



Early Childhood Policy Council 2024 Annual Report



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I. Introduction

A. Overview of the Early Childhood Policy Council and its Advisory Committees

1. The Council

The Early Childhood Policy Council (Council) was established by law^[1] in 2020 to advise the Governor, Legislature, and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on statewide early learning and care (ELC) policy, including the planning for and implementation and evaluation of the state's [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](#) (MPELC) and the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education Final Report. Specifically, the Council's role is to:

- Advise the Governor and perform activities required pursuant to Section 9837b of Title 42 of the United States Code.
- Prepare a formal public annual report on the work of the Council.
- Provide specific recommendations directly to the Governor, Legislature, and CDSS on all aspects of the state's early childhood education system, including the following topics:
 - Equity, with consideration for demographic, geographic, and economic diversity, and with a focus on family-centered two-generation approaches.
 - Opportunities to incorporate a support model of accountability, as opposed to a compliance model of accountability, into the state's early childhood education system.
 - Ways that the state's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education Final Report can be updated and improved.

¹[Statutory source: Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10320.](#)

The Council is a 27-member body, with members appointed as follows:

- Fourteen members appointed by the Governor, including those required pursuant to Section 9837b of Title 42, of the United States Code.
 - One of the Governor’s appointees shall be the chairperson of the Council.
- Four members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.
- Four members appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.
- One member appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Two members of the Parent Advisory Committee, appointed by that committee.
- Two members of the Workforce Advisory Committee, appointed by that committee.

Members of the Council serve terms of no more than six years. At the time this report was written, nine of the Council’s members had terms due to expire by the end of 2025. Council members are interest holders and representatives of the comprehensive ELC system. Members reflect the geographic, ethnic, racial, and language diversity of the state, including those communities separated from opportunity due to poverty, bias, isolation, disability, and other factors.

2. The Council’s Advisory Committees

The Council has two standing committees—the Parent Advisory Committee and the Workforce Advisory Committee. Each committee has nine members appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Senate Committee on Rules.

The Parent Advisory Committee is composed of parents served by different ELC settings. The Workforce Advisory Committee is composed of members of the ELC workforce from diverse settings. Both committees provide recommendations to the Council and other entities on all aspects of ELC, including the following:

- Equity, access, and best practices for engaging families

- Creating warm and welcoming care environments
- Developing local and state partnerships to support the best outcomes for families that interact with the state’s ELC system

B. Council and Committee Membership

The following individuals were members of the Council and its Advisory Committees in 2024:

Early Childhood Policy Council

Kim Johnson, Chair, Director, CDSS^[1]

Lupe Jaime-Mileham, EdD, California Department of Social Services

Miren Algorri, Algorri Family Child Care

Paula Merrigan, Castro Valley Unified School District

Mayra Alvarez, The Children’s Partnership

Scott Moore, Kidango Child Care

Kim Pattillo Brownson, Ballmer Group

Sarah Neville-Morgan, California Department of Education

Lisette Frausto, Kidango Child Care

Carola Oliva-Olson, PhD, EDvance College

Natali Gaxiola, Lennox School District

Cheryl Polk, High Scope Educational Research and Foundation

Mary Ignatius, Parent Voices California

Kay Ruhstaller, Family Resource and Referral Center of San Joaquin County

Sonia Jaramillo, Gonzales Unified School District

Donna Sneeringer, Child Care Resource Center

Robin Layton, Educational Enrichment Services

Dean Tagawa, Los Angeles Unified School District

Tonia McMillian, Kiddie Depot Family Child Care

Janet Zamudio, Stanford University

¹ [Kim Johnson was appointed Secretary of the California Health & Human Services Agency in September 2024 by Governor Newsom.](#)

Parent Advisory Committee

Mary Ignatius, Chair, Parent Voices California

Deborah Corley-Marzett, Family daycare provider

Naima Facih, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services Advisory Board Member

Lisete Frausto, Kidango Child Care

Patricia Lozano, Early Edge California

Patrick MacFarlane, Child Care Resource Center

Yenni Rivera, People Assisting the Homeless

Cheryl Schroeder, Resource parent, foster care educator, and advocate

Workforce Advisory Committee Members

Tonia McMillian, Chair, Kiddie Depot Family Child Care

Patricia Alexander, Licensed in-home family child care provider

Miren Algorri, Algorri Family Child Care

AnnLouise Bonnitto, California Rural Indian Health Board, Inc.

Virginia Eigen, Campbell Union School District

Amelia Soto, Mexican American Opportunity Foundation

Zoila Carolina Toma, Fun Minds Inc.

Debra Ward, Cerritos College Child Development Center

Latonda Williams, Plaza del Raza Child Development Services

C. Organization of the Report

The Council convened quarterly in 2024, and its Advisory Committees met twice jointly. This report describes the topics the Council and its Committees addressed in alignment with the MPELC goals.

II. Advancing MPELC Goal 1: Unify and Strengthen Programs and Services to Support Children’s Learning and Development

MPELC Goal 1, pp. 8–9

California’s ability to broaden access to high-quality care and learning opportunities and address the pressing challenges of equity requires that we confront and address the complexity and dizzying array of publicly supported options for learning and care support. There are upwards of a dozen programs, each with its own rules and regulations and contracting requirements that make it challenging to manage and support streamlined access, communicate with families about their options, and consistently improve quality.

California can unify a range of programs that serve children ages birth through five, and thereby deliver equitable access to high-quality early learning and care, as follows: (1) expand access to paid family leave; (2) consolidate child care programs, streamline eligibility and enrollment, and strengthen workforce quality and sustainability; (3) provide three- and four-year-olds with access to high-quality preschool; and (4) eliminate bias and ensure equitable treatment for all children and families through better training and practices.

A. Building a Comprehensive ELC Mixed Delivery System that Integrates Universal Prekindergarten

The topic of integrating universal prekindergarten (UPK) into a comprehensive ELC mixed delivery system was a focal point of discussion and recommendations from the Council and its Advisory Committees in 2024. The Council's work on UPK began at its second quarterly meeting. Council members Sneeringer and Tagawa facilitated the conversation.

Sneeringer opened by explaining the vision for UPK as a vision for local control and parent choice. She asserted that:

“...as a Council and as an industry, we need to design a system that gives families options to meet their needs, so their kids are supported to thrive...we are challenged to build a system that's not going to look exactly the same in every community yet still offers families an array of choices.”

Sneeringer went on to say, “We've become very entrenched in which side of the early education aisle we sit on, whether we're on the preschool/[transitional kindergarten (TK)] side or the child care side...but families don't see us as separate. They see us as a single continuum that they need to raise their families.”

Tagawa reminded the Council of the recommendation for UPK cited in the MPELC, sharing:

“...part of the goal of working on the MPELC is to make sure that every four-year-old had an opportunity to go to school before kinder. And then even thinking about our three-year-olds, it talks about our three-year-olds that are income-eligible and making sure they have a way to get into a program.”

Sneeringer and Tagawa added that the Council aims to make policy recommendations to the state on “what else needs to be done to create a comprehensive system and how do we work better together and what barriers do

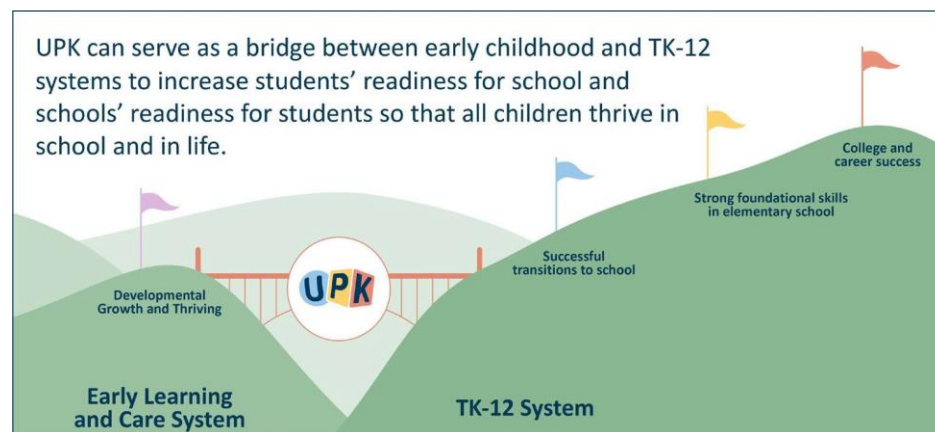
we need to bring down...between our pre-K, TK, and child care structures so that we can collaborate, and we can create a stronger mixed delivery approach.” They explained that the meeting’s guest speakers had been invited to share their expertise to support the Council in beginning to develop recommendations.

1. Overview of UPK

Stephen Propheter, Director of the California Department of Education (CDE)’s Early Education Division, provided an overview of the status and goals of UPK. As shared by Propheter, the goal of UPK is to update California’s existing system of pre-K programs to better fit the needs of families and dramatically expand access to high-quality preschool. TK will be available for free to four-year-old children by 2025–26, but enrollment in TK will not be mandatory. Families will maintain the right to choose a program best suited to their needs and the needs of their children. Currently, CDE data shows 59 percent of eligible four-year-old children enrolling in TK.

Propheter explained that the roadmap for UPK was set out in the MPELC, and the CDE is implementing that vision. Given the legislative mandate for UPK expansion, the CDE “made an intentional decision to take a systemic approach through the launch of UPK rather than just focusing on TK.” The CDE views UPK as a bridge between the ELC and TK–12 systems.

Figure 1. Alignment Between Systems - CDE



Director Propheter acknowledged that UPK success relies on system shifts and new partnerships. In addition, Director Propheter provided a review of UPK enrollment trends for three- and four-year-olds.

