

Colorado Child Care Corps

Year One Evaluation

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Table of Contents

Rationale	Page 3
Background	Page 3
Evaluation Framework	Page 5
Methodology	Page 5
Findings	
• Objective 1: Needs Assessment	Page 7
• Objective 2: Recruitment	Page 8
• Objective: Retention	Page 11
• Objective: Licensure	Page 12
• Sustainability	Page 14
• CCCC Program	Page 16
Summary	Page 17
Suggested Next Steps	Page 18
Appendix	
• Interview Instrument	
• Survey Tool	

Rationale

With the advent of welfare reform, the additional requirements for child care services in Colorado are anticipated to be 40 percent greater than services currently available. The additional strain on the child care system has many experts in the field concerned about quality issues such as staffing ratios, teacher-child relationships, safety hazards, and other environmental factors. The challenges are daunting in light of the fact that the average wage of a child care worker in Colorado is \$5.65 per hour and the average turnover rate in child care centers is 41 percent per year.¹

Research has shown that high staff turnover is an indicator of poor quality care because children who experience transient caregivers tend to realize poor developmental outcomes.¹ Conversely, studies show that providers who are committed to their jobs, participate in continuing early childhood education, and are appropriately compensated produce higher quality care. Ellen Galinsky, co-president of the Families and Work Institute says, “If you push more children into this system through welfare reform and you are saying to these families, ‘Just get any child care you can pay for,’ there’s a real danger.”²

Researchers who conducted the *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers in Colorado*³ study revealed that Colorado centers scored relatively low on appropriate caregiving and developmentally appropriate activities. Scores on

¹ The Colorado Office of Resource and Referral Agencies, Inc., *Finding the Balance*, 1997

¹ Ibid, The Colorado Office of Resource and Referral Agencies, 1997

² Collins, J. The Day Care Dilemma, *Time Magazine*, February 3, 1997

³ Helburn, S., Culkin, M., Morris, J., Mocan, N., *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers: Colorado Report, June 1996*. Denver, Colorado: University of Colorado at Denver, 1996.

responsiveness by teachers were also low, indicating some missed opportunities for child learning.

The Colorado study recommends an investment in staff development and education for child care providers in order to improve quality and support child/teacher relationships. It further recommends that “collaborative efforts both use and expand the current Colorado infrastructure to improve the system of child care services” in the state, specifically through “strengthen[ing] the child care resource and referral system.”

CORRA, Colorado’s resource and referral system, represents the only organized child care recruitment effort in the state. In addition to the recruitment, training, and provider support services already offered through Colorado Resource and Referral agencies (R&R’s), there is a need to coordinate and enhance those services. The Colorado Child Care Corps (CCCC) represents an expansion of the current system and an opportunity to better coordinate existing services, increase the number of licensed providers, and promote staff development. The CCCC program is organized around four objectives:

1. to assess the child care supply
2. to increase the number of providers
3. to retain providers
4. to license providers

Complete objectives and service activities as detailed in the program proposal are included in Table 1. These objectives form the basis from which the program will be evaluated.

Background

This evaluation examines the formative activities during the first year of the Colorado Child Care Corps (CCCC) project. CCCC is a two year project designed to use the services of AmeriCorps Members to help

identify and meet local child care needs throughout the state. The project represents a partnership between the Colorado Governor's Commission on National and Community Service, the Colorado Office of Resource and Referral Agencies (CORRA), the Colorado Division of Child Care, and the Governor's Office of First Impressions. CORRA was established in 1991 to coordinate the state's child care resources through a system of 18 Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies representing 12 Service Delivery Areas (SDA's). The CCCC extends CORRA's efforts to build the capacity of communities to meet local demand for affordable, accessible, and quality child care.

In November of 1996, 17 AmeriCorps Members representing 15 FTE were assigned to full and part-time positions in one of 12 CORRA Resource and Referral (R&R's) agencies throughout Colorado. Sponsoring R&R agencies were selected based on the agency's:

- Needs relative to the project
- Capacity to provide member supervision
- Commitment to sustain activities initiated by the member
- Demonstrated collaboration with social services and other key service providers

Selected sponsoring agencies recruited and selected AmeriCorps Members from their communities. Members were chosen who had:

- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- A dedication to child advocacy
- A familiarity with the community they would serve

Prior to beginning their work with the R&R's, members attended an intensive five day training session. Sponsors joined Members for the final three days of the training session for an orientation to the

project and to discuss strategies for effectively supervising the Members and promoting the sustainability of their efforts. Training topics included in the Members' orientation were:

- An overview of the americorps program, CORRA, and the CCCC
- An overview of statewide child care issues, and regulatory, and licensure processes
- Information regarding recruitment strategies, community collaboration, and effective methods for addressing issues of parents related to child care
- Tools for conducting a community needs assessment

Before the joint training was complete, sponsors worked with Members to design a workplan for implementing project objectives and another plan to support the professional growth of the member. Participating R&R's were required to report on progress toward meeting goals and objectives through written quarterly reports submitted to the CCCC project coordinator at CORRA.

