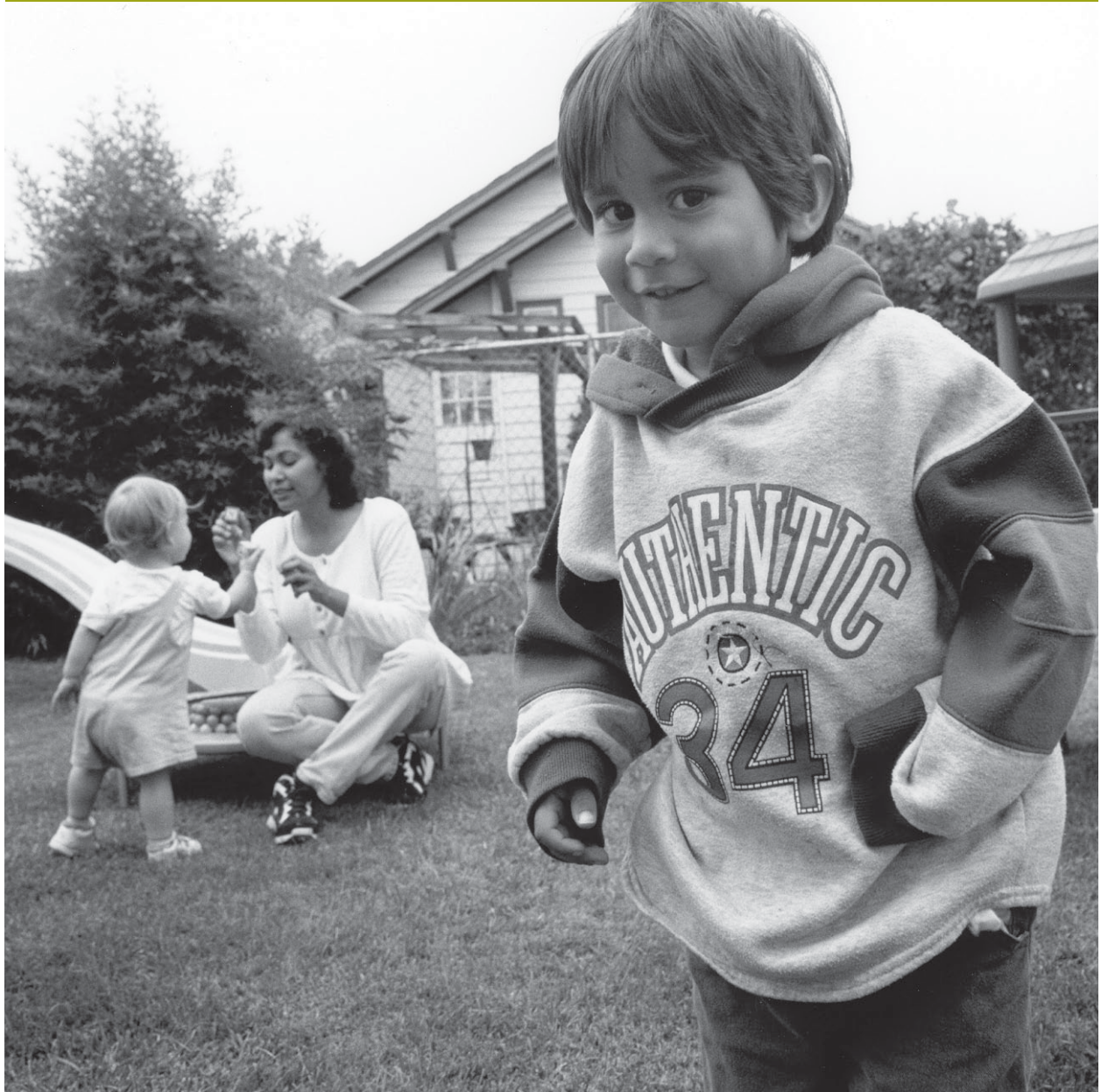


CROSSING THE CASCADES FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES



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WASHINGTON STATE CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL NETWORK

From the major metropolitan technology-hub of Seattle on the Puget Sound to the 400-person town of Ione surrounded by forests in the Northeastern corner of the state, Washington boasts a formidable range of topography and demography. Child Care Aware of Washington (originally known as Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network) has the oversight responsibility for the diverse child care resource and referral programs that serve families with children from across the entire state.

The mandate to ensure that all of the Network's member agencies provide an equally high standard of service to families and their children — no matter where they live — is challenging for the 18 member agencies that have to cover all of the state's 39 counties.

When Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) began working with the Network, it was structured much like a trade organization (with the board comprised solely of member agencies). FTA had a long history with child care resource and referral, having worked with the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network for more than 10 years and also having led the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) through its own strategic plan.

PROJECT DATE:

2002-4

SECTOR: *Child and Family Services*

KEY SKILLS AND SERVICES:

Organizational assessment, strategic planning, facilitation, governance, board development; communications, design, writing

CHILD CARE AWARE-WASHINGTON'S member agencies help parents find quality child care, provide information on child development, advance better care through training and accreditation, collect and analyze supply/demand data, and advocate for policies that support families and children.

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To better understand the issues specifically confronting Washington's resource and referral agencies (R&Rs), FTA traveled across the state to visit more than two-thirds of the member organizations — assessing the range of issues faced as they attempted to address child care issues in vastly different contexts.

The result was a comprehensive set of findings and recommendations for the structure and governance of the organization. One of the core recommendations was an expansion of the Board — not necessarily numerically, but conceptually. FTA recognized that by opening Board membership to non-R&R-affiliated individuals, the coalition would gain invaluable external perspectives, while building support in broader circles for fundraising and legislation for children. Since that time, the organization has benefited from the participation of Board members from a wide spectrum of professions and experiences — a structure that exists today.

Following completion of the plan, bylaws, and orientation of the new Board of Directors, FTA designed a publication to effectively explain the role of the member organizations to the general public and why they were crucial service providers. The single, comprehensive communications piece was designed to be used by all members. The 16-page accordion fold, self-standing publication explained that child care resource and referral organizations meet a need that no one else does and that its integrated services in working with parents, providers, and policymakers give it a perspective that cuts across boundaries.

The Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network supports families throughout the state by training newly licensed providers in child development, health, and safety in certified courses that meet the state's regulatory requirements. They also recruit and train providers for children with special needs – and the needs of their families.