Figure 2. UPK Enrollment of Four-Year-Olds - CDE

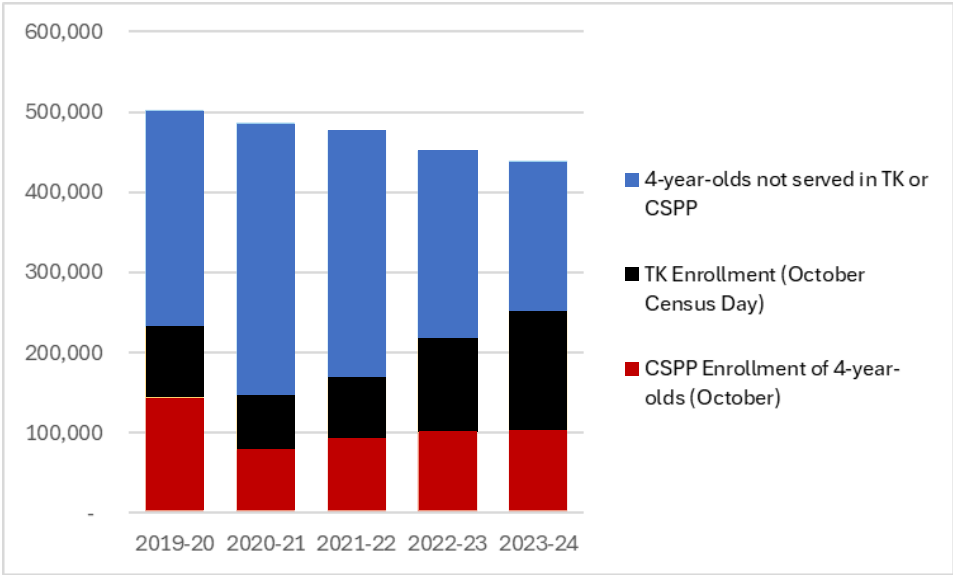
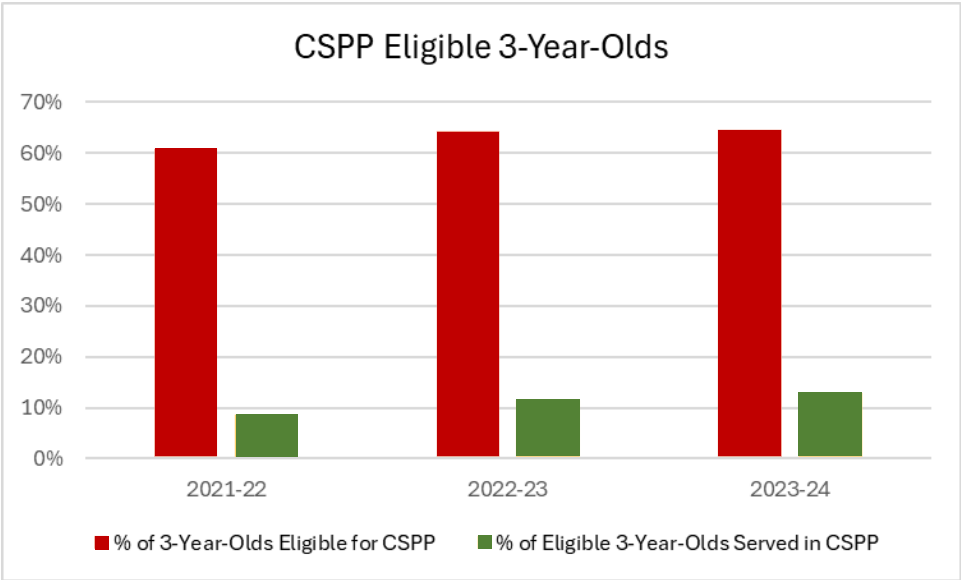


Figure 3. UPK Enrollment of Three-Year-Olds - CDE



Propheter shared that recent investments in Great Start California, an initiative to ensure all children in California have access to quality ELC services, have resulted in historic changes impacting program quality and equity. Great Start's new requirements to serve children with disabilities, support multilingual learners, and significantly reduce exclusionary practices have made California State Preschool Programs (CSPPs) more inclusive spaces. Through granting children with disabilities categorical eligibility and requiring that at least 5 percent of slots to be reserved for children with disabilities, children with disabilities accounted for 5.6 percent of CSPP enrollment in the first year of implementation (compared to 4.3 percent the year before). He shared that while enrollment has improved, legislation is still needed as more funding was not approved in the most recent budget proposal.

Propheter also reported on data from year two of new requirements for identifying multilingual learners (MLLs):

“In the first quarter of this current year, 58 percent of children in state preschool were dual language learners, mirroring that of the birth to age five population in California. Our [CSPPs] are tracking with the Migrant Policy Institute's estimate that about 59–60 percent of children from birth to five are MLLs...These insights are really powerful for fostering culturally inclusive and affirming...programs for California's children and families as well as increasing support for home language development alongside English development.”

Head Start and private preschools will continue to be critical partners in



ensuring families have choices that give all children access to the early learning opportunities they deserve.

Propheter discussed CDE's plan to begin rolling out the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) 2nd Edition and Classroom Environment Tool in the 2024–25 school year to ensure that UPK is an educator-first system of improving adult-child interactions. He shared that CDE supports the new CLASS tool for the benefit of the state. The CLASS tool provides a

standardized way to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions, offering actionable feedback to improve teaching practices, identifying areas for professional development, promoting positive environments, and supporting better child outcomes by focusing on the quality of interactions between teachers and children. There are more than 200 independent empirical research studies that substantiate the positive effects the CLASS tool and coaching have on ELC programs and outcomes for children.

Related Work of the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup

Propheter also highlighted recommendations from the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. Established in law in July 2021, this workgroup has three main responsibilities:

- Provide recommendations on best practices for increasing access to high-quality UPK programs for three- and four-year-old children offered through a mixed delivery model that provides equitable learning experiences across a variety of settings.
- Provide recommendations to update preschool standards to support equitable access to high-quality preschool and TK programs through the mixed delivery model and across all appropriate settings and funding sources.

- Ensure that recommendations align with the MPELC, without recommending new system changes that create increased state or local costs to offer preschool across the mixed delivery system.

Propheter shared key recommendations from the *UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup Report*:

a. **Quality recommendation**

Require that UPK programs foster child-centered learning environments, including requiring CSPPs to (1) adopt an evidence-based curriculum aligned with the Preschool and Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and (2) use of those tools to inform instruction and practice.

b. **Access recommendation**

Encourage community schools serving elementary grades to focus on supporting expanded access to high-quality UPK programs through a mixed delivery model by collaborating with local preschool programs and local ELC infrastructure to offer full-day options to best meet the needs of children and families.

c. **Intersection of quality and access**

Provide pathways for family child care homes (FCCHs) to join Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs), including the following supports:

- Provide recommendations and technical assistance to CSPP contractors on how to offer services through a FCCHEN.
- Ensure CSPP contractors and applicants are aware of expansion funding opportunities.
- Work with ELC infrastructure partners to communicate with FCCH providers about opportunities to join a FCCHEN.
- Modify the CSPP Quality Rating Improvement System Block Grant Request for Applications to include a stronger focus on FCCHENs.

d. Educator quality supports

Provide financial incentives and invest in effective models for professionals to achieve permits, credentials, and degrees and to progress along leadership pathways. Incentives could include scholarships or other financial aid, such as stipends, and resources to pay substitutes. Effective models could include apprenticeships, other “earn and learn” programs, and models that offer online instruction or opportunities for evening and weekend coursework. (These recommendations are subject to availability of additional funding).

Propheter expressed gratitude on behalf of the CDE for its partners, including CDSS, the State Board of Education, and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, as well as the workgroup members.

2. Overview of CDSS Role in UPK

Dr. Lupe Jaime-Mileham described how the CDSS is integrated into the UPK system. The CDSS oversees direct contracts of voucher and Title 5 programs that serve children from birth to 13 years old, which includes three- and four-year-olds in private centers; preschools; licensed FCCHs; and Family, Friend, and Neighbor settings. Voucher programs include the Alternative Payment Program and CalWORKs, while Title 5 includes General Child Care and Development (CCTR) Programs, General Migrant Child Care, and FCCHENs. Depending on a family’s income, the voucher program covers all or a portion of the cost of the family’s preferred child care provider, including those offering UPK.



The CDSS also subcontracts with child care resource and referral agencies (R&Rs) that support families seeking child care. The R&Rs help families identify programs that meet their needs.

Finally, operating within the CDSS, the California Head Start Collaboration Office supports Head Start agencies and activities designed to benefit income-eligible children and their families from the child's birth until school entry. The Collaboration Office's primary purpose is to partner with other state and local agencies, ensuring alignment with UPK goals and enhancing program quality.

Jaime-Mileham summarized CDSS workforce supports made possible with Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funds, highlighting the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN). The CPIN provides high-quality professional learning, technical assistance, and support through a virtual learning network. The CPIN Leads across the state deliver professional development training and learning strategies to CSPPs, CCDF-funded programs, and voucher and Title 5 programs to support the development of three- and four-year-olds.

3. Local Spotlights of UPK Planning

Dez Martinez, Coordinator of Early Education Special Projects for the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), shared work being done in San Diego's UPK transitions and planning processes. Martinez summarized key factors that contributed to successful UPK planning and implementation outcomes. She identified collaboration as key to the partnership between the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) process and the Vista Unified School District (VUSD). The LCAP and VUSD partnership resulted in a prenatal to third grade (P–3) continuum of supports that includes parents, teachers, and community members. Additionally, the partnership between community-based organization (CBO) Educational Enrichment Systems and district superintendent Dr. Matt Doyle is a model for successful collaboration between districts and local CBOs. This type of partnership can be replicated with districts willing to support all children and families at a systems level.

The SDCOE also developed a P–3 team that supports networking and individualized technical assistance to help districts learning which CBOs are nearby and how to best work with them.