AmeriCorps Members were awarded a stipend. Additionally, they received customary employee benefits and an educational benefit of \$4700 for every year of full-time program participation.

During the program year, Members duties were numerous and varied but consistently focused on the recruitment, retention, and licensure of new and existing child care providers within their SDA. Participants engaged in creative and situationally responsive strategies for community mobilization and inter-agency collaboration toward building increased capacity for quality child care. Best practices, lessons learned, and suggested next steps are detailed in this evaluation report.

Evaluation Framework

This evaluation of the CCCC program is an improvement-oriented evaluation. It describes strengths, weaknesses, best practices, lessons learned, and progress/barriers toward accomplishing program objectives. Objectives of the evaluation are described more fully in the following evaluation framework:

Eval Ques 1	What progress has been made toward meeting the four program objectives?
Eval Ques 2	What steps have been taken toward sustaining program achievements?
Eval Ques 3	How effective was the organization and structure of the CCCC program?

Using evaluation results to improve a program is fundamentally different from an outcomes oriented approach. Rather than judge the overall effectiveness of the program, improvement-oriented evaluations gather data about a program's strengths and weaknesses to inform the ongoing cycle of decision-making along the way. The first year of a program, when activities are exploratory and formative, is a time to look at how to improve implementation, solve unanticipated problems, and make sure that program participants are progressing in the right direction toward desired outcomes.⁴

It is also a good time to start identifying potential best practices for possible refocusing of year two activities.

⁴ Patton, Michael Quinn, *Utilization-focused Evaluation*. Sage Publications, 1996.

Methodology

A variety of methods were used to obtain the information needed to answer the evaluation questions including interviews, survey, and document review. As observations were developed from the different methodologies, the evaluator validated them through ongoing discussion with AmeriCorps Members and sponsors. Questions used in the surveys and interviews were primarily retrospective. Documents such as quarterly reports provided observations that were concurrent with program activities. Methods include:

- **Review of Quarterly Reports** - Each SDA is required to submit a written report to the CCCC program coordinator on each quarter's progress. Information is requested on numbers of providers recruited, retention efforts, numbers licensed, program barriers, plans for sustainability, best practices, and program successes. Quarterly reports were available at most sites from November 1996 through September 1997. Reports are completed through a collaborative effort between the AmeriCorps Member and the Member's sponsor. The majority of information is collected using open-ended questions. Consequently the depth of reporting is directly related to the amount of time and inclination one has for writing. It does allow for the emergence of some rich information, however, that may not have surfaced with a more quantitative tool.
- **Interviews with AmeriCorps Members** - Interviews were conducted by the evaluator with the assistance of two AmeriCorps Members using a five page interview tool. Ten of the fifteen Members who were still enrolled at the close of the program were interviewed. Time constraints and unavailability of Members precluded interviewing all fifteen. Questions focused on methods of recruitment and retention, community

mobilization/collaboration, barriers to licensure, the CCCC training experience and on-site experience, and projected

sustainability of effort. (See Appendix for interview form)

Table 1. Objectives and Service Activities of the CORRA Program

Objective	Activities to Achieve Objective
<p>1. Each participating R&R will complete a child care supply and demand assessment to establish a baseline and identify local needs and service gaps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess supply and demand needs of SDA • Identify issues and barriers related to supply of care • Survey parents to identify their opinions about quality and choice issues
<p>2. The number of quality, affordable child care providers in participating R&R's will increase by 10 percent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit more providers • Address key issues of supply identified in needs assessment • Retain providers • Train volunteers to implement and refine recruitment strategies on an ongoing basis
<p>3. The sponsoring R&R's will enhance retention and training of child care providers significantly by identifying a series of coordinated training opportunities for potential, new and existing child care providers and will assist providers in taking advantage of these opportunities for professional growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify training gaps • Identify training resources to fill training gaps • Engage local providers in training opportunities • Blend and coordinate public and private resources in an effort to sustain training resources through volunteer efforts after the AmeriCorps Member leaves
<p>4. At least 95 percent of the new providers identified through this project will successfully complete the licensure process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps Members will serve as ombudsmen between licensing specialists and potential providers • AmeriCorps Members will share information on quality issues, training opportunities and licensure review process with existing providers • AmeriCorps Members will work to build capacity to continue these functions on an ongoing basis

