

## BUILDING SUPPORT FOR CALIFORNIA FAMILIES



Fern Tiger Associates | 201 Clay Street, Suite 290 | Oakland, California 94607 | 510.208.7700

## CALIFORNIA CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL NETWORK

The California Child Care Resource & Referral Network was founded more than three decades ago, as the first statewide resource and referral (R&R) organization in the U.S. Not long after, child care R&R programs expanded to every county in California and since that time, most states have established R&R as a critical part of a comprehensive child care system.

Today the Network looks much different from what it was in its early years when it was governed by a board that included one member from each of its agencies – more than 60 individuals representing member agencies across the state. The Executive Board, consisting of members elected from the broader board, met at least quarterly and the full membership was convened semi-annually in conjunction with conferences and larger meetings organized by the Network. Under this configuration, the Network's leadership was 100% "internal" with all board members coming from R&R member agencies – in a trade organization style.

In the 1990s, California and the nation saw major policy shifts that significantly impacted child care. The advent of welfare reform (CalWORKs) resulted in enormous expansion of demand for child care. The Network embraced the moment, hiring Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to conduct a comprehensive and strategic assessment of the organization.

### PROJECT DATE:

1987 - 2012

**SECTOR:** *Child care and early education; family services*

### FTA SKILLS AND SERVICES:

*Analysis and synthesis; strategic planning; development of nonprofit governance structure; branding, messaging, collateral development (print and electronic); web design, development; facilitation of board and regional member meetings and convenings; documentation*

California Child Care Resource & Referral



*THE CALIFORNIA CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL NETWORK is comprised of member agencies located throughout California which support parents to find quality child care, recruit and train child care providers, and collect and disseminate critical child care data.*

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Prior to this time, FTA had worked with the Network to develop and design award-winning publications, such as *Making A Difference*, that were disseminated locally, statewide, and nationally.

But, this request was an entirely new kind of undertaking. FTA began by researching the broad child care landscape, the R&R context, and the Network's internal structures, communications, and programs. FTA sought to understand how the Network could maximize its effectiveness as it worked to support progressive policies — while increasing the effectiveness of its members to ensure that the impact of R&R across California would be more than the sum of the parts.

After the year-long assessment process, the Network's 60+ member "board" adopted FTA's recommended changes in management structure — reducing the number of board members to less than 20 including members from the "outside" — broadening the thinking and expanding the reach of the Network's leadership. The new structure included 60% R&R representation and assurances that all regions of California would be represented. Immediately following this change, FTA created a strategic plan for the "new organization." Later, in 2001 and 2006, FTA would again develop situational/organizational assessments and strategic plans for the Network — engaging members in a variety of venues across the state, as well as the board — in addition to continuing to produce a wide range of electronic and print materials. In 2010, FTA developed a new brand and identity program, complemented by a new website for the organization.





## 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 nearly 70 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).

