

CCR's Technology Progress

Because a strong early childhood lasts a lifetime.



Over the past ten years, Child Care Resources has strived to keep up with modern technology, to both enhance our services and reach a broader audience. Here is a look at the evolution of CCR's technology.

Strengthening Services Through ChildCareResources.org

In the fall of 1998, Child Care Resources launched the agency's first website, www.childcareresources.org. The website was built by Gordy Pace, a CCR Board Member. The site was organized by customer group, parents, providers or employers, and was also navigable by CCR programs - Resource and Referral, Training, Health and the Child Care Food Program. CCR began to develop an online library with articles grouped by subject area. It included a Calendar section that listed CCR's upcoming workshops.

In the winter of 2002, CCR launched a new website. The site included much of the same information as the previous version, as well as a number of new, interactive features. The improved website allowed providers to register and pay online for upcoming classroom workshops. The site also included a Frequently Asked Questions page, where CCR could post questions and answers to provide more immediate assistance for clients.

In 2008, the company that hosted CCR's website had a server crash, and the website was lost. While it was difficult to not have a live website for over five months, this provided CCR with an opportunity to start fresh. The outcome is the website that is currently online at www.childcareresources.org. The new site is much more interactive and modern than the previous version. The website features easier navigation and more resources for our clients. It also includes an

extensive registration database for providers to view, sign up and pay for classroom workshops.

In the coming year, CCR has some plans for more improvements to the site. The home page will be redesigned to allow frequent changing content, as well as incorporating social media. We plan to create and feature a Delicious library on the website. Delicious is a social bookmarking tool that will allow CCR to bookmark numerous web pages that are helpful or beneficial for parents or early childhood professionals. We'll essentially build a library of web page resources. Child Care Resources also has a Facebook profile and we hope to help recruit more friends through our website. In 2010, Child Care Resources plans to incorporate an RSS feed on the website. An RSS feed (which stands for Really Simple Syndication) allows you to reach a group of people all at once - though people must sign up for the RSS feed to receive the information. When something new is published to the RSS feed, those who are subscribed will receive an email notifying them that we have posted something new, such as notification of new scholarship rates, an upcoming classroom workshop, or important and timely information for early childhood professionals.

We hope you'll utilize some of these new features once they're available on our website. Logon to www.childcareresources.org today!

ChildCareTraining.org - Seven Years in the Making

2002

- CCR launched the first version of ChildCareTraining.org
- 4 courses live

2003

- 8 new courses developed
- 13 courses live
- Course approval in 20 states
- 444 courses sold in Montana
- 99 courses sold out of state

2004

- 8 new courses developed
- 21 courses live
- 10 Montana CCR&R agencies helped CCR promote the training site in their annual training calendar
- 470 courses sold in Montana
- 402 courses sold out of state

2005

- 23 courses live
- 429 courses sold in Montana
- 541 courses sold out of state

2006

- 1 new course developed - *Print in Preschool*
- 21 courses live - some courses were removed from the site to be updated
- 579 courses sold in Montana
- 713 courses sold out of state
- Revenue trends increased and the site broke even!

2007

- 28 courses live
- Courses were approved in Arizona
- 635 courses sold in Montana
- 819 courses sold out of state

2008

- 30 courses live
- 455 courses sold in Montana
- 316 courses sold out of state
- The site crashed and was unavailable from June - September

2009

- A new, custom built site went live in October with 10 courses
- CCR developed the current ChildCareTraining.org using Moodle, a third party platform, and went live on March 11, 2009
- 21 courses live
- Approved in 20 states
- 7 course instructors
- 459 courses sold in Montana
- 208 courses sold out of state

2010

- 15 additional courses in our curriculum will be added, including 2 new courses - *Personnel Management in Child Care Centers* and *Functional Assessment in Early Childhood Settings*
- RSS feed to be incorporated on the website
- Media, such as audio, videos or animations, will be incorporated into some of the course content
- Explore partnerships with other agencies and similar organizations in Montana

See the article on the back page for a comprehensive history of CCR's business venture with ChildCareTraining.org.

The Rollercoaster Venture – ChildCareTraining.org

Seven years after the first version was launched, CCR has learned how to provide high-quality online training

“Child Care Resources strives to provide trainings that keep up with you.” Well, what exactly does that mean? We know your lives are busy, even hectic. We know early childhood professionals and child care providers have little time and energy left at the end of the day to drive to and attend classroom trainings. So in 2002, CCR decided to do something proactive to help you, and we created ChildCareTraining.org.

