

# Connecting Families with Child Care in Oregon



Oregon is considered a child care desert – meaning there is only one regulated child care slot for every three children – in most counties across the state. In 2023, the Employment Related Day Care Program (ERDC), Oregon's child care assistance program, moved under the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC). Today ERDC is reaching more households than ever before and improving access to child care for Oregon families. Recent legislative expansions have increased the reach of the ERDC program to serve more households than ever and thousands of additional families. One recent policy expansion included increasing the duration of protected eligibility from 3 months up to 12. This shift helped reduce administrative burdens on child care providers and allowed families more time to find stable child care that meets their needs. The rapid increase in families being serviced by the program, along with the shift to 12 month protected eligibility, has resulted in a waitlist for the program as well as a large number of families who are approved for ERDC and have not yet connected with a care provider. There are multiple approaches actively underway to connect families so that they can get the care that best suits their unique family needs.

## Background

Prior to 2016, child care referrals were provided through regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) organizations across the state. The Early Learning Division (now DELC) created a workgroup with child care providers and families that developed recommendations to address child care referrals. This led to 211info Child Care being selected to offer additional hours of referral services, expand referral modalities to include texting, increase access for families to request referrals to other holistic resources, and the centralization of referrals offered an economy of scale.

## Multiple ways a family may get connected to child care:

<b>Find Child Care Oregon</b>	Find Child Care Oregon (FCCO) is meant to be an accessible online tool for families and communities which contains information on local early learning and child care programs. FCCO includes information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Licensing information- New, Renewals, Closures</li><li>• Compliant and Compliance History</li><li>• ERDC Status</li></ul>
<b>Child Care Resource &amp; Referral</b>	CCR&Rs are responsible for updating and verifying information about their regional early learning programs in FCCO to ensure that parent referrals are as effective as possible. Outside of referrals, CCR&Rs provide technical assistance, training, and coaching to child care providers in their community.
<b>211info Child Care</b>	211info Child Care provides referrals and gives parents a choice in what type of program and provider they use. A specialty team receives ongoing training and support from DELC and Western Oregon University's Central Coordination of Child Care Resource and Referral to employ best practices designed to serve families looking for child care. Bilingual specialists are available and always have access to a language line. 211info Child Care is open 365 days of the year M-F 7am-11pm and Sat, Sun 8am-8pm. When a family is approved for ERDC, their eligibility worker or family coach will discuss the family's child care arrangements and if the family needs support finding a child care provider, the eligibility worker will refer the family to 211info Child Care.

## Understanding Gaps in Services and Providing Enhanced Supports

Families face a variety of challenges finding the type of care setting that meets their unique care needs including care availability during non-standard hours, in a location that is easy for them to get to, care available in their preferred language, and high safety standards. Today there remains gaps in how Oregon's referral system can best serve children and families. DELC is employing several strategies to both learn more about the needs of families looking for care, as well as leveraging existing structures to be more responsive to community need. Support options currently underway include:

### Additional 211info child care specialist support

Recognizing that a subset of families are unaware of how to find child care, or struggle to find the appropriate care for their child, DELC will be piloting additional outreach strategies in partnership with 211info Child Care Specialists and ODHS Family Coaches beginning in January 2025 to reach out to families approved for ERDC but not connected to a provider. These strategies include a review of the family's current or anticipated child care needs and a quarterly text that will allow families to opt into a child care specialist from 211info Child Care calling to support child care referrals.

### Find Child Care Oregon improvements

Whether a family searches on their own or with support from 211info Child Care, DELC recognizes it's essential that the database is up to date and user friendly. To support this, DELC is making the following improvements to the FCCO database:

- Active ERDC provider list sent daily to Find Child Care Oregon, rather than current monthly report.
- Update to allow families to search for ERDC Listed programs in their location, without requiring they select provider type first.
- Adding a DELC/ERDC logo to ERDC Listed Programs for easy identification.



### For more information please contact:

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To learn more about the Employment Related Day Care Program please visit the DELC website:  
[Oregon.gov/delc/erdc](http://Oregon.gov/delc/erdc)