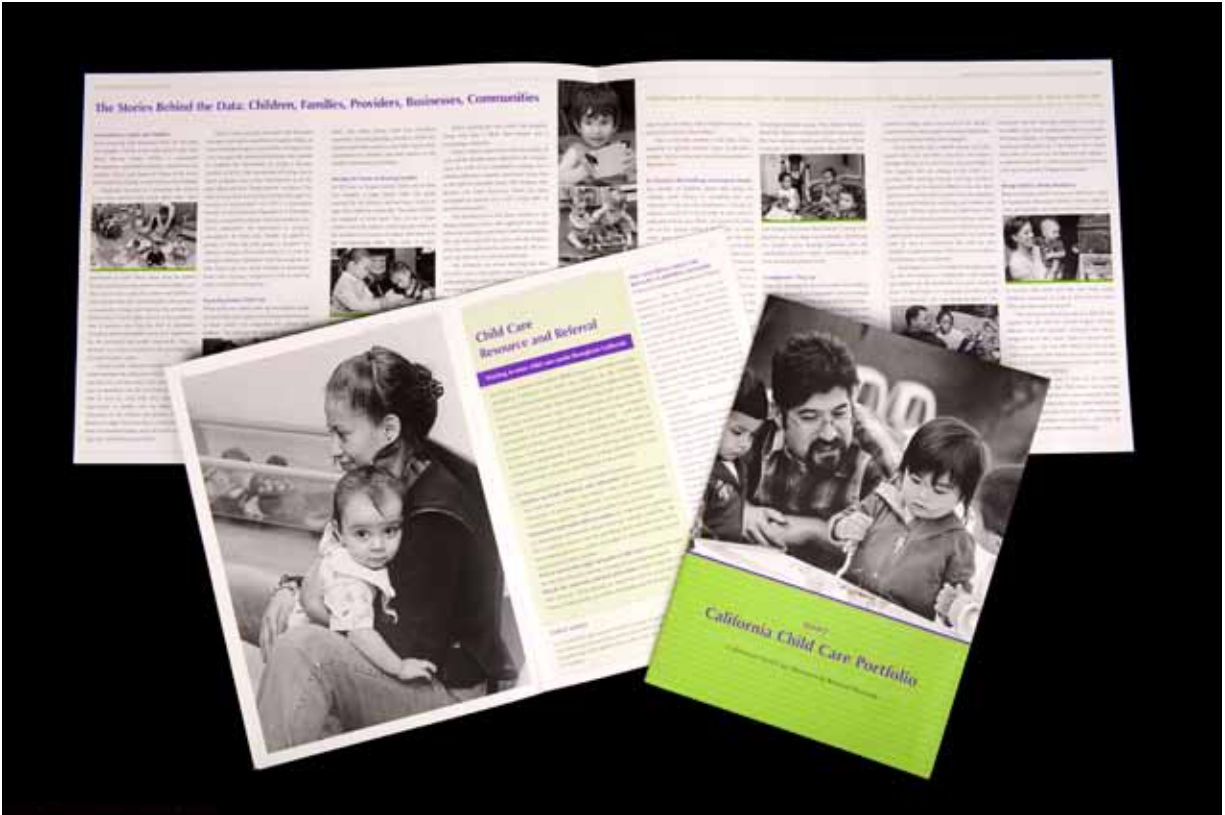
FTA recognized that to tell the story of families struggling to work and to find safe care for their children required more than just county-by-county graphs about supply and demand; it needed to be put into a meaningful context. So FTA interviewed parents and child care providers, graphically juxtaposing 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 California 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.*

*Data is brought to life by featuring 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.*







## A DURABLE HOUSE OF CARDS



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In the late 1990s, welfare reform created greater demand for child care and also an urgent need to inform parents about child care options. Recognizing this situation, the California Child Care Resource & Referral (R&R) Network called on Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to conceive a way to reach parents – including those from isolated cultural and language backgrounds – in the community, at shopping centers, welfare offices, health clinics, and more.

What was needed was a portable, engaging display that could be “outposted” in many settings, so parents (even those with limited English) could “see” the benefits of good child care. FTA designed a set of large interlocking panels. These two-sided boards contained either photos depicting quality child care or simple questions in bold, colorful type. These sturdy, foamcore panels could be assembled, like a house of cards, in multiple ways to create freestanding displays – as towers, pyramids, or boxes – and then dismantled and placed in a specially-made, silk-screened tote bag (with a multilingual message) for easy transport.

One hundred bilingual displays were ordered for member R&R agencies throughout the state, who soon were asking for versions in Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, and other languages. Eventually produced in eight languages, the display was phenomenally successful in informing parents about both child care options and the services of R&Rs.

*The child care outpost display was such a success that calls came from R&Rs around the country wanting displays of their own. And, California R&Rs wanted additional copies. Grant funding paid for 100 displays, but 250 others were eventually produced, paid for by individual agencies. Although there had been no advertising, FTA began fielding calls from R&Rs hoping to learn whether the firm “accepted credit cards.”*