Funded by a DPHHS Specialized Training Grant of a little over \$5,000, Child Care Resources began a venture that no one could have anticipated to have so many ups and downs. The first version of ChildCareTraining.org was developed using software purchased off the shelf. “We soon found out that this package wouldn’t work for our needs,” said Kelly Rosenleaf, Executive Director. The site launched with four courses and experimented with a few tools to provide interaction among the students, such as chat rooms and bulletin boards for students to post comments. However, because the courses were being offered in an asynchronous format (students take the course on their own time, at their own pace instead of as a group), these tools weren’t often used. Child Care Resources also anticipated that it would be easy to turn classroom trainings into online courses, but “we found it was much easier in reverse,” said Kelly. “You respond on your feet in a classroom in a way that must be anticipated ahead of time in an online environment. We just didn’t think about those things.” CCR began developing contractual relationships for new course development.

CCR received another DPHHS Specialized Training Grant in 2003 to help expand the online course offerings – this time for \$15,000. Having gained a better understanding of what’s involved in online training, CCR decided to launch a second version of the site. The agency’s network administrators developed a custom platform for ChildCareTraining.org.

The site was redesigned with a more professional look, better navigation, better statistical tools to track course sales and more. We began actively marketing the site in 13 states, with courses approved in 20 states. At the close of the 2003 Fiscal Year, ChildCareTraining.org was generating over 50 percent of its income from out-of-state child care providers.

In 2004, Child Care Resources entered an Online Training Venture Business Plan in the Yale School of Management National Business Plan Competition to compete for a \$500,000 grand prize. CCR competed against 551 other non-profit business plans, and was selected as one of the top 20 finalists in the nation. CCR staff traveled to New York City in May to present the Online Training Venture, which created a new vision for how high-quality content and the effective use of technology can shape the future of distance learning in the child care market by delivering instructor led, on-demand online training. Unfortunately, CCR did not win the competition, but we were honored to be selected as a finalist.

The following year, Child Care Resources faced the decision of continuing or phasing-out ChildCareTraining.org. Grant support was obtained for the online training venture through the end of the 2006 Fiscal Year. CCR hired a marketing person to help better market the website nationally, and launched an aggressive marketing plan. The site was marketed at the NACCRRRA National Symposium in Washington DC. The site’s marketing efforts were concentrated on six states – Wyoming, Nevada, Idaho, New York, Utah and Montana. CCR also worked to improve the placement of ChildCareTraining.org through Google’s search engine – after ongoing efforts, the page was listed as the third or fourth result on Google. Revenue trends also increased as a result of these marketing efforts.

To appeal to the larger market of students, in 2007, CCR boosted ChildCareTraining.org’s course offerings to 28! The website exceeded its revenue goal, allowing CCR to use the profits for other services and programs in the Missoula region. It has always been a goal of launching the online training website to use the profit to improve and strengthen other agency programs and services. Unfortunately, much of the website’s success was halted in June of 2008 when the website crashed. The company that hosted both CCR’s website and ChildCareTraining.org had a crash, and the antiquated language of both websites was not compatible with other hosting companies. The crash sent CCR’s network administrator into a fury to finish developing a new training site – work that had already been started in anticipation of launching the third version, now on a much tighter timeline. Just after the end of the 2008 Fiscal Year, the new site went live, offering 10 courses.

In the 2009 Fiscal Year, CCR evaluated the goals of the online training website and determined that it would be best to pursue a third party platform with more capabilities, instead of one developed in-house. This brought about the current version of ChildCareTraining.org that was developed using a Learning Management System called Moodle. We are proud to offer a more interactive learning experience for the students, with a more modern look and capabilities – and to now be the first result in a Google search!

Today, seven years after its inception, Child Care Resources is proud to be the only CCR&R with an online training website for a national market. We hope to continue to empower child care professionals through an educational learning community on ChildCareTraining.org.

The Future of ChildCareTraining.org – Plans for Improvement

Looking to the future, CCR has some ideas in the works to ensure that we continue to provide quality online training. First, we plan to incorporate media into some of our courses. We hope that by using forms of media, such as audio, video, flash animation, and more, students will gain a broader understanding of the course topic. We also plan to offer some synchronous learning opportunities on the website, where students enroll in a course for a set time period and interact with each other as they learn together. In January 2010, CCR will incorporate an RSS feed on the website. An RSS feed (which stands for Really Simple Syndication) is basically a more modern form of a ListServ, allowing you to reach a group of people all at once. The difference is that people must subscribe to the RSS feed to receive the

information, instead of just receiving a mass email. When something new is published to the RSS feed, those who are subscribed will receive an email notifying them that we have posted something new – perhaps a new course or a featured course of the month. The RSS feed will allow us to better communicate with the students who use the site. We’ve also created a Facebook page for ChildCareTraining.org. Facebook users can become a Fan of our page and receive updates! Another future goal for ChildCareTraining.org is that we expect to partner with other agencies and similar organizations to gain more course offerings, a greater variety of expertise in our instructors, and expand our marketing. We hope to begin this partnership plan in Montana in 2010.