Finally, the SDCOE developed a UPK mixed delivery team focused on obtaining ongoing feedback from mixed delivery partners. This led to a draft UPK mixed delivery plan which outlines significant needs, barriers, and possible solutions. “It’s through this work that county-wide UPK expansion and enhancement can happen through [FCCHs], CBOs, districts, Head Starts, military providers, and native providers.”



Martinez also shared challenges the SDCOE has observed and hopes to convert into positive goals over time. The first challenge is a strong tendency for a “parallel play” approach towards UPK efforts rather than a “collaborative play” approach: “The need for internal collaboration has come up in multiple ways by multiple people, multiple agencies, districts, and even our own county office of education...we’re working in silos. We’re hearing that even districts that have [CSPPs] on campuses are not effectively collaborating with those preschools...” Martinez pointed to the UPK grant itself really being two grants: “they’re held at different departments within the [SDCOE].... We work to collaborate, but it has been difficult, and we’re doing some great things, and work is continuing to move on...”

The second challenge is an atmosphere of competition rather than cooperation related to funding, salaries, services, and quality. The disparity

in workforce pay and qualifications remains an issue. Martinez explained, "...I'm not sure that we will see the workforce crisis come to an end until we can have equitable wages between both TK and our mixed delivery early educators." Martinez shared an example of TK and CSPP teachers working in the same classroom: an experienced CSPP teacher may hold a higher degree or a high-level Child Development Permit and have more knowledge than a new TK teacher, but without a teaching credential the CSPP teacher will have a lower salary range and may be seen as an assistant.

Martinez discussed that CSPPs offer some quality services that are "not quite there at the TK side yet." For example, CSPPs are using the DRDP, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, and CLASS. "We're also evaluating their teacher-child interactions, which we know are key for brain development..., but we're not seeing those same requirements or services on the TK side."

Finally, Martinez pointed to a limitation with family choice when it comes to TK and special education. "When it comes to special education services and inclusion, we're not quite there yet." For example, if a child has an identified special need but the family prefers a CBO provider to rather than TK, they may be excluded from access to district special education services.

The next speaker was Maeva Marc, Vice President of Advocacy and Policy at Kidango. An early learning and care agency in the Bay Area serving roughly 5,000 children and families, Kidango offers a blended variety of child and development programs: Early Head Start, Head Start, CCTR, and CSPP. The organization also works with 72 providers who are part of its FCCHEN program.

Marc described how Kidango's 20-year relationship with Alum Rock School



District in Santa Clara County, based on a shared and aligned vision of ELC, has enabled the development of a birth to five campus. She explained, "We know that throughout our K–12 system, there's been some under-enrollment in schools. And instead of closing a school down, we were able to transform this school based on the need within that community for families who had children under five years old...we provide the infant/toddler care, as well as working with the three-year-olds, and we provide the wraparound services, the before- and after-care for their TK and K students."

Marc further explained Kidango's vision and relational approach: "We need to be able to stabilize our families as well as our [ELC] workforce. ...what we need to do is ensure that as we begin to implement, the UPK programs have the support that they need to establish meaningful foundational partnerships with their [local education agency]. There needs to be a way for them to have access to those kinds of relationships." She advocated for partnerships with school districts.

She also shared her observations of what families want in child care:

"It's expensive to live in California, so families are working very hard to keep a roof over their heads and to keep their children fed. And so full-day care is something they need. And I think that with this system, if we work together, we cooperate, we move away from parallel play, and we shift to cooperative play, we can really build a system that serves children and families in the way that they need it. And it's important too to ensure that families are able to choose what is best for them throughout this system."

Adam North, Director of Professional Development with EveryChild California, provided an overview of the [UPK Partnership Guidebook](#) (Guidebook) that has been rolled out to support the ELC community in engaging in conversations around UPK. The Guidebook was funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation and developed by six partner organizations that are interest holders with a significant investment in seeing successful partnerships. He explained that the purpose of the Guidebook is “to create a common understanding of the regulations and laws that govern [UPK].” In addition, work includes “starting to create and share resources, tools, and templates that help facilitate the successful delivery of UPK.”

4. Council Development of Draft Recommendations on Improved Integration of UPK

Council members Sneeringer and Tagawa facilitated a Council discussion to identify what is needed to ensure the mixed delivery system integrates UPK in a way that supports parent choice and the network of providers essential to delivering on that commitment. Input included the following suggestions:

a. Collaboration

- Build a comprehensive ELC mixed delivery system that integrates UPK in a manner tailored to the needs of local families.
- Facilitate ways for school districts and ELC providers to work together to create good family choices.

b. Pay

- Create parity in pay and benefits.
- Move forward with the alternative rate methodology.

c. Training and coaching

- Provide coaching and access to coaching from professionals with experience and success working with children.
- Provide additional funding to hire coaches and provide training.

- Provide more CSPP training for teachers now working with younger children.
- Provide training for Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs.

d. Pathways

- Provide pathways for FCCHs to join FCCHENs.
- Support ELC providers in transitioning to provide care to more children aged 2 years and younger.
- Create more education pathways for providers to provide programs as part of UPK.

e. Information

- Establish effective, formal ways for R&Rs to receive full information about UPK and TK to ensure parents receive complete and accurate referrals.

f. Funding

- Continue to advocate for maintaining existing funding and securing additional funding to achieve UPK goals.

g. Early intervention/inclusion

- Provide all California children with inclusive, multilingual ELC experiences and strong early intervention services, regardless of setting or program.

h. Transportation

- Provide transportation for preschool so families can have access to school choice.

Sneeringer and Tagawa shared this input with the Advisory Committees for further development and brought draft policy recommendations back to the Council for consideration at the third quarterly meeting.

5. Advisory Committees' Input on Draft UPK Recommendations

The Council asked the Parent and Workforce Advisory Committees to discuss UPK at a joint meeting on June 27. In this meeting, Committee Chairs Tonia McMillian and Mary Ignatius shared the input provided by the Council and invited additional suggestions. The Advisory Committees offered input that built upon the Council's concepts for recommendations:

- Integrate UPK in a manner that will tailor to the local needs of families, including full-day programs and before- and after-care.
- Remove administrative barriers, increase flexibility, and facilitate ways for school districts and early childhood education (ECE) providers—including Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers—to work together to create good choices for families.
- Create parity in pay and benefits for ECE providers and TK teachers.
- Provide increased access to and funding for coaching, utilizing professionals with the experience of successfully working with children.
- Provide local education agency teachers and administrations with professional development to effectively support younger TK children in their classrooms and on their campuses.
- Support ECE providers in transitioning to provide care to more infants through 2-year-olds with compensation to address higher ratios.
- Create more education pathways for providers—including Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers—to deliver programs as part of UPK.
- Establish effective and formal ways to inform families who are eligible for CalWORKs and who enroll directly at an Early Head Start, Head Start, CSPP, or directly contracted Title 5 child care center, that they also qualify for a CalWORKs child care voucher that could provide child care until their child's 13th birthday. This could be aligned with key moments in CalWORKs child care eligibility.
- Provide sufficient funding to meet the needs of children from prenatal/birth until a child's 13th birthday (older for child with special

needs) to ensure a whole child/whole family approach to a continuum of services across the age spectrum.

- Ensure a seamless transition between regional centers, child care programs, and public education programs that follow the child without disruption.
- Expand dual language learning in ELC and early elementary settings to support the majority of Californian children under age 6 who speak a language other than English at home.
- Provide transportation, or transportation vouchers or reimbursement, for pre-K so families can have access to a full range of child care settings that meet the needs of families choices of schools.
- Provide transportation funding to early educators who transport children between UPK programs and other child care settings.

6. Council Final Recommendations on Effective UPK Integration

Council members Sneeringer and Tagawa used the input from members of the Council and Advisory Committees to develop recommendations for Council consideration. Sneeringer and Tagawa also analyzed the extent to which the recommendations aligned with recommendations from the MPELC and UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. These draft recommendations were posted on the Council web page. At the August 13 meeting, the Council discussed, finalized, and formally endorsed the following recommendations to advise to the Legislature and Administration on effective implementation of UPK:

Table 1. Council Recommendations for Building a Comprehensive Early Learning and Care Mixed Delivery System that Integrates Universal Prekindergarten

Council Recommendations	Aligns with Recommendations from:	
	UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup	Master Plan for Early Learning and Care
1. Collaboration		
a. Build a comprehensive early learning and care mixed delivery system that integrates universal prekindergarten (UPK) in a manner that will tailor to the local needs of families, including full-day programs and before- and after-care in community- and school-based settings.	✓	✓
b. Remove administrative barriers, increase flexibility, and facilitate ways for school districts and early childhood education (ECE) providers—including Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers, licensed family child care providers, and private child care centers—to work together to create good choices for families.	✓	✓
2. Pay		
a. Implement the alternative rate methodology.		✓
b. Implement parity in pay and benefits for ECE providers and transitional kindergarten (TK) teachers.		
3. Training and coaching		
a. Provide increased access to and funding for coaching, utilizing professionals with the experience of successfully working with children.	✓	✓
b. Provide local educational agency teachers and administrations with professional development to effectively support younger TK children in their classrooms and on their campuses.	✓	✓
c. Provide training for Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs about the unique needs of younger children.	✓	✓

Council Recommendations	Aligns with Recommendations from:	
	UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup	Master Plan for Early Learning and Care
d. Ensure coaching and training is supported with stipends and certifications that recognize providers' time and effort towards professional development.	✓	✓
4. Pathways		
a. Expand Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs)—and related funding—across CDE and CDSS early care and learning programs to more counties and promote pathways for family child care homes to join the FCCHENs.	✓	
b. Support ECE providers in transitioning to provide care to more infants through 2-year-olds with compensation to address higher ratios and facilities funding to convert classrooms and homes.		✓
c. Create more education pathways for providers—including Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers—to deliver programs as part of UPK.		✓
5. Information		
a. Establish an effective and formal partnership through the CDE and CDSS to expand the roles of resource and referral agencies (R&Rs) to receive full information for TK, and UPK and expanded learning programs more broadly, so that R&Rs can give parents comprehensive information for their children throughout their development.	✓	