- Survey with AmeriCorps Sponsors-** A one page quantitative survey was designed to elicit feedback directly from program sponsors. Nine of the twelve AmeriCorps sponsors responded to the survey. Sponsors were queried anonymously regarding achievement of recruitment targets, most effective methods for recruitment and retention, most significant barriers to licensure, and most frequently identified training gaps. Their opinion was also solicited regarding the quarterly report format, the adequacy of the needs assessment conducted by the Member, and the perceived sustainability of AmeriCorps efforts. (See survey instrument in Appendix)
- Interviews with AmeriCorps Non-completers** - Of the fifteen Members who began the program, eight did not complete it for various reasons and were replaced, sometimes more than once. A total of eleven Members turned over throughout the year. Of the eleven, phone numbers were available for six out of which three were available for contact. These individuals were asked why they left the program, and about program impressions.
- Review of Documents-** Various CORRA and CCCC documents were reviewed, including the CCCC grant proposal, CORRA program brochures and reports, needs assessments and training materials for the various SDA's, and articles from the literature.
- Dialogue with Informants** - Continuous dialogue occurred between the evaluator and CCCC program coordinator and various sponsors and Members as questions arose requiring clarification about quarterly report entries, other state or county funded programs, or program history.

This multiple use of methods to study a single program is referred to by evaluators

as methodological triangulation. Triangulation strengthens an evaluation in that it allows more than one way of looking at things. In this evaluation, the CCCC program is viewed through the eyes of the sponsors and Members as well as program managers and developers. Multiple sources of information were sought because no single source could be trusted to give a comprehensive and objective perspective of the program. The use of multiple methods of inquiry allows for validation of information at points of convergence and direct further inquiry when perspectives are divergent.

Findings

Findings of this evaluation have been organized around the three evaluation questions defined above.

Evaluation Question 1. What progress has been made toward meeting the four program objectives?

Objective 1: Needs Assessment

The intention of the first program objective stated in the grant proposal was that each Americorps member would conduct a needs assessment of child care supply and demand in their service delivery area which would include an identification of barriers and a survey of parent opinions. The Member was expected to either conduct the assessment or assist with the completion of one that was already under way. Members received needs assessment training prior to beginning their placement, however, five out of the nine Members who were interviewed for this study felt they were not adequately prepared.

A variety of different needs assessment methods were employed. They ranged from the collection of anecdotal information

through community meetings and informal phone calls to sophisticated analyses of data including demographics, travel patterns, median family incomes, and local business patterns. Several sites, particularly in urban areas, had existing supply side data bases from which Members were able to extract and summarize data. Some sites equated an update of their provider data base with a needs assessment.

Information regarding demand for services was less available than supply data, however. One Member took the creative approach of tracking referral data to assess needs. Although this is a very reasonable and logical approach to assessing demand for child care services, one R&R found that a decrease in requests for non-traditional care did not mean that the need was filled but rather “that parents do not ask for something they assume is not available.” Another site realized that “not knowing how much exempt care and nanny care is available makes it difficult to truly assess the need for non-traditional care.”

Only two of the Member sites did formal assessments of parent opinions regarding quality and choice issues. Four of the sites conducted community surveys to assess demand for services. Despite good intentions, lack of technical support in survey design and administration resulted in low return rates in some cases and less than useful information in others.

Despite the fact that some Member sites had imperfect information with which to assess the child care needs of their communities, all made an attempt to target their recruitment strategies using the data which was collected. As often happens, many did not uncover true needs until they began the process of filling assumed needs. Notably, there was a pervasive awareness of ever-changing needs in response to legislative and policy changes, shifts in supply, and local industry profiles. When asked about the adequacy of the needs assessment conducted by their member, six of the eight

sponsors who responded to the survey question strongly agreed (4) or mildly agreed (2) that the assessment was adequate.

Finding: There was a broad diversity of strategies and skill levels used in the assessment of child care needs. Six of eight sponsors felt the needs assessment was adequate.

Objective 2: Recruitment

The second objective of the project was to increase the number of quality, affordable providers by 10 percent. This was to be accomplished by recruiting more providers in key areas of supply as identified in the needs assessment. The next step was to train volunteers to continue ongoing recruitment.

Members, along with their sponsors, set 10 percent targets for recruitment based on the number of providers documented in their data base at the start of the project. Targets could be as low as 2 providers or as high as 57 providers. The 10 percent recruitment target appears to be a modest one in light of successes realized in this area. With the exception of one participating Member site, all others far exceeded their targets, in some cases seven- to ten-fold.

Finding: Member sites far exceeded their recruitment targets by the third quarter.

The targeted number of providers to be recruited was exceeded by 122 percent and the number of spaces exceeded by 154 percent. These numbers do not, in many instances, include achievements during the last quarter of 1997 as the last quarterly report was not available at the time this evaluation was conducted. Cumulative recruitment results for all 12 SDA's appear in Table 2.

