation findings summarized in this report echo a common theme in the field of early learning—that parents place a higher premium on convenience than on a professionalized standard of care when selecting a child care facility. CCA of WA has an important opportunity to pursue around building public will and demand—as well as interest—in quality of care, which may also be related to political will and demand (manifested in, e.g., tiered reimbursement for early learning settings based on quality ratings). Looking ahead, this will be an important part of the landscape in early learning as a whole—along with kindergarten readiness and sustained achievement in WA State—especially for children from low income backgrounds. How CCA of WA approaches this longstanding convenience-versus-quality hurdle is worthy of significant attention. Additionally, its ability to partner with others and leverage its unique position and reputation is of great value to achieving this end.

CCA of WA, CCA of King County, and the other regional CCAs have much to be proud of as the first year of CCA of WA Family Center implementation and evaluation concludes. They are increasingly establishing themselves as the “go to” place for information and referrals, and are providing high-quality service. Looking forward, this evaluation has also identified areas for leveraging this role to support alignment with other early learning efforts and to focus on opportunities that will support parent education about high-quality care. This is especially relevant as the state of Washington strives to achieve ambitious goals in implementing Early Achievers.
APPENDIX: NACCRRRA Quality Assurance for CCR&Rs: Parent Services Referral Call Checklist
Use the following checklist to score the referral call by Best Practices standard. Put a check in the box if the standard was met. At the end of the section, count the number of boxes checked and put that number in the line next to the category identified by red, bold font.

___/4 Availability of consumer education and referral services
☐ Phone system easily understood by client (5.A.2.a)
☐ Hold time was less than 10 minutes (5.A.2.a)
☐ Phone answered “live” during published business hours (5.A.2.a)
☐ OR message left with “live” person who indicated call would be returned
☐ OR no answer, voice mail message left and returned within one business day
☐ OR no call returned or message returned later than one business day
☐ CCR&R had a second language prompt on the referral line (5.A.1.f)

___/6 Greeting by the specialist
☐ Phone was answered in a courteous and polite manner (5.A.3.a)
☐ Specialist explained expectations for the call (5.A.3.a)
☐ Specialist assessed the caller’s time constraints (5.A.3.a)
☐ Specialist set a positive, conversational tone for the call (5.A.3.a)
☐ Specialist informed caller of the fee policy prior to receiving information (5.A.1.a)
☐ Specialist ensured caller understood that all information provided would be kept confidential (5.A.1.b)

___/3 Clarification of needs
☐ Specialist collected information in a seemingly unbiased, sensitive manner (5.A.3.a)
☐ Specialist collected information included in the National Standardized Data fields, including parent contact information, details related to child care needs, email address, and employer (2.A.1.a, 5.A.7.a)
☐ Specialist used effective communication techniques to clarify caller’s needs, including (5.A.3.a):
  o Focusing—summarize the conversation to help get a better perspective of what the caller was saying
  o Questioning—asked probing, open-ended questions to ascertain the caller’s needs
  o Restating—repeated what the caller said, slightly differently, to ensure (s)he had a good understanding of what the caller’s intents were
  o Validating—indicated that what the caller was saying made sense and was valid
  o Other: ____________________
NQA Parent Services Referral Assessment Call

Individualized information provided during the call - the Specialist explained clearly and understandably:

☐ The different child care options available to the parent (5.A.5.b)
☐ The basics of the state’s regulatory requirements as they related to: (5.A.5.c)
  ___ Child(ren)’s Age ___ Type of care (check all that apply)
☐ The average cost of care for the caller’s child(ren): (5.A.5.f) (check all that apply)
  ___ Child(ren)’s age ___ Type of care requested by the parent ___ Geographic area
☐ Information about public child care subsidies (5.A.5.g)
  ___ Public subsidy/voucher ___ State child care tax credit
  ___ Tribal ___ Federal child care tax credit
☐ Information about other financial assistance programs with clear definitions or descriptions: (5.A.5.h)
  ___ TANF ___ State Earned Income Tax Credit
  ___ Private, sliding fee programs ___ Federal Earned Income Tax Credit
  ___ Head Start ___ Free, public pre-kindergarten
  ___ Employer ___ Other: describe

Specialist provided or offered the following quality indicator information with clear definitions or descriptions: (5.A.5.e)

☐ Group size
☐ Ratios
☐ Accreditation
☐ Family involvement
☐ Caregiver education and turnover
☐ Health & Safety Indicators

/1 Parent Education

☐ Specialist offered information about the availability of trainings and workshops for parents and the contact email and telephone number to get more information (5.A.6.c)

/4 Referrals

☐ Specialist ensured the caller understood that all options were referrals only and not recommendations (5.A.1.c)
☐ Specialist ensured referrals were free of personal bias (5.A.3.c)
☐ Specialist offered the caller these options to receive referrals: (5.A.5.j)
  ___ Phone
  ___ Fax
  ___ E-mail
  ___ Regular mail
☐ Specialist provided caller with three or more referrals, if available (5.A.4.b)
  o OR Engaged in creative problem solving, anytime fewer than three referrals are provided (5.A.3.d)
  o OR Parent requested referrals be sent
NQA Parent Services Referral Assessment Call

Anticipation of what is to come

- Specialist explained what would be in the referral (or consumer education) packet (5.A.5.k)
- Specialist mentioned evaluation will be forthcoming and importance to CCR&R services (5.A.7.d)
- Specialist informed caller of the CCR&R complaint policy (5.A.1.d)
- Specialist informed caller of the provider complaint policy with caller (5.A.1.e)
- Specialist discussed with caller a plan for the child care search (5.A.5.k)
- Specialist provided contact information for the licensing office and encouraged caller to check the licensing records clearly sharing why this is important before selecting a child care program (5.A.5.d)
- Specialist ensured the caller is ready to begin the child care search (5.A.5)

Overall use of communication techniques – the Specialist:

- Spoke clearly, distinctly, in an understandable manner (5.A.3.a)
- Was reassuring and helped the caller feel at ease with the process (5.A.3.a)
- Collected information relevant to the caller’s child care search (5.A.3.c)
- Used statements that were encouraging and supportive (5.A.3.a)
- Managed the call in a time efficient way (5.A.3.a)
- Was respectful of the caller’s knowledge, ideas, and feelings, as evidenced by tone of voice, rate of speech, and choice of words and reflective statements (5.A.3.a)
- Directed the caller to additional support services within the community (5.A.5.i)

Flow of the call

- Conversation was comfortably paced, with appropriate pauses (5.A.3.a)
- Specialist consistently engaged the caller in the conversation. (5.A.3.a)
- Specialist did not place caller on hold during the call (5.A.2.a)

Optional (value = 1 point added to “Earned Score”)

- Specialist explained the state’s Quality Rating System to the caller (5.A.4.c)
  OR
- Not Applicable

Additional comments:
NQA Parent Services Referral Assessment Call

This checklist may be used to assess whether a referral call between a parent and a referral specialist meets NACCRA's Best Practices criteria for referral calls. Below are the total points that can be earned by Best Practices standard:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Earned</th>
<th>Possible Score</th>
<th>Best Practices Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clarification of needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Individualized information provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Anticipation of what is to come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Communication techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Flow of the call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Total possible score</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Optional extra points</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Final score with optional included</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To score a referral call and determine whether it meets Best Practices, use this scale:
- Exceeds Best Practices: 46 or more
- Does Not Meet Best Practices: 31 or fewer

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