Council Recommendations	Aligns with Recommendations from:	
	UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup	Master Plan for Early Learning and Care
b. Require CDSS to create a partnership with CDE, CalWORKs child care, and the Head Start Collaborative office to ensure all families maintain eligibility and are notified of their rights in both programs to ensure continuity for children. Explore policy changes to allow children in other early learning programs to maintain their CalWORKs child care eligibility without additional assessments or certifications for continuity of care when they start school.		✓
6. Funding		
a. Allocate funding based on the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel report to meet the needs from prenatal until a child's 13th birthday (and older for a child with special needs) to ensure a whole child/whole family approach to a continuum of services across the age spectrum.		
7. Early Intervention/Inclusion		
a. Provide all California children with inclusive and multilingual early education experiences and strong early intervention services, regardless of setting or program.	✓	✓
b. Ensure a seamless transition between regional centers, child care programs, and public education programs that follow the child without disruption.		✓
c. Expand dual language learning in ELC and early elementary settings to support the majority of California's children under age 6 who speak a language other than English at home.	✓	✓
8. Transportation		

Council Recommendations	Aligns with Recommendations from:	
	UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup	Master Plan for Early Learning and Care
a. Provide transportation, or transportation vouchers or reimbursement, for preschool so families can have access to a full range of child care settings that meet the needs of families.		
b. Provide transportation funding to early educators who transport children between UPK programs and other child care settings.		

B. Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs)

The Council and the Advisory Committees discussed CSPP FCCHENs in 2024. Propheter and members of his team presented information about FCCHENs and invited feedback from the Council and Advisory Committees.

1. Background on FCCHENs

A CSPP FCCHEN, as defined in Education Code Section 8205, is an entity that contracts with the CDE to make payments to licensed FCCH providers and provides educational and support services to those providers and to children and families eligible for state-subsidized ELC services.

The CSPP FCCHEN contractors are required to fulfil the following duties:

- Provide training and support to FCC providers and staff, assess each FCCH provider's services according to quality standards for CSPPs, and ensure that a developmental profile is completed for each child.
- Provide administrative activities including recruiting; enrollment; certifying eligible families; training, supporting, and reimbursing providers; assessing program implementation of CDE standards; collecting family fees; monitoring; and reporting.

2. Goals and Challenges of FCCHENs

Propheter shared CDE's vision to expand access to FCCHENs, which are currently available in six counties. He added that FCCHs are recognized as a crucial component for providing UPK access to parents of three- and four-year-olds. He shared the following regarding the CDE and FCCHENs:



The CDE does not have the authority to appropriate funds, determine budget allocations, or redirect pre-K funds to TK–12 education. These financial decisions are made by the Legislature and Governor. The CDE also does not redirect pre-K funds to TK–12 education; such budgetary decisions are made by legislative and executive branches of the state government, not by the CDE.

The CDE values FCCHENs as an essential option for families and acknowledges the low participation rates and the need to increase access for families. Because of this, FCCHENs are a focus area in the CSPP improvement initiative.

There are strategies that can be implemented within the CDE's administrative authority to expand access to FCCHs, as well as recommendations that can be made to lawmakers to support expansion. Increasing access to FCCHENs requires additional funding, which is a critical component of the expansion effort.

Propheter emphasized the CDE vision to increase families' access to mixed delivery in a school, community-based center, or FCCH setting. He acknowledged "there's still a long way to go in terms of expanding [FCCHENs] across the state as well as supports for [FCCHs] to join a

[FCCHEN]. We hear that many of you share this concern as well...it takes time and resources to achieve that vision.”

Propheter highlighted that the CDE has been working steadily to implement recommendations issued in March 2024 to support increased access to UPK for FCCH providers. He noted the addition of a Los Angeles County FCCHEN. The CDE “looks forward to continuing to increase the number of FCCHENs across the state as more resources become available.” The CDE has been working to implement the following recommendations with existing resources and current opportunities:

- Assess the existing workforce development funding sources and recommend changes to ensure funding can be used by preschool educators to earn college credits.
- Support optional opportunities for FCCH providers to earn units towards Child Development Permits.
- Provide pathways for FCCHs to join FCCHENs.

The CDE highlighted that its ability to expand this work depends on additional funding and resources from the state.

3. Council and Advisory Committee Feedback on FCCHENs

Council and Advisory Committee members provided the following feedback to improve integration of FCCHs in FCCHENs and in UPK more globally:

- Better prepare all FCCH providers for the UPK program. More transparency and improved communication about the process of joining FCCHENs will help ensure providers can take full advantage of the opportunities presented by UPK. This includes better communication about the FCCHEN requirement that providers have a current Child Development Permit issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.
- Clarify who is responsible for completing the DRDP—the provider or the FCCHEN contractor—and create more consistency in the process for completing DRDPs. There is inconsistency across FCCHEN contractors, and it causes stress for the child care providers. Providers should be

involved in the assessment, as they are the individuals working directly with the child.

- Align rules and rates across CDE and CDSS FCCHENs to reduce providers' administrative burden.
- Given the improved state revenue forecasts, it will be critical to advocate for more funding to address CSPP family fees or getting family fees waived. This will be necessary to ensure true access and parental choice for all families. If families can go to UPK or TK for free but have to pay a fee for subsidized center-based programs and FCCHs, many families will have no choice but to go to UPK.
- Address inequities experienced by child care centers under Title 5. Contractors, whether non-profit or for-profit, are treated differently by licensing, CDSS reviewers, and CDE reviewers. Staff should be treated equally whether they are in FCCHs, centers or school districts.

C. The Transition of Child Care Programs to the CDSS

This year marked the final year of formal reporting on the transition of child care programs from the CDE to the CDSS. At each of the quarterly Council meetings, the CDSS shared a status report of that transition. These updates can be found in this report under the related MPELC goal that the topic most closely supports.

1. Status of Enrollment in Programs Administered by the CDSS

At the first quarterly Council meeting, Jaime-Mileham shared the status of enrollment in CDSS administered programs for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022–23. The following numbers are based on unduplicated CCDF programs and estimates for Stage 1 and Bridge programs.

Table 2. Total Programmatic Enrollment Summary in CDSS Subsidized Child Care and Development Programs, Monthly Average, FY 2022–23

Programs	Enrollment
Alternative Payment (CAPP)	92,428
CalWORKs Stage 1 Child Care (C1AP)	48,095
CalWORKs Stage 2 Child Care (C2AP)	24,497
CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care (C3AP)	51,818
General Child Care and Development (CCTR)	25,170
Family Child Care Education Home Networks (CFCC) Program	2,759
Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children (Bridge Program)	2,549
Migrant Alternative Payment Program (CMAP)	1,826
Migrant Child Care and Development Programs (CMIG)	1,143
Children with Severe Disabilities (CHAN)	72

For FY 2022–23, CDSS child care and development programs served an average of approximately 250,000 children per monthly average across 10 contract types. The highest enrollment was in the Alternative Payment Program, with approximately 92,000 children or 40 percent of participants.

Most children enrolled in subsidized child care are between two and five years old. The CCTR program has the greatest proportion of the oldest children enrolled in the child care programs, and the FCCHEN program has the youngest caseload of any child care program.

As displayed in Figure 4 below, 158,959 children (43 percent) enrolled in CDSS subsidized ELC programming receive care in licensed FCCHs, 124,708 children (34 percent) receive care in centers, and 82,704 children (23 percent) receive care in license-exempt settings.

Figure 4. ELC Setting Caseload Summary, FY 2022–23

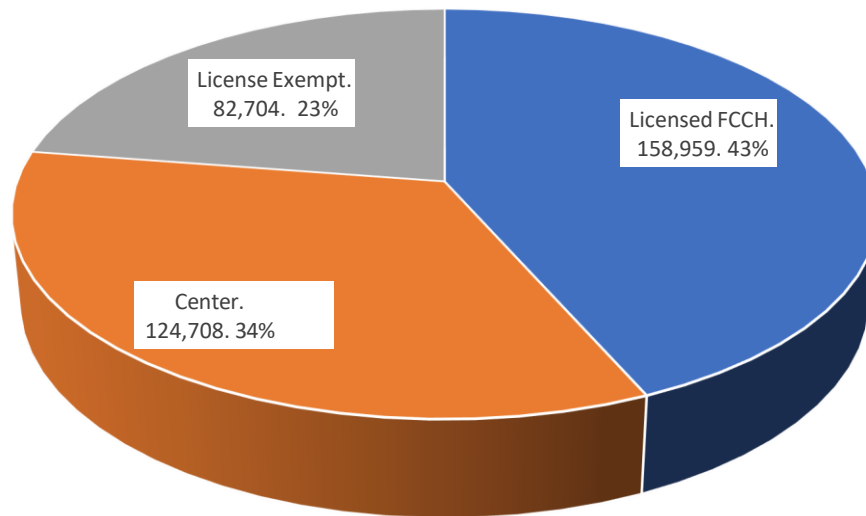
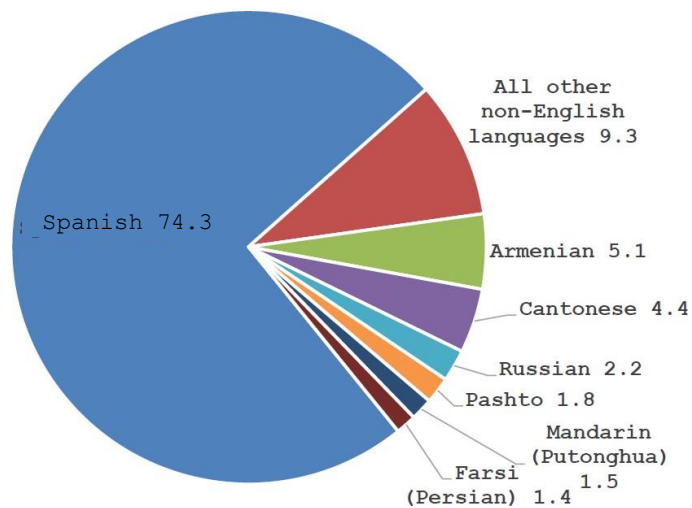


Figure 5. Primary Language Other than English, Caseload Summary, FY 2022–23



Of the 290,429 total children served in subsidized ELC programs in FY 2022–23, 48,561 (15.5 percent) have a primary home language other than

English. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of the home languages of this 15.5 percent of children. Specifically, among these children, 48,561, or 74 percent are in Spanish speaking homes. These figures are based only on Child Development Management Information System enrollment data, excluding Bridge and Stage One data.