Table 2: CCCC Cumulative 1997 Recruitment Results Third Quarter

Providers		Spaces	
Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
197	438	949	2410

Recruitment meant different things to different areas relative to the needs explicated by the needs assessment. In most areas efforts were targeted at increasing the total number of providers. In others, the total number of providers was adequate but not the type; for instance, not enough infant/toddler, non-traditional, or subsidized care spaces. Needs assessments revealed that areas of greatest unmet need, overall, were for providers of infant/toddler care and odd hours care.

The three most effective strategies given for recruiting child care providers were consistent among independent responses from sponsors and AmeriCorps Members alike, although in different priority. Included are: 1.) “the personal factor” which involves one-on-one interactions with potential providers, 2) networking with other agencies and in the community at large, and 3.) the design and distribution of flyers throughout the community. Results are presented in Table 3 which follows.

Table 3: Most Effective Recruitment Strategies

Sponsors	Members
1. The personal factor	1. Community/inter-agency networking
2. Community/inter-agency networking	2. Flyers
3. Flyers	3. The personal factor

Specific examples which describe the implementation of these recruitment strategies are numerous in the quarterly reports and in member interviews. Many of them were felt to be best practices by their implementers and worthy of replication in other communities. Those mentioned as most frequently successful are quoted here:

Community/Inter-Agency Networking

- Active participation of Member on health, education, Child Find, and Social Service boards has increased referral calls by 50 percent. “These agencies are our best referral system.”
- During the Kids’ Fair 35 community booths were set up to advertise/promote services for children. “Because it was such a success, our hope is that a motivated provider will spearhead the event next year with a secondary motivation to publicize her business.”
- “We ask licensed home care providers if they have friends to refer as potential providers.”
- Active participation in other local efforts such as Respite Care and Child Find has resulted in increased awareness and many more referrals.
- We work with Department of Social Services (DSS) and the licensing agent to contact exempt providers and people on pre-licensing sign-up sheets

The Personal Factor

- “We go out to do the [pre-licensing] training rather than ask them to come to us.”
- “When someone calls to ask for a licensing packet I talk to them on the phone about their interest in child care, I set up a time to hand deliver the packet, I inform them about class times, and then I follow up with a phone call later.”
- “I cover the rules and regs with them because they’re pretty scary.”
- “I act as a liaison between the State and potential new clients.”

- Pre-licensing must be done in small experiential groups with “lots of opportunity for questions and answers. “ Groups of 3 or 4 work best led by an experienced home care provider who “is one of them.”
- “We contacted existing providers to ask them to add low income slots and non-traditional slots; we also put this information in recruitment packets.”
- “Making Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) information more accessible and easy to understand has taken away the mystery and misconceptions that have accompanied CCCAP.”
- “In helping wade through the large number of requirements for establishing a new child care facility, providers need constant reminders that requirements are in the best interest of children’s safety.”
- “We translated licensing materials and the standard contract into Spanish and arranged for an interpreter to accompany the licensing agent.”

Flyers

- “Marketing the services of the R&R through flyers has the phone ringing off the hook.”
- We developed posters and flyers with photos of local providers on them to recruit new providers; our slogan was “Called to Care: Become a Child Care Provider.”
- Flyers posted in stores, post offices, schools, and churches were one of our best recruitment strategies.
- Flyers need to go out on a regular basis; they’re not a one time effort.

Finding: The three most effective child care provider recruitment strategies were: (1)The Personal Factor; (2) Community And Inter-Agency Networking; and (3) Flyers

While engaging in recruitment efforts, some significant barriers were encountered. One of the most prominent dealt with factors

associated with Colorado’s subsidized child care program, CCCAP. A recent review of CCCAP payroll records conducted by Children’s Services in Boulder revealed that 61 percent of all CCCAP slots are in centers, 15 percent in licensed homes, 11 percent in exempt homes, and 13 percent in school-age programs. Several Members throughout the state are instituting various strategies to encourage more home care providers to provide at least one CCCAP slot. Some of the resistance they are encountering includes:

- Large gaps between cccap rates and market rates; a common response is “I’m not interested in doing twice the work for half the pay.”
- Bad experiences with low income families involving behavioral issues, late pick-ups, and difficult parents
- Delayed payments from dss for any minor inaccuracy in paperwork
- The amount of paperwork required to enroll in the program and maintain provider status
- Recent reduction in usda food program reimbursements

Two other notable barriers to recruitment exist in the specialty areas of infant/toddler care and non-traditional (weekend, evening) care. Providers are resistant to changing any of their slots to infant/toddler slots because of the increased training requirements for infant/toddler care and the concurrent loss of school age slots. The additional stipulation that providers count their own school age children in infant/toddler ratios presents more of a disincentive.

Non-traditional care for infants/toddlers is the ultimate challenge. Providers are not interested in providing evening and night care to infants who still wake in the middle of the night. Non-traditional care, in general, is scarce but in great demand. Some providers with high vacancy rates are reluctant or unable to offer non-traditional care due to conflicts in family schedules or

unfamiliarity or fear with families using this type of care. Unfortunately, many of the parents who are eligible for CCCAP are the very ones confronted with non-traditional work schedules. As one CCCAP parent stated, "I could have had 20 jobs if I could have found early morning child care."

