

CIS

Children's Integrated Services of Chittenden County

February 6, 2015

Dear Reeva, Ken, Breena, Monica, and Aly,

I am writing on behalf of Chittenden's CIS Administrative and Intake Teams in response to the administration's proposal to remove child care referral services from the community-based system of child care supports. We discussed this proposal during our most recent meetings and request its withdrawal for the following reasons:

- Child care referral services are closely linked with CIS services. Finding child care is often an essential step in stabilizing a family in crisis and in meeting a family's goals of joining or staying in the workforce while optimizing their child's development. When CIS providers support families in identifying an affordable, quality early care and education program, they either work closely with the local Referral Specialist or rely on the CIS Child Care Coordinator's co-location and regular collaboration with that person. Placing child care referral services in a state-wide system would disengage a local partnership that facilitates the work of CIS providers and contributes to CIS' positive impact in families' lives.
- Families seeking child care often have related needs, such as supporting a child who has been asked to leave a previous program, help paying for child care, identifying quality child care, and transportation. Local child care resource and referral agencies are currently a one-stop shop for such a variety of needs. As slots become available in programs with quality recognition, Referral Specialists, Provider Professional Development staff, CIS Specialized Child Care providers, and members of the CCFAP team can quickly notify one another and help families searching for care connect with those programs. Local knowledge that supports the most effective child care referrals.
- Community based child care referral is a specialized service. It can be provided in person, in conjunction with other services. It often requires multiple calls with a family, the family's primary service coordinator, and programs which may have newly available slots. A centralized call center like 211 is designed to make initial connections between people and service, "a first step" toward solving everyday problems or when people face difficult times. Our current Child Care Referral Specialists collaborate with other local professionals to support families as long as they seek assistance, usually until they find child care.
- While exploring the 2010 proposal to centralize CCFAP Eligibility Determination, community-based services were found to be more cost effective and preferred by clients. Until now, the plans for staffing Help Me Grow within 211 have been conservative: two to three Child Development Coordinators. Help Me Grow would need to add many more staff positions. The current quality of service could not continue for the proposed amount of \$279,585. Placing referral services in the context of a new initiative launched with time limited grant funding puts them at risk. Past experience predicts that it will cost more to conduct child care referral through Help Me Grow than it will to sustain it as a community-based service.

Your CIS team can answer questions or concerns about:

Healthy child development

Pregnancy or Post-partum

Social, emotional and behavioral health of children under 6

Family support services

Specialized Child Care

Links to community resources

1110 Prim Road
Colchester, VT
05446

802-860-4426

We welcome further discussion with you and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Ann Dillenbeck

Ann Dillenbeck, CIS Coordinator

Cc: House Appropriation Committee