2. Dismantling the Preschool to Prison Pipeline

At the second quarterly Council meeting, Jaime-Mileham shared information about CDSS efforts to combat implicit bias and racism as it manifests through the disproportionate expulsions of preschool-age children of color. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, preschool-age children are three times more likely to be expelled than their school-age peers. African American children represent 42 percent of expelled children across all subsidized preschool programs, though they only make up 18 percent of enrollment. Children who have been expelled from ELC settings are 10 times more likely to drop out of high school and face an increased risk of incarceration.



To combat these inequities, the CDSS collaborated with EduPop! LLC, an organization with subject matter expertise regarding equity in child education, to provide a webinar entitled "Dismantling the Pipeline: A Change

Centered Approach.” Participants learned about implicit bias and microaggressions in the classroom and how these behaviors perpetuate generational challenges for historically excluded communities. The presentation also expanded on how exclusionary discipline practices like suspension and expulsion push young children out of school and into prison.

California is implementing policy changes to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline in CDSS-contracted child care centers. Recent legislation (Assembly Bill 2806) requires center-based programs and FCCHENs to implement preventative practices aimed at understanding and addressing children’s behavior, supporting each child’s needs, and reducing suspension and expulsion without due process.

Practices focus on multiple dimensions of behavior, including social skills, emotional literacy, mental health, and family support. The CDSS has hired an Early Childhood Wellness and Inclusion team support center-based and FCCHEN contractors in implementation of these new policies and procedures.

Additionally, the most recent Memorandum of Understanding between the State and the Child Care Providers United - California, a union representing the state’s family child care providers, necessitated that a Joint Labor Management Committee provide recommendations on suspension and expulsion policies to the Legislature by March 31, 2024. The JLMC concluded on March 31st, 2024, with final recommendations being submitted to the Legislature in April 2024.

D. Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations

At the first quarterly Council meeting, Propheter provided an overview of California’s Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (Foundations).

The Foundations outline key knowledge and skills that most children ages three to five-and-a-half years old can achieve when provided with the kinds of interactions, instruction, and environments that research has shown to promote early learning and development.

In 2021, the CDE was charged with updating the Foundations, originally published in 2008 as the Preschool Learning Foundations. The update is intended to reflect updated research and to address implementation of TK, which provides a year of prekindergarten in a school setting.

The updated Foundations will describe nine domains of learning and development for children in center-based, home-based, and TK settings. The updated Foundations also feature an increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, providing more examples of children with disabilities, as well as more examples of culturally and linguistically responsive practices. The newest domain, *Approaches to Learning*, is aligned with the Desired Results Developmental Profile. The Foundations publications, detailing all nine domains, were released in Summer 2024.

E. Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program

At the February 28 Council meeting, Prophetter announced that the CDE had released a Request for Applications for the second iteration of the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP). The purpose of the IEEEP grant is to increase access to inclusive early learning and care programs for children birth through five with disabilities, including children with severe disabilities. The IEEEP is funded through Proposition 98.



The majority of IEEEP funds (\$116 million) are for local grants. However, \$45 million in grant funding is available for state-level systems building and professional development to align local practice with research- and practice-

based strategies that best promote child outcomes and program quality. The goals for this state-level funding are to build sustainability within the state, reach as many programs as possible, and provide support to the field to help increase inclusive settings. These funds will address the high level of need for additional professional development in the CSPP, especially training related to instructional practices to support inclusion, such as coaching, special education experts, and support techniques. In collaboration with county offices of education, the Community Service Block Grantees Quality Improvement System, and Quality Counts California, state-level work will include elements to improve inclusion and increase positive teacher-child interactions in the classroom.

The CDE is exploring investing in resources and training around challenging behaviors, focused on the California Teaching Pyramid and based on the California Collaborative on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. The goal will be to train regional leads, trainers, and coaches, thereby increasing the number of participants and programs trained in inclusive practices and working with behaviors that challenge adults. In addition to building program capacity for working with children with disabilities, improving skills around challenging behaviors can also decrease suspension and expulsion rates.



F. Birth Equity

The first quarterly Council meeting included an expert panel discussion of birth equity issues. Along with Mayra Alvarez, President of the Children’s Partnership and member of the Council, panel participants included:

- Nikki Helms, Owner and Lead Midwife, San Diego Birth Education Center
- Raena Granberry, Director, Maternal and Reproductive Health, California Black Women’s Health Project
- Solaire Spellen, Interim Executive Director, California Preterm Birth Initiative, University of California San Francisco (UCSF) and Co-founder of the California Coalition for Black Birth Justice
- Candice Charles, Research and Evaluation Manager, California Coalition for Black Birth Justice

Alvarez opened the discussion and described the Children’s Partnership’s commitment to advancing pro-Black policies and deepening understanding of anti-Blackness and how it impacts families’ ability to thrive. Alvarez pointed out the central role providers of all types play in a child’s first years of life and development. Providers often have the family’s trust and can offer critical connections to services, despite facing harsh inequities themselves. Underscoring the importance of early connection to support, Alvarez stated:

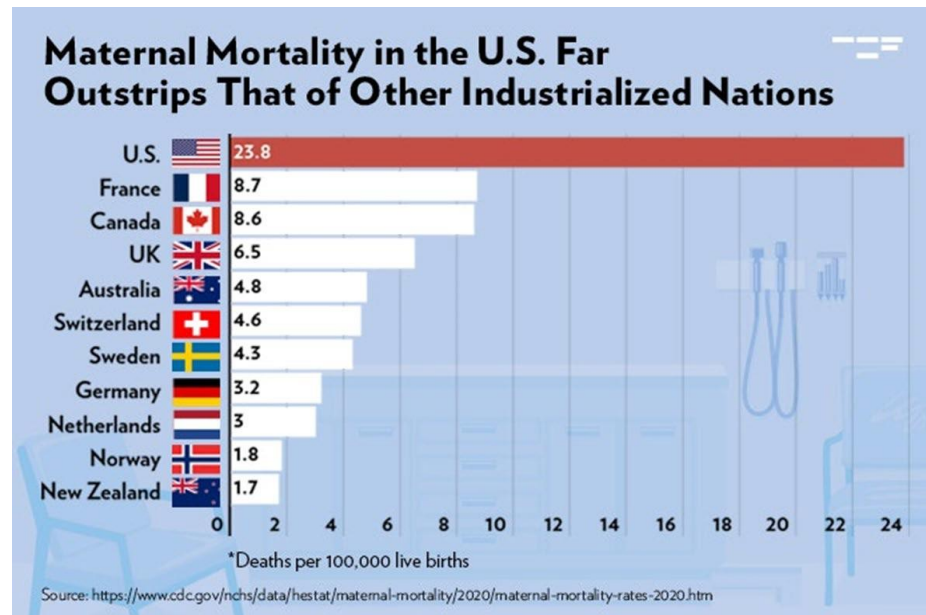
“[The birthing process has an] ...immense impact on a parent or a caregiver’s ability to care for their baby, to connect them to the resources, and to get that family on the best path for healthy early childhood development. And, yet, for far too many California birthing people, particularly Black and Indigenous women, too many are robbed of that opportunity.”

1. Maternal Mortality

Nikki Helms defined birth equity in the context of America’s maternal outcomes. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control, the United States was ranked 54th in maternal mortality in 2020, with 23.8 maternal deaths per 100,000 births. Helms noted a concerning upward trend

in the mortality data, sharing that: “In 2021, the figure goes from 23.8 per 100,000 births to 32.9 per 100,000 births.”

Figure 7. Maternal Mortality Rates of Industrialized Nations, 2020



Helms went on to show the disparities in U.S. maternal death rates across races. Black birthing people in the hospital system experience a mortality rate of 40 maternal deaths per 100,000 births, compared to 12 deaths per 100,000 births for non-Hispanic White birthing people. This means Black birthing people are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications.