A final barrier to provider recruitment relates to child care in Colorado's resort areas. Due to the high cost of living in a resort community, providers must charge higher rates. The discrepancy between resort rates and CCCAP rates becomes even more pronounced making it nearly impossible for low income service workers in the community to secure care for their children. Because most of the service industries in resort areas pay higher wages, most would-be child care providers opt for service industry jobs instead. This is not an insignificant recruitment barrier considering the extent of Colorado's resort industry.

Finding: Barriers to provider recruitment include: (1) CCCAP rates below market rates; (2) Resistance to odd hours care; (3) Reluctance to offer infant slots; and (4) High cost of living in resort areas.

Objective 3: Retention

Based on the hypothesis that training enhances the retention of child care providers, objective three proposes that the Members' provision and coordination of training will significantly enhance the retention of providers. Members were asked to identify training gaps, identify and coordinate public and private resources to fill those gaps, and engage local providers in training opportunities.

When asked about their success in retaining the providers who had been recruited during the first year, Members gave responses indicating an overall 88 percent retention rate. Three of the Members indicated a 100 percent retention rate so far. The lowest was 60 percent.

Members put an inordinate amount of effort into arranging, organizing, and encouraging training. Although the availability and accessibility of training has been much less of a problem in urban areas, Members in rural areas have facilitated and coordinated an abundance of training options.

Working with local community colleges, food programs, social service agencies, child care associations and individual trainers, they have coordinated trainings which are convenient and affordable for providers. In some cases, the Member herself became a trainer when other options were not readily available, especially with regard to pre-licensing training. In a recent survey conducted with former providers in one of the predominantly rural R&R's, less than 5 percent of respondents cited unavailability of training as a reason for leaving the child care business.

Finding: Members report an 88 percent retention rate of providers recruited in year one.

From quarterly reports, training gaps which were identified and filled through these collaborative training efforts include:

- Pride in Professionalism
- Self-esteem
- First Aid and CPR
- Business Management
- Health and Medications
- Infant/Toddler Care
- Pre-licensing
- Safety and Health in the Child Care Setting
- Universal Precautions
- Abuse and Neglect
- Dynamics of Children in Divorce
- Oh, Baby, What a Brain!
- Contracts and Policies
- Illness in Child Care

With the exception of one Member, no mention was made of a formal assessment of training needs. Providers were informally

polled through advisory panels, personal phone calls, and at child care association meetings.

When surveyed, sponsors felt that the most frequently identified training gaps included:

- Child development
- Infant/toddler care
- How to run a business
- Licensure training

Interestingly, when asked about most effective methods for retaining child care providers, sponsors listed training in their top three responses but rated relationship-building with providers and provider support groups higher. Similarly, a majority of AmeriCorps Members felt training was a major contributor to retention, but when asked why, they proceeded to talk about the many provider support activities that occur in conjunction with training sessions rather than the training itself, namely:

- Networking with other providers
- Obtaining needed support
- Becoming motivated
- Having someone with which to discuss problems
- Developing ideas on how to constructively resolve issues

A major unexpected finding, therefore, is that provider retention is influenced by provider support in the form of mentoring, association membership, and provider support groups. One Member captures this philosophy beautifully and succinctly in this statement abstracted from her quarterly report: “It is our belief that the way to keep people in child care is to insure they are connected to a support system to prevent isolation, frustration and burnout.” She also speaks of “developing a sense of trust with providers through frequent contact initiated by the R&R which results in the R&R being viewed by the providers as a credible and dependable source of information.”

Lessons learned regarding specific retention strategies found particularly effective at this and other R&R’s throughout the state include the following:

- Create local chapters of The National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or Colorado Association of Family Child Care (CAFCC) where none exist and encourage active involvement.
- Design an Early Childhood Mentoring program using curriculum from the National Center for Early Childhood Workforce which includes a trainer’s guide, mentor’s handbook, and program evaluation forms.
- Build trusting relationships with providers through quarterly informational phone updates and assessments of their needs.
- Consistently offer providers verbal validation of their worth as child care providers in the community.
- Listen to provider concerns.
- Encourage other community groups and agencies to advocate for child care.
- Sponsor Provider Appreciation Baskets where local merchants are asked to donate children’s items (books, drawing supplies, markers) and personal items for providers (teas, bath salts); sponsor appreciation dinners.
- Produce a Resource Directory of Early Childhood Services for providers and parents.
- Provide problem-solving forums and support groups

Finding: Provider support in the form of mentoring, association memberships, and provider support groups is a very effective retention tool.

