

MAKING DATA DAZZLE



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As an economic, social, and educational issue, child care affects millions in California – yet it rarely attracts media and policymaker attention. The California Child Care Resource & Referral (R&R) Network and its 71 member agencies decided to spotlight the issue by collecting and publishing first-of-its-kind child care data with the help of Fern Tiger Associates.

FTA recognized that to tell the story of families struggling to work and to find safe care for their children required more than just county-by-county data about supply and demand; it needed to be put into a meaningful context. So FTA interviewed parents and child care providers, graphically juxtaposing the Network's data with Census data to show that the number of children of working parents far exceeds the availability of licensed care and that the cost of care eclipses the earnings of many families.

Pitched to the media, covered in legislative briefings, and presented at press conferences, *The California Child Care Portfolio* is a policy report and media package. FTA trained R&Rs to use it for advocacy and media relations. A biennial series begun in 1997, the *Portfolio* capitalizes on timely news angles, even when the data shows little change. Each edition has generated unprecedented attention for child care, influencing policy, inspiring news coverage, and garnering many regional and national awards – proving the power of data when coupled with strong, strategic design.

The California Child Care Portfolio has been published biennially since 1997. Each edition has featured true stories of families struggling to find affordable, quality child care and has linked the child care to other pressing social, economic, and policy issues. The families have been selected from phone interviews with parents statewide.

THE CALIFORNIA CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL NETWORK is comprised of member agencies (R&Rs) located throughout California and which help parents find child care and educate them about how to make wise child care decisions.