Figure 8. Maternal Mortality Rates, Comparison by Race



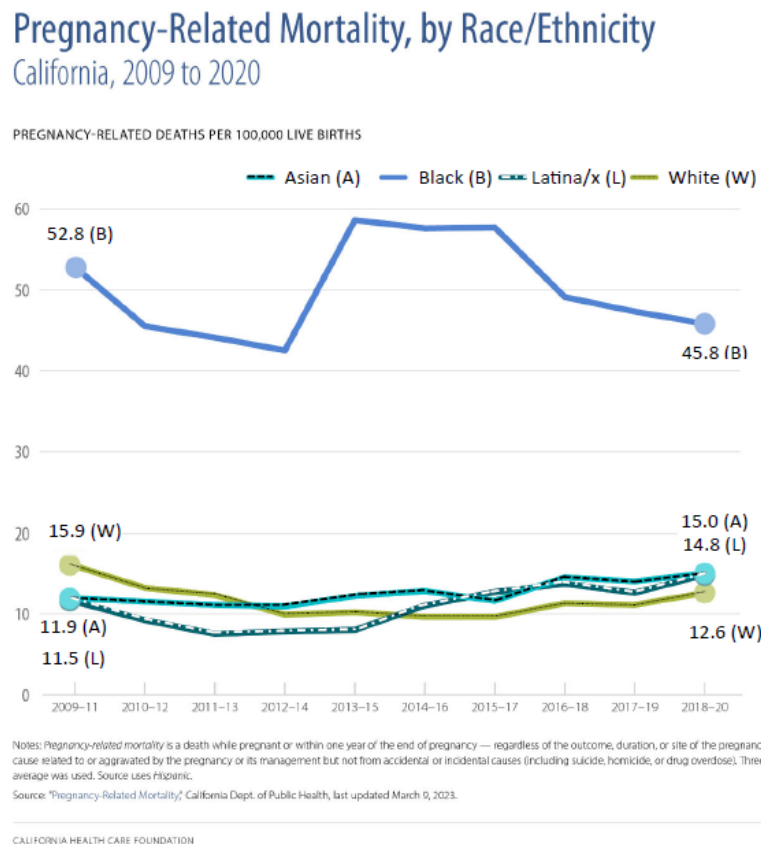
The California Coalition for Black Birth Justice (the Coalition) was founded by Black women leaders in California in 2022 to unify and strengthen the Black birth justice movement in the state. Solaire Spellen reviewed the Coalition's three areas of work: (1) being the Black Birth Justice Connector and Convener of California, (2) supporting the Black birth justice workforce, and (3) strengthening and scaling systems-change efforts in health care. She asserted that there needs to be more attention and resources on the Black birth workforce. Birthing work is highly taxing and a statewide approach to this challenge could help streamline solutions that will allow the workforce to remain energized to continue the work.

Candice Charles reviewed data by race and ethnicity, including pregnancy-related maternal mortality, low birth weight, and preterm birth rates. She reported that assumptions linking data on outcomes to causes related to weight, income level, or education are not supported by the data, stating:

"...educated Black women have worse outcomes than White women who have not graduated high school. We can always go back to these points and say, 'This is not about race.' A lot of times, it's about racism, and it doesn't start at the doctor's office. A lot of times, it starts in the community. A lot of these communities are

underserved, under-cared for, and it causes a lot of pre-pregnancy issues that aren't cared for once we are in hospital settings.”

Figure 9. Pregnancy-Related Mortality, by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2009–2020



Maternity Care in California Quality

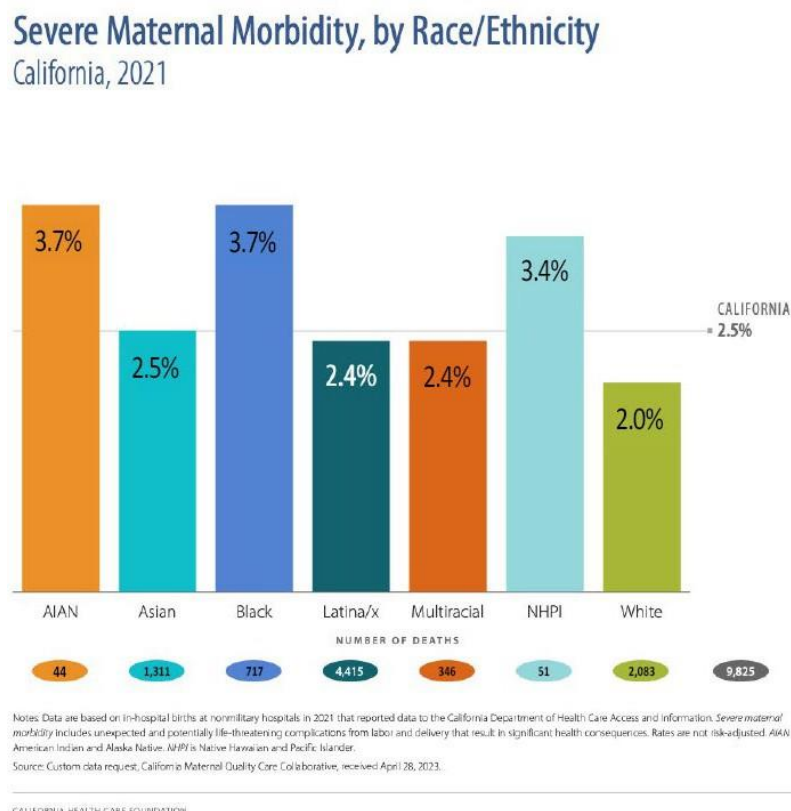
Between 2009 and 2020, the pregnancy-related mortality rate for Black mothers / birthing people¹ was three to four times higher than the rate for mothers / birthing people of other races/ethnicities. This variation cannot be explained by factors such as age, income, education, and health insurance coverage. Research shows that implicit bias and racism are key causes of disparate outcomes for Black mothers / birthing people.¹

¹ Birthing people is used to recognize that not all people who become pregnant and give birth identify as women or mothers.

¹ “Birth Equity,” California Health Care Foundation.

Raena Granberry noted that Indigenous and Native populations also have “really high disparate rates in a lot of these categories...in some cases, you can see Pacific Islanders as well.”

Figure 10. Severe Maternal Morbidity, by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2021



Maternity Care in California Quality

In California, rates of severe maternal morbidity (SMM) varied by race/ethnicity. American Indian and Alaska Native, Black, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander mothers / birthing people¹ had the highest SMM rates in 2021. Maternal age and chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are associated with increased risk of SMM.²

¹ Birthing people is used to recognize that not all people who become pregnant and give birth identify as women or mothers.

² "Severe Maternal Morbidity." California Dept. of Public Health, last updated April 11, 2023.

Helms posed the question: "What do we do as a nation—a wealthy, industrialized nation—what do we do to change the outcome of this appalling maternal mortality rate and these low birth weights for Black birthing bodies?"

2. Council Recommendations to Address Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

The panel of experts and Council members identified the following policy recommendations to address disparate maternal and infant health outcomes:

a. Institutional accountability and data accessibility

- Use community-defined measures to monitor progress in reducing Black maternal and infant health disparities.

- Produce a publicly accessible Black birth equity monitoring and evaluation system.
- Incentivize provider actions to advance Black birth equity through innovative Medi-Cal payment models.

b. Black birth justice workforce development and sustainability

- Strengthen recruitment and retention of Black clinical and non-clinical workforce.
- Establish sustainable mechanisms to support the joy and well-being of the Black health justice workforce.

c. Community-based care

- Expand coverage for community-based care to increase access to holistic support.
- Invest in Black-led birth centers, organizations, and birth workers.

Council Chair Kim Johnson, Director of the CDSS, concluded the panel discussion, sharing her appreciation for the panelists and highlighting CDSS efforts focused on birth equity issues, including a guaranteed income pilot focused on pregnant individuals. One of the pilot sites, the Expecting Justice program, focuses on birth equity for San Francisco parents experiencing great disparities. She emphasized that the California Health & Human Services Agency (CalHHS) is dedicated to birth equity efforts, stating: “We are taking that charge to heart, that we have to make sure these things are connected, that we’re asking these same questions again to the point on data, how we’re reporting outcomes and progress, and the strategies that we’re investing in.”

G. Whole Child Community Equity

1. Overview of Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup Efforts

At the fourth quarterly meeting, the Council examined the state’s work developing two resources: a Whole Child Community Equity Framework report (Framework) and Whole Child Community Equity Screening Tool

(Equity Tool). The Framework outlines categories essential to supporting the whole child and the Equity Tool provides data to support equitable distribution of resources and monitoring of the state's progress.

This work stems from legislation enacted in 2022 (Assembly Bill 2832, Chapter 699, Section 1 (b), Statutes of 2022). A whole child equity approach “[enables] leaders to make informed decisions about investments and policies that uplift underserved communities to build the support and infrastructure they need for their families with young children to thrive.” Initial efforts focus on CDSS and CDE programs.

The Council invited Carlise King of Child Trends to provide a progress report from the Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup (Workgroup), which is facilitated by WestEd and Child Trends on behalf of the CDSS and CDE. The Workgroup provided recommendations on the development of the Framework and Equity Tool, with a goal of ensuring the resources are informed by those who know the field and their communities well.

The Framework will conceptualize how we serve the state's youngest children using a whole child approach, taking into account their academic, economic, social, emotional, and physical needs and development. The goal of the Framework is to ensure all children benefit from the state's investments. Several areas of support were identified in AB 2832, including child care access, health and mental health services, education, supports to address childhood adversity, economic well-being, and built environments. The Workgroup has added maternal and child health and environmental conditions as support categories for inclusion in the final Framework.

Using the Framework as a foundation, the Equity Tool will help state, regional, and local decision makers allocate resources for early childhood initiatives in ways that reduce racial and economic inequities. The Equity Tool's data-driven insights should allow leaders to (1) identify specific community factors that support or hinder children's development, (2) begin to identify challenges that may require targeted interventions, and (3) monitor progress over time. This will lead to more targeted investments, more effective policies, and ultimately better outcomes for children and families.

The Workgroup has discussed the importance of asset-based discussions of community strengths and needs.

At the time of the Council meeting, the Workgroup had defined and developed a vision statement for the Framework, reviewed the whole child community categories, and started exploring existing data and measurement tools—such as the Child Opportunity Index and the Social Vulnerability Index—as well as California-specific data tools and administrative data. Identifying available state data while being cognizant of potential biases in data sources is key to building an efficient and comprehensive Equity Tool. The Workgroup will convene for topic-focused meetings through 2025 and will present Framework and Equity Tool recommendations to the CDSS late in the year.