Objective 4: Licensure

The fourth and final objective of the program states that 95 percent of all new providers recruited through the project

would successfully complete the licensure process. This would be accomplished through Members serving as ombudsmen between licensing specialists and potential providers, sharing licensure information with providers, and then building capacity for continuation of efforts.

Seven of twelve participating Members claimed full licensure of all new recruits by the end of the third quarter of the year. The remaining five noted varying numbers of recruits licensed but many more working through the process.

Finding: Seven of twelve participating Members claim full licensure of new recruits by the third quarter.

Although Members have demonstrated successful licensure results, the list of barriers is long. Most commonly cited barriers by sponsors and members were:

- Start-up costs
- Zoning/covenant/rental restrictions
- Home improvement costs
- Large gaps between cccap rates and market rates
- Complexity of licensure packets
- Lack of child care for children of women attending training classes

Other barriers mentioned less frequently include:

- Only one licensing specialist for six counties
- Lack of recognized need for licensure
- Materials and training not in spanish
- No financial resources for training
- No transportation to training
- Husbands of hispanic women do not want them to work
- Lack of timeliness of pre-licensing classes
- Low cccap reimbursement rate
- Biases against cccap families
- Lack of business knowledge

- Unlicensed providers who charge less
- Not enough business exclusions for tax purposes
- Low unemployment
- Inclusion of own children in ratios
- Rural communities' fear of licensing agents
- Animosity between dss and local providers
- Prohibitive cost of land in resort areas
- Restrictions during overlap times
- Providers do not want to use their own homes for child care
- Lack of respect for early childhood education field

Finding: Primary barriers to licensure include start-up costs, zoning/covenant restrictions, home improvement costs, complexity of licensing packet, large gaps between cccap rates and market rates, and lack of child care for children of women attending training classes.

Lessons learned have led to solutions being implemented to ameliorate these barriers include:

- develop good working relationships with licensing agents to be able to serve as ombudsmen for providers
- provide significant one-on-one support for providers who need help filling out licensing packets
- assist providers in finding financial assistance for home improvements and scholarships for required training
- support providers in their appeals processes with homeowner's associations, landlords, and county commissioners
- arrange for child care and transportation to trainings
- translate licensure materials into Spanish and arrange for an interpreter for site visits

Evaluation Question 2: What steps have been taken toward sustaining program achievements?

Sustainability

Because the CCCC was envisioned as a two year endeavor, sustainability of effective efforts beyond the grant period is highly desirable. It is hoped that the strategies that best fit the needs and demands of the local child care industry will become institutionalized within the R&R and the community and remain as long as they maintain their usefulness.

Sustainability, by its very nature, can only be measured after the project is over. Steps have been taken in the first year, however, toward creating a legacy of AmeriCorps efforts. These efforts fall into two major categories: tangible and intangible, each of which includes two sub-categories as follows:

1. Tangible sustainable efforts
 - a. financial
 - b. technical
2. Intangible sustainable efforts
 - a. awareness raising
 - b. interagency collaboration

Tangible Sustainable Efforts - Several of the R&R's are in the process of securing funds from alternative funding sources to continue activities demonstrated to be effective. Many of these activities are time intensive and require the presence of additional staffing to persist. Working one-on-one with providers, meeting with community groups, coordinating trainings to make them more accessible, problem-solving with providers, guiding providers through a quagmire of licensing barriers all require additional time. Some R&R's have already secured funding through Capacity

Expansion of Child Care for Low Income, Neighbor to Neighbor, or Consolidation of Child Care pilots. Others are looking to local sources. CORRA itself is pursuing alternate avenues for continued funding.

Concurrently with financial sustainability, some R&R's will sustain technical assistance efforts provided by AmeriCorps Members. Examples include:

- The establishment of local association chapters
- A file designed to capture effective recruitment tools and techniques
- Development of packets designed to meet the needs of exempt providers
- Licensing materials, brochures, and contracts which have been translated into spanish
- A parent educational library
- Development of a guide to early childhood services resource manual

Finding: Americorps activity produced both tangible and intangible sustainable results.

Intangible Sustainable Efforts - Several Members expressed the notion that, if nothing else, their presence at the R&R and in the community has raised awareness of child care issues. Within the R&R itself, awareness of the value of using "the personal factor" in recruitment and retention strategies was mentioned repeatedly by Members. Within the community, awareness raising occurred with employers who came to realize the impact of quality child care on the morale of their employees who were parents. In one community parents were calling to express their gratitude for efforts of the R&R "having stirred community awareness and concern about quality of care and importance of licensing."

Finally, but perhaps most strikingly, were strides made toward inter-agency collaboration. Walls of turfism have been

brought down through the direct efforts of AmeriCorps members. According to one sponsor, the Member “opened many doors that will remain good contacts.”

Unprecedented collaborative working relationships developed in several communities with licensing agents and social service workers. One Member spoke for many when she reported “building rapport through the exciting relationships developing with County Social Services.”

