



# Building a Bridge to High-Quality Child Care for Foster Children



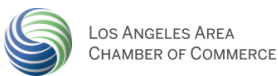
County of Los Angeles  
Department of Children and Family Services



ADVANCEMENT  
PROJECT



CHILDREN NOW



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
GRANTMAKERS

USC School  
of Social Work



## Child Care for Foster Children: An Overview

When children are removed from their parents due to abuse and neglect, they are in crisis and need a safe, loving family environment. But for our youngest children, one of the top barriers to finding placement is the lack of access to child care. In an October 2015 survey conducted by ACHSA, 100 percent of foster family agencies cited that concerns about child care affect recruitment and the willingness of foster parents to accept young children into their care. Over two-thirds reported that their foster children had been denied eligibility for subsidized child care. In another survey of social workers charged with finding placements in the Children's Welcome Center, an estimated 25 percent of the denials were due to the lack of child care.

Increasing access to child care would enable a larger pool of families to become foster parents, providing a stable home for more children in need. Furthermore, we know that for all the benefits that high quality child care has on children ages 0 to 5, the impact can be even more dramatic for young children who have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and removal from their homes. With 28 counties applying for 2015 Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention & Support funds for child care purposes, this is clearly a statewide unmet need.

## The Access Barrier

Immediately following a child's removal, resource families, including relative caregivers, struggle to access child care because State child care programs often operate at full capacity. Many of these programs sign up children during short enrollment windows that may not align with a child's placement into foster care. This means that caregivers who work or are in school cannot take in a child without significantly disrupting their lives or putting their family in financial jeopardy. In addition, State child care enrollment is complicated and resource families may languish on waiting lists.

## Proposed Solution: Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children

*We can help resource families by building a bridge to long-term child care.* To do this effectively, we propose a solution that includes: an emergency child care voucher, the support of a child care navigator, and workforce training to support trauma-informed care.

### **(1) Emergency voucher**

Any resource family needing child care for children ages 0 through 3, as well as parenting foster youth, would receive an immediate, time-limited voucher to pay for child care for up to six months following a child's placement. This voucher would ensure care while the caregiver is at work, school, or fulfilling training and home approval requirements. Estimates show that this would cost about \$22 million statewide.

### **(2) Child care navigator support**

Navigators would work with the resource family to facilitate use of the emergency voucher to ensure a foster child's immediate access to child care. Going forward, the navigator would continue to work with the family to transition or stabilize the child into a long-term, high quality licensed child development setting.<sup>1</sup> Navigators would also facilitate continuity and help prevent gaps in care. Administered by the county Resource & Referral agencies, child care navigator support is estimated to cost \$4 million.

### **(3) Trauma-informed care**

To meet the unique needs of abused and neglected children, child care providers will require additional support and training in the area of trauma-informed care. With a trainer to cover every county, this workforce training proposal would also include coordination at the State level and cost roughly \$5 million.

## Support and More Information

With support from a broad-based coalition of private, non-profit, philanthropic and public sectors, this request was developed by:

**Helen Berberian**, LA County DCFS, 213.351.5765,  
HBerberian@dcfs.lacounty.gov

**Genie Chough**, Office of LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl,  
213.974.3333, GChough@bos.lacounty.gov

**Molly Dunn**, Alliance for Children's Rights, 916.706.0080,  
M.Dunn@kids-alliance.org

**Martha Guerrero**, LA County Legislative Representative,  
213.441.7888, MGuerrero@ceo.lacounty.gov

**Dr Jacquelyn McCroskey**, USC School of Social Work,  
213.740.2004, McCroske@usc.edu

**Tim Morrison**, Children Now, 510.763.2444,  
TMorrison@ChildrenNow.org

**Donna Sneeringer**, Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles,  
916.715.0575, DSneeringer@ccrc.org

<sup>1</sup> Based on determination of CPS status per Education Code 8263 or status as a "family of one," foster children are placed at the top of waiting lists. As such, with the help of a navigator, they could effectively be transitioned into licensed child care programs.