

# FY 2024 CITY OF SAN DIEGO BUDGET AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS PERTAINING TO CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

On behalf of a cohort of organizations and leaders, we welcome you to consider the following City of San Diego considerations for FY 2024. We believe for San Diego to thrive as a city, it needs a continued commitment to make San Diego a place where every child, youth, and family is safe, healthy, and empowered.

We want to begin by acknowledging the important work being done by your office, your colleagues on the City Council, and the Mayor. As a Council, you have helped San Diego navigate extremely difficult times, and pushed to make San Diego the best place to grow up and raise a family. We implore you to accept this letter as a celebration of what has been accomplished and the opportunity to build upon those wins.

## Office of Child and Youth Success

With San Diego's first local infrastructure dedicated to children, youth, and their families, there is a catalytic opportunity to marshal city resources and leverage intergovernmental and community partnerships to efficiently, effectively, and equitably to support San Diego community members. We support the budget request from the Office of Child and Youth Success Executive Director. Based on similar departments in municipalities across the country, we are hopeful this budget request helps **fully staff the office with a team who represents experience** in the child care mixed-delivery system, systems impacting young people, and families. The '24 funding should also **provide support to implement the strategic plan for the Office**.

## Access to Affordable, Quality Child Care

Despite research showing time and time again that child care is essential in the healthy development of our children and for the employment of their parents, child care continues to be scarce and expensive in San Diego County. What's more, in the region 10% of our licensed child care centers and 5% of our child care homes have permanently closed due to the pandemic. Members of the Children First Collective are seeing progress made as elected officials and public servants continue to prioritize child care, and yet, still more must be done.

### ***Child Care Facilities***

Soon, with the passing of Measure H, more City-owned property that has been deemed suitable for child care will be available for consideration of licensed child care.

Undoubtedly, renovations will be necessary to get these properties ready to meet Community Care Licensing standards. In continuing to engage the community with the DREAM team, and utilizing child care availability data, we recommend that the City determine an initial cohort of sites. A goal can be to prepare at least three sites as "shovel ready" to apply for the State's [Child Care and Development Infrastructure Grant Program](#), New Construction and Major Renovation. In addition, a budget allocation based on timely prevailing wage and materials costs should be dedicated for facility improvements for the initial cohort of facilities. Community Development Block Grant funding may also be considered.

### ***Job-Related Benefits and Policies for Working Parents***

As the City works to become a more family-friendly employer, we advise:

- That every employee be enrolled in the State Paid Family Leave program;
- That the City augment the State Paid Family Leave program so that employees receive 100% pay during their leave;
- That the City work to provide stable schedules with minimal variation from week to week and any variations scheduled with two weeks' notice to employee;
- Child care grants for employees with children under age 5 making less than \$100,000 a year;
- All employees can use a flexible spending account to pay some of their dependent care expenses using pre-tax dollars;
- And when supporting employees with child care, we advise that the City consider leveraging existing programs and early care and learning infrastructure to connect employees with quality child care options and for administering funds.

Ideally, not only are these practices in place, but every employee is well aware of them and has a clear pathway to accessing them. To every extent possible, we recommend that the City also holds its contractors accountable for the same level of family-friendly benefits.

### ***Child Care Workforce Crisis***

With many child care businesses on the verge of closing, the City's Development Services has an opportunity to utilize resources and expertise to **expressly reach out to and support the City's child care small businesses**. San Diego offers significant support to small businesses, however, owners of family child care—who are predominantly women of color—are often unaware or unable to access these services. Consider dedicated staff to help child care providers identify the business supports relevant to them, as well as navigate permitting and construction processes with the City. Both the Economic Development and Planning Departments could hold these roles.

### ***Mental and Behavioral Health Support Specific to 0–5-Year Old's', Their Parents, Caregivers, and Child Care Providers***

Work with the community to understand the growing need for mental and behavioral health support. Work jointly with the County of San Diego's Behavioral Health Services to support expanded services in prevention and early intervention specific for the 0-5 population and those who care for them, including parents, caregivers, and child care providers.

## **Pathways for Young People to Succeed, as Defined by Youth, for Youth**

It's essential that our youth are provided with meaningful opportunities and pathways to success. The creation of this office is a promising first step, as we move forward, we must continue to heed the voices of young people by allowing them to lead this work and ensure that they're well equipped to engage with the City. This is an investment with a long-term gain, by providing meaningful experiences to engage with the City, our youth are getting the skills needed to pursue other careers or a pathway within San Diego. The following recommendations will ensure that our City is providing equitable access to civic engagement for youth:

### ***Wraparound services for young people involved in Employ and Empower***

An approach to wraparound service is strengths-based, needs-driven and includes service strategies specific to a young person. Funding from the Employ & Empower program or leveraged grant opportunities should be sought to support teens and transition-age youth in the program who indicate need for support. Additionally, prepare

City leaders who are coaching youth interns to host a nurturing experience by offering training in trauma-responsive care.

***Success for the Youth Commission***

To help the Youth Commission reach a new level of success to integrate youth voice into city decisions, greater support is needed. Recognize the need to support the Youth Commission in meeting quorum. Implement a compensated civics education and engagement program for Youth Commissioners with a starting allocation of \$100,000.

***Support for Youth who are Unsheltered***

Support for youth who are unsheltered is a direct prevention to chronic adult homelessness. Considering [evidence of San Diego's increasing number of unsheltered youth](#), and the [published goal of having youth homelessness be rare, brief, and nonrecurring](#), more must be done. Utilize the Homeless Housing, Assistance Program (HHAP)—youth set aside funding—to support the Housing Our Youth recommended services for \$3,747,600 annually. Additionally, consider a youth-specific project or a youth component if additional Project Homekey applications are submitted to the state.

***Mental and Behavioral Health Support Specific to Teens and Transition Age Youth***

Work with the community to understand the growing need for mental and behavioral health support. Work jointly with the County of San Diego's Behavioral Health Services to support expanded services in the continuum of care for 12–25-year-olds, including a consideration of meeting youth where they are, and expanding opportunities for community-based organizations to offer therapeutic services.

**Thank you very much for your consideration!**

**For further information or inquiries, please contact the following individuals:**

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