Some specific noteworthy examples of inter-agency collaboration are essential to describe this important and sustainable effort:

- Succeeded in collaborating with the school district to open a nursery center in the high school with 10 slots for infants
- Inter-county collaboration on pre-licensing training
- Information sharing among agencies regarding funding (cofic, hud, corra)
- Collaborative community needs assessment among child focused agencies (developmental disabilities center, social services, cccap) looking at shifts and trends in need for child care in community
- *Women in construction* offering free remodeling services for a new child care center
- Negotiated a higher reimbursement rate with local cccap for legally exempt providers who attend 8 hours of training and 8 hours of first aid/cpr
- Coordinating three county response to consolidation child care pilot funding
- Contacts with business community led to two recruits
- Collaboration with local extension office to the extent that one of their staff is providing training in-kind
- Working with national hog farm to open up a child care facility for employees

The entire concept of collaboration is an important one for sustainability. The

literature on collaboration suggests that collaboration spans a continuum beginning with casual or passive relationships that progress to more intricate relationships which foster interdependence among organizations.⁵ Two experts in the area claim that the collaboration process creates a relationship that is defined as “interorganizational effort to address problems too complex and too protracted to be resolved by unilateral organizational action.”⁶

The continuum begins with networking which has no deliberate or common goals and progresses through cooperation and coordination to collaboration where risks and responsibilities are shared and common problems are solved through solutions dealing constructively with differences.⁶

Implications for the CCCC project are that the agencies involved have moved beyond just “knowing of each other,” sharing information, or working only with those who have compatible missions. They are sharing the risks of common funding and joint ventures. They are taking joint responsibility through a shared vision of quality care for young lives in their community. These are sustainable relationships which will endure beyond the term of the AmeriCorps Member.

Finding: Members have brought down walls of turfism and moved R&R’s and local agencies toward sustainable relationships through inter-agency collaboration.

⁵ McKendall, Vanessa J., *Factors Facilitating Interorganizational Collaboration*, University of Minnesota, 1996.

⁶ Gay, B., and Wood, D., *Collaborative alliances: Moving from practice to theory*. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 27(1), 3-22, 1991.

⁶ Ibid, Mc Kendall, 1996

Evaluation Question 3: How effective is the organization and structure of the CCCC program?

CCCC Program

In considering the effectiveness of the CCCC in meeting program objectives, it is important to examine the underpinnings of the facilitative component itself. This evaluation explored structural components including didactic training, on-site experience, and quarterly report format. Perceived program benefits and drawbacks were also examined.

The program realized a significant amount of Member turnover with the obvious disadvantage being lack of continuity and momentum. Additionally, Members who began their terms mid-year were not given any preparatory training or orientation. The same is true for sponsors who started mid-year.

Of the three non-completers who were interviewed for this study (none of which participated for longer than 4 months), two cited the inadequacy of the stipend as their reason for leaving. The third Member interviewed felt that the position was not well defined, supervision was poor, and her skills were not utilized. She also felt that it was an immense disadvantage to start without training.

Finding: The program realized a significant amount of member turnover.

Didactic training of members and sponsors - Regarding the five day preliminary didactic training of Members and sponsors, responses indicate opportunities for improvement. Out of the nine Members who answered the training question in the interviews, responses

regarding the adequacy of training are detailed in Table 4 which follows.

Table 4: Adequacy of Member Didactic Training

Do you feel the training you received upon starting adequately prepared you to:		
	Yes	No
• Conduct a needs assessment?	4	5
• Work with parents?	5	4
• Recruit new providers?	5	4
• Work with other agencies?	5	4
• Help providers get licensed?	5	4

When asked about other information or skills they thought they needed, Members responded with the following list:

- Public speaking
- Grant writing
- More carefinder training
- Information on cultural diversity
- Proper way to fill out quarterly reports
- Computer training
- More information about r&r's

Sponsors were less than satisfied with the two day sponsor training session. Two of the seven sponsors who responded to the survey question regarding sponsor training felt that "sponsors and members were given conflicting information." Another respondent referred to the session as "long and boring." Out of the seven who responded to the statement that the session provided needed information to supervise the member, one strongly agreed, three mildly agreed, and three mildly disagreed.

Finding: The orientation training for members and sponsors could be improved. Mid-year enrollees need orientation.

On-site training experience - Members rated their overall on-site experience with an average score of 8.6 on a scale of 1 to 10. Except for one Member who entered the program mid-year without training or orientation, comments were positive regarding the on-site experience. Comments included, “good supervision, lots of attention, great atmosphere, involved in workplan development, wonderful support, and work with good, committed people.” There was also a genuine appreciation expressed by more than one Member for the opportunity to make a “contribution to the community.”

