

**Accomplishments from Children First Collective's  
Advocacy for Child Care within CARES Act and ARP Act Federal Relief Funding**

**On March 16, 2020**, school districts in San Diego County responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by suspending all in-person classes and moving to distance learning. Just three days later, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced a statewide stay-at-home order, asking residents to limit recreation and traveling to work unless their work fell into the categories deemed essential in an Executive Order. These decisions, made within a matter of days, upended daily life.

Essential workers, many of whom were in the healthcare sector responding to the early days of the pandemic, **suddenly had to find and pay for child care for their children who would normally be in school.**

Other parents found themselves taking on **dual roles of employee and teacher** as families adjusted to working from home and distance learning.

Many other **parents lost their jobs.**

**The impact on our child care sector was devastating.** As families stayed home and limited activities to prevent contracting and spreading the COVID-19 virus, and/or stayed home because they were laid off, child care providers' revenue plummeted. They adopted increased sanitization, distance and hygiene protocols based on confusing guidance. Supplies and food were difficult to obtain due to scarcity and hoarding. Many child care teachers chose or were forced to stay home because they were at elevated risk from contracting the virus or they had children at home doing remote learning. Yet San Diego child care providers knew that if they ceased operations, many essential working parents would have to quit their jobs.

The gravity of the situation necessitated a quick response to meet the child care needs of families and ensure the sustainability of the local child care sector.

**On March 19**, the previously formed San Diego Early Care and Education Advocacy Coalition (now Children First Collective) held their first meeting as the San Diego Emergency Child Care Task Force, which **met daily thereafter for weeks**, then weekly, then monthly as the crisis was managed. Members of this group included nonprofit and coalition organizations, the local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (YMCA of San Diego County Childcare Resource Service), Alternative Payment Program agencies, family child care home education networks, child care providers, community organizations, representatives from government agencies, members of essential worker and child care unions, and the philanthropic community.

By mobilizing quickly to form a trusted node for action, pairing **immediate relief with rapid policy advocacy**, and pivoting quickly in the face of evolving conditions and information, the Children First Collective secured a region-wide prioritization of and investment in the child care sector. Public and private **funding for child care relief in San Diego County has totaled more than \$50 million** since that fateful March 16.

This summary outlines the accepted recommendations, specifically for federal COVID relief dollars, put forth by the Children First Collective.

**CARES Act - \$35 Million**

Proposal by the Children First Collective

- **\$5M** Emergency CC Vouchers for Essential Workers, County of San Diego
  - [County Board of Supervisors Board Letter](#)
- **\$5M** Emergency CC Vouchers for Essential Workers, matched by City of San Diego
  - [City Council Resolution](#)
- **\$25M** Child Care Provider Stipends (included licensed exempt programs, Family Child Care Providers, Child Care Centers) County of San Diego
  - [County Board of Supervisors Board Letter](#)

**ARP Act (County of San Diego) - \$16 Million**

Proposal by the Children First Collective

- **\$2M** Facility (County child care facility development for County staff)
- **\$2M** Child Care Provider Stipends
- **\$2M** Child Care Vouchers (used to supplement Foster Care Bridge in supporting children/caregivers during reunification and adoption process)
- **\$10M** Child Care Workforce Pipeline
  - [County Board of Supervisors Recovery Plan Performance Report](#) (pgs. 50-52)

**Conclusion**

Outlined above are the outcomes of strategic advocacy performed by the Children First Collective. Please note that this outline reflects only the federally funded portion of the overall money and resources that the Children First Collective helped secure, facilitate, and disperse to families and child care providers countywide. For a more detailed account of these activities, please look to the report, [United for Our Future: Accomplishments and Recommendations from the San Diego Early Care and Education Advocacy Coalition's COVID-19 Response](#).

While the child care sector and the region's working parents remain in crisis, Children First Collective's actions, for locally-allocated federal funding within CARES Act and ARP Act dollars, averted some of the chaos and crisis experienced by families in other major metropolitan regions of the country.

Children First Collective continues to focus local advocacy on issues concerning equitable provider pay, access for all families, facilities development, mental and behavioral health support, job-related benefits for and policies for working parents, and local government infrastructure for children, youth, and their families. We welcome thought partnership on any and all of these issues going into 2022.

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