2. Council Feedback on Whole Child Community Equity Work

The Council provided the following feedback for the Workgroup and the state to consider as efforts continue:

- It will be important to ensure implementation of the Equity Tool supports practitioners and communities without adding more to their already burdened plates.
- If the Equity Tool is used in the future to allocate funding, it will be important to be aware of the nuances of community data and not overlook areas where families work and send their children to school in different zip codes than where they live.
- Better coordination and collaboration across all CDSS child welfare services will be necessary to achieve whole child and community equity. This includes mandated supporting and prevention through the Families First Prevention Services Act, universal basic income, food supports—all of the comprehensive needs that families have. The State would benefit from looking at this more holistically than just child care.
- The process of data gathering and community input should leverage existing forums at the local level as much as possible.
- It will be important to include data on physical and mental health as part of the Equity Tool—as part of understanding the whole child.

III. Advancing MPELC Goal 2: Support Children’s Learning and Development by Enhancing Educator Competencies, Incentivizing and Funding Career Pathways, and Implementing Supporting Program Standards

MPELC, Goal 2, p. 17

California can advance equity for all young children by ensuring the early learning and care workforce has access to learning opportunities; support for pursuing them; compensation that aligns to qualifications; and authentic, unbiased, and straightforward pathways to career advancement—regardless of race, gender, age, culture, primary language, geographic location, or the setting in which one works. This goal can be achieved through three interrelated actions: (1) enhancing educator competencies to optimally support child learning and development; (2) incentivizing and funding career pathways; and (3) implementing supportive program standards.

A. Lifting Up the Needs of Parents and Providers

Among the Advisory Committees’ discussion topics in 2024 was identifying the most pressing needs of parents and providers. The Parent and Workforce Advisory Committees compiled a list of priorities in response to the question: What is most on your mind as parents of young children and as providers in the early care space? The chairs of the Committees identified focus areas and presented them to the Council, along with specific issues of concern:

- Rate reform and true cost of care

- The need for rate reform to align with the actual cost of providing quality child care
 - The urgency of addressing this issue by July 1, 2025
- Parental choice and accessibility
 - Access to child care options
 - The lengthy TrustLine process and the need for a simplified system/portal that respects parental choice
- UPK and FCCH providers
 - The challenge of integrating family child care providers into the UPK program
 - The need to clarify the role of family child care home providers
 - Barriers to joining a FCCHEN and lack of clear communication to providers and families
- Children with special needs and early intervention
 - Difficulties in accessing early intervention services for children with disabilities
 - The challenges providers face without adequate resources or compensation for needed accommodations
- Workforce retention and professional development:
 - Staff retention in early education
 - The importance of competitive wages
 - The need for adequate training and education that prepares educators for real-world experiences
- Racial wage justice and equity
 - The existence of racial wage disparities in the early education workforce, particularly affecting Black early educators
 - The need for systemic changes to address this inequity
- Licensing and regulatory challenges

- Administrative and regulatory barriers, such as delays in licensing inspections and fire code requirements
- The expansion of age ranges
- How all these issues hinder the opening or adaptation of child care facilities
- Impact of TK expansion
 - The effect of TK expansion on family child care enrollment
 - The need to consider the implications for providers and the families they serve
 - Is it truly family choice?
 - Is it truly an equitable system that's being created?
 - Are the facilities and logistics where they need to be?
- Advocacy for systemic change
 - The importance of advocating for changes to improve the early care system
 - Ensuring that policies and practices are inclusive and equitable
 - Adequately supporting the needs of children, families, and providers
 - The importance of listening to voices from the field and then taking direct action based on those needs and concerns
- Emergency funding and financial stability
 - The call for emergency funding supports for providers still facing financial difficulties in recovering from the pandemic
 - The need for financial supports for families still choosing between child care, housing, and food
- Whole child, whole family approach
 - The call to adopt a holistic approach that addresses the needs of the child, the family, and the community (similar to Head Start)

- Ensuring that systems talk to one another and limit the burdens placed on families and providers
- Parent and educator voice in policy:
 - The need for parents and educators to be more directly involved in policy discussions and decisions affecting the ELC system

B. Professional Development Modules for ELC Professionals

As part of the status report on the transition of child care programs to the CDSS, Dr. Jaime-Mileham shared information about the launch of free online professional development modules for ELC professionals in all roles and settings.

The modules were developed by CDSS and CalHHS, in partnership with WestEd, with funding from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal and Planning grants. The module series, listed below, cover topics including health and safety, leadership in FCCHs, supporting young children's development, and becoming an ECE professional.

- *Trauma-Informed Practice: Culturally Responsive Strategies for Early Care and Education*
- *Creating Brave Spaces: Disrupting Implicit Bias in Early Care and Education*
- *Health and Safety for Family Child Care Settings*
- *Health and Safety for Center-Based Settings*
- *Inclusive Practices for Children With Disabilities or Delays*
- *Leadership in Center-Based Settings*
- *Leadership in Family Child Care Settings*
- *Responsive and Inclusive Early Learning and Care Environments*
- *Developing and Maintaining Responsive Relationships With Children and Families*
- *Social and Emotional Learning: A Foundation for Life*
- *Foundational Practices in Early Care and Education*
- *Becoming an Early Care and Education Professional*

- *Supporting Young Children's Development and Learning*
- *Supporting Young Multilingual Learners*

The modules are available on the [California Early Childhood Online \(CECO\) website](#) and are available in English, Spanish, and Simplified and Traditional Chinese. The Chinese CECO portal launched in November of 2023 and currently features several translated professional development module series.

Learners earn certificates of completion for each module.

IV. Advancing MPELC Goal 3: Unify Funding to Advance Equity and Opportunity

MPELC, Goal 3, p. 27

Unifying funding, tying provider reimbursement rates to quality, and designing sliding-scale fees based on family income can help California advance equitable access to high-quality early learning and care while providing equitable opportunities for early educators. The State's current reimbursement rate structure is overly complex and inequitable. It can be better aligned to reflect the cost of caring for and teaching an increasingly diverse set of young children. This goal can be achieved by following previous recommendations made by the Rate Reform Work Group (November 2018), Poverty Task Force (November 2018), Blue Ribbon Commission (April 2019), and Preschool Development Grant Strategic Plan (October 2019), all of which called for a shift from the current reimbursement models to a tiered reimbursement model that unifies the system. Unifying funding and increasing the child care subsidy to incentivize program improvements in quality would ensure that the workforce is supported to address the diverse needs of California's young children, including dual language learners, those with disabilities, and children experiencing poverty, homelessness, or involved in the child welfare system. In addition, implementing a sliding payment scale that adjusts as a family's income grows can increase accessibility and affordability for more families of young children and increase the racial and economic diversity of settings.

A. Rate Reform

The topic of rate reform is a standing agenda item at Council meetings.

1. Background on Rate Reform

To increase positive outcomes for children, families, and the ELC workforce, California is in the process of revising child care subsidy payment rates. Moving away from market rates, the new rates will be informed by the cost of care. The CDSS is working with national experts—Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies (P5)—to design and implement an alternative methodology process.

In 2023, the State and Child Care Providers United entered into an agreement (Chapter 193, Statutes of 2023) that comprehensively addresses topics including payment practices, part-time and full-time care definitions, a single rate structure based on an alternative methodology, and a one-time transitional payment and Monthly Cost of Care Plus Rate to bridge the period pending implementation of the single rate structure.

2. Progress on Rate Reform

At each quarterly meeting of 2024, Jaime-Mileham and members of her team provided updates on progress toward building an alternative methodology and rate system. Highlights include that:

- The CDSS is working with national experts P5 to design and implement the proposed alternative methodology.
- P5 developed a cost estimation tool based on feedback from the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel and others.
- The Joint Labor Management Committee (JLMC), with representatives from the state and Child Care Providers United, worked to reach consensus on rate element definitions.
- The CDSS solicited input from child care providers and members of the public about the definitions identified by the JLMC.

- The CDSS convened opportunities for public input about the rate reform process through Fiscal Year 2024–25 at Rate and Quality Advisory Panel and/or Council meetings.
- The CDSS partnered with the CDE to convene focus groups to understand current issues related to the JLMC-approved elements, implementation, and operationalization.
- The CDSS retained Child Trends to develop an evaluation framework for the new rate structure.
- The 2025–2027 CCDF State Plan was approved by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in November 2024. The plan contains an update on the alternative methodology process and timeline, including a plan to set new rates using the alternative methodology by July 1, 2025, per the federal deadline.
- The CDSS will submit an update to the ACF by July 1, 2025, which will include new payment rates informed by the alternative methodology.



B. May Revise Budget Proposal and Council Budget Priorities

1. May Revise Budget Proposal

The May 20, 2024 Council meeting included a briefing of relevant items related to the Governor's May Revise Budget Proposal, and the Council discussed and endorsed a letter to legislative leaders and the Governor.

Jaime-Mileham provided a high-level overview of proposals included in the May Revise to address budget shortfalls that would impact families and children, specifically those solutions linked to CDSS programs. She acknowledged that balancing and stabilizing the budget would require difficult decisions to prevent ongoing shortfalls. For CDSS, the key approach to this budget was preserving programs as much as possible.

Propheter provided a brief overview of the impacts of the May Revise proposals on CDE ELC programs. He echoed that CDE's goal was to maintain investments as much as possible, with the understanding that reductions or pauses may be needed due to the multi-billion-dollar shortfall.