When sponsors were asked if the R&R had benefited from accomplishments which would not have occurred this past year had the Member not been available, seven out of nine were in strong agreement, one mildly agreed, and one mildly disagreed. When asked whether the quarterly report format was reasonable and asked for the right information, two strongly agreed, three mildly agreed, one mildly disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. Reactions to the report format are summarized in the following comments:

- Reflected work of entire agency, not just Members, so it looked misleading
- Seemed to change each quarter; never received anything but faxes to which to respond
- No consistent information on deadlines for reports

Finding: Members and sponsors gave high ratings to the on-site experience.

CCCC Program Benefits and Drawbacks - Seven of the ten Members who were interviewed spoke unequivocally about the tremendous benefit they received from sharing experiences and insights with other members. The next biggest reward came from sharing each other’s strengths. Members assisted each other in creating flyers, learning how to be trainers, and

conducting presentations. Beyond the camaraderie shared with others, additional benefits included networking, the ability to build skills and knowledge for career advancement, and the availability of the educational benefit.

Suggestions for program improvement were primarily focused on communications. More than one Member asked for more interaction with the CORRA office and with other Members. Another suggested better communication between CORRA and the R&R’s. Roles and responsibilities also need clarification. Members are unclear about the roles and relationships between CORRA and the R&R’s or, in some cases, their own role. This was primarily reflected in comments given by those who had not received orientation training. One final comment regarded the inability to live on the limited program stipend.

Finding: Members benefitted greatly from each other but need more communication with each other and CORRA.

Summary and Suggested Next Steps

Summary

Achievements throughout year one of the CCCC program are significant. Despite a high turnover of AmeriCorps Members and the perceived inadequacy of training and communication, Members achieved remarkable and sustainable accomplishments.

Using a variety of methodologies at various skill levels, needs assessments were conducted which were adequate and useful to sponsors. Recruitment activities, which were numerous, creative and situationally responsive, resulted in an increase in

provider capacity which greatly exceeded the anticipated target. Barriers to recruitment were identified and addressed.

Retention strategies were uncovered which far exceeded training expectations. Numerous activities which demonstrated support and respect for providers as professionals proved to be highly effective retention tools. The availability and dedication of Members working one-on-one with providers resulted in the retention of providers who otherwise had threatened to leave the profession.

Licensure, although still in process, was attended to with a methodical and patient course by Members. Numerous barriers to licensure were matched with companion solutions to ameliorate those barriers. Strategies were intentional and often led to secondary benefits involving increased cooperation between licensing and social service agents.

Perhaps the single most significant accomplishment of the program were the sustainable relationships formed through inter-agency collaboration. Members brought down walls of turfism and opened new doors to collaboration and joint problem solving. These essential but difficult to accomplish strategies were particularly effective in addressing the complex problems of child care that no one agency could address alone. The resultant potential for sustainability of program efforts is high.

Suggested Next Steps

As an evaluation unfolds, suggestions for improvement and next steps naturally emerge. Improvement-oriented, developmental evaluations, as this is, are

designed to deliver suggestions intended to improve program effectiveness during subsequent years of effort. The suggestions included in this report represent lessons learned in both the implementation and evaluation of the CCCC project and are listed in no priority order. Each suggestion includes a rationale to explain the reason for its inclusion. Suggestions are outlined in Table 5 on the next page.

Table 5: Suggested Next Steps for CCCC Program

Suggestion	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance to R&R's for needs assessments and survey design and implementation. 	<p>Improve processes for identifying and prioritizing community's child care needs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore strategies for improving the current selection process for AmeriCorps Members. 	<p>Decrease the amount of Member turnover.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further assess and address needs for Member and sponsor orientation training. 	<p>Improve understanding and coordination of program efforts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further assess additional training needs of Members. 	<p>Prepare members with knowledge and skills necessary for maximum effectiveness.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully orient Members and sponsors who enter the program mid-year. 	<p>Afford late enrollees an equal opportunity to be successful.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the quarterly report format to include more clarity, structure, and accountability and to be more responsive to program objectives. 	<p>Information will be organized and available to afford a complete and logical description of program efforts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for members to have more opportunity to spend time with each other. 	<p>Maximize opportunities for peer learning experiences.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore strategies to improve communications between Members and CORRA and between R&R's and CORRA. 	<p>Allow opportunity for meaningful exchange of information toward ongoing program improvement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist R&R's in developing reasonable tracking systems for recruitment and retention activities. 	<p>Improve and standardize existing tracking systems to ensure accountable reporting during year two.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further study and validate successful efforts at community and inter-agency collaboration. 	<p>Offer replicable models to other community based efforts locally and nationally.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture and codify effective recruitment, retention, and licensure strategies in a replicable document. 	<p>Share successful strategies with other child care capacity building efforts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share this report with Members, sponsors, policy makers and program officials. 	<p>Communicate and celebrate program accomplishments and make necessary policy changes.</p>