2. Council Letter on Budget Priorities

Council members Layton and Sneeringer shared a draft letter that would advise legislative leaders and the Governor on the Council's recommendation to maintain and follow through on ELC investments. The letter was endorsed by the Council, with only Council members who also represent the Governor's Administration and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction abstaining. The letter was submitted and can be found [on the Council web page](#). The following is an excerpt (p. 1-2) from the letter that reflects Council recommendations:

Specifically, we want to acknowledge the state's historic investments that made a significant impact on children, families, and early educators – predominantly from communities of color – which include transforming the family fees, extending the hold harmless policy, and providing increased funding to child care providers and programs to keep their doors open. In addition, with your leadership, California adopted in the 2022 – 23 Budget a continuous Medi-Cal coverage protection for young children ages 0-5.

We also recognize and appreciate the Administration's establishment of the Rate and Quality Workgroup – and now the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel – to address the state's woefully inadequate reimbursement rate structure. We look forward to the Administration's and Legislature's adoption of the Panel's recommendations in the forthcoming report, expected July 1, 2024, to establish a regionalized reimbursement rate that:

- 1. Compensates all teachers and child care providers for the true cost of providing care by reimbursing them at rates that reflect the economic diversity of California.*
- 2. Recognizes the costs of meeting varying quality standards and regulations; and,*
- 3. Strengthens the ability of the state's mixed delivery system to provide quality options.*

As you embark on the State Budget development process for Fiscal Year 2024–25, we look forward to the Administration and Legislature upholding the investments cited above, as well as:

- Maintaining the promise to fund 200,000 child care slots by Budget Year 2025-26.*
- Providing ongoing financial support to attract and retain members of the ECE workforce; and,*
- Funding and greenlighting the Medi-Cal continuous coverage policy so that the California Department of Health Care Services can make this protection operational by January 2025.*

We must ensure there is equitable access to services and support for families and the workforce, particularly marginalized populations, including Black, Tribal, and People of Color families, immigrant families, homeless families, foster children, children of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents, children with disabilities, dual language learners, and low-income families, including those experiencing generational poverty.

V. Advancing MPELC Goal 4: Streamlining Early Childhood Governance and Administration to Improve Equity

MPELC, Goal 4, p. 35

A truly equitable system is one where families know whether they are eligible for services and are able to retain them when their financial circumstances change until they reach self-sufficiency. Where parents could find the best fit for their children's needs through easy access to information on the choices of programs near their homes and workplaces. Where the state would have data that provides an accurate picture of performance and informs improvements in policies and practices. Where programs could share knowledge and resources to reduce overhead and allow them to spend more time on early learning and care. And, where every community would have a supply of quality early learning and care facilities that meets the diverse needs of its children. This future state of early learning and care depends in large part on California making changes in administration and governance that better serve the needs of families and providers. We recommend five key actions to achieve this goal: (1) streamline eligibility to remove barriers for those most in need; (2) create an integrated data system to provide families and the state with the information necessary to make informed choices; (3) use the data to drive continuous improvement in research, technical assistance, and policy development; (4) develop shared services networks to help providers reduce administrative costs and focus more on teaching; and, (5) expand facilities in underserved communities to guarantee equitable access to early learning and care.

A. Brilliant Beginnings

At two Council meetings, CDSS shared updates on the Brilliant Beginnings Initiative, a nimble cloud environment that links ELC data pipelines. Brilliant Beginnings provides a comprehensive and inclusive central Master Data Management solution that links, governs, and produces data products for consumers. It includes the California Supporting Providers and Kids (CalSPARK) project, MyChildCarePlan.org, and Child Care Connect.



The CDSS partnered with the California Child Care R&R Network (R&R Network) to launch the MyChildCarePlan.org website on October 11, 2022. Since its launch, the website has received over one million hits from Californians seeking information about child care services and searching for providers that meet their needs. The CDSS continues collaborating with the R&R Network to host and maintain the MyChildCarePlan.org website. In the first quarter of 2024, MyChildCarePlan.org was updated to include all licensed child care providers in California. The CDSS made progress in the state information technology approval process for Child Care Connect, which will replace MyChildCarePlan.org after June 2025. Child Care Connect will meet all federal and state child care consumer education requirements, including those mandated by state Assembly Bill 2960 (Chapter 829, Statute of 2018). MyChildCarePlan.org does not meet these requirements. The CDSS finalized the draft report on Child Care Connect, informed by parent listening sessions hosted by the R&R Network.

In the same quarter, the CalSPARK project progressed in two areas: (1) conducting internal engagement and market rate research and (2) conducting disciplinary market rate research with the vendor community. Stage 2 work of the project approval lifecycle process continues for CalSPARK, and vendor proof of concept demos have been executed. Stage 2 focuses on understanding the needs of the new system and completing market research on available solutions.

The MyChildCarePlan.org awareness campaign, which ran from Spring 2024 through October 2024, reached over 1.9 million families.

B. Disrupting Poverty and Neglect with Concrete Supports

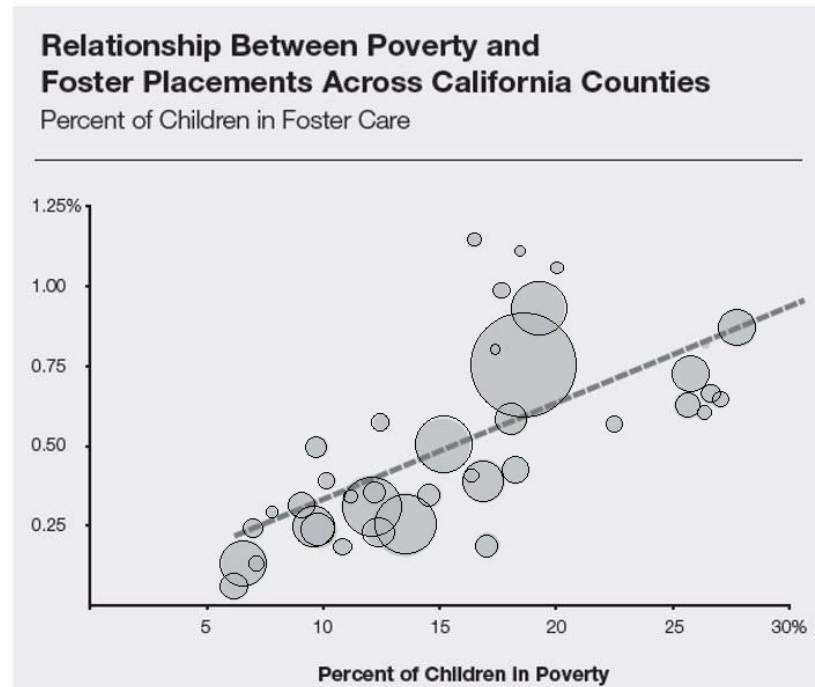
In its third quarterly meeting, the Council examined the topic of disrupting poverty and neglect by providing concrete supports for families and children. The Council invited Yasmin Grewal-Kok, Policy Fellow at University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, to provide a national and state policy perspective on the issue. Grewal-Kok pointed out that the U.S. has historically separated programs designed to address poverty from those designed to protect children. As a result, family economic hardship is often combined with a fragmented human service system, deficit-based policies, and disparate access to supports. The outcomes of this include overloaded and destabilized families, unmet service and support needs, high rates of reported neglect, deployment of authorities to investigate, and removal of children from the home and other child welfare involvement.

1. Perspective on Poverty and the Child Welfare System in California

Grewal-Kok reviewed statistics that show a strong relationship between family economic insecurity and child welfare involvement in California. As Figure 11 shows, foster placements by county in California increase as the rate of poverty increases.

She noted that it is critical to think of economic and concrete supports as a racial equity strategy to address persistent disparities across the child welfare continuum in California and nationally. The total annual public expenditure of California's child welfare system is over \$3 billion, and more than 50 percent of federal child welfare funding goes to foster care. Meanwhile, only 11 percent of federal funding is directed to preventative services.

Figure 11. Relationship Between Poverty and Foster Placement Across California Counties, Legislative Analyst's Office, 2024.



Research shows that reduced access to economic and concrete supports is associated with increased risk of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement, while increased access is associated with decreased risk.

California recently enacted two important laws narrowing the definition of neglect to prevent children from entering the child welfare system for reasons of economic hardship alone:

- Assembly Bill 2085 (Chapter 770, Statutes of 2022) clarifies that mandated reporters should not make referrals based solely on parents' economic disadvantage.
- Senate Bill 1085 (Chapter 832, Statutes of 2022) prohibits children from being removed solely due to homelessness or poverty.

2. Policies that Disrupt Poverty and Support Families' and Children's Well-Being

Grewal-Kok summarized the categories of supports associated with decreased risk for child welfare involvement, including (1) macroeconomic supports, (2) concrete supports, (3) public benefits, and (4) child welfare interventions augmented with economic and concrete supports. She highlighted key findings around positive impacts of unconditional cash payments to families, earned income and child tax credits, paid family leave, child care subsidies, preschool, supportive housing, TANF (temporary assistance to needy families), and SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance programs).

Chair Johnson underscored a recent policy change in California's TANF program, CalWORKs. Historically, a family working to reunify lost access to benefits and supportive services while the child was in an out-of-home placement. The new policy allows TANF payments to continue, thereby increasing the opportunity for family reunification.

3. Shifting the Paradigm from Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting

Cheryl Treadwell, CDSS Chief of Safety, Prevention, and Early Intervention Branch, explained California's shifting paradigm from mandated reporting to community supporting. Treadwell shared that data from phone calls to the mandated reporting hotline showed general neglect as the most common allegation. When a call is flagged with this catch-all allegation it biases responses towards child welfare involvement and does not allow for more specific solutions and resources to be utilized. Treadwell highlighted the importance of addressing racism embedded in the child and family service public systems, pointing to significant disparities when Black and Native American children are separated from their families.

4. California's Community Pathways

The CDSS is working to advance family-centered policies that leverage community organizations to prevent unnecessary involvement in the child welfare system. Families often voluntarily seek support from public and

private community agencies. These include faith-based organizations, schools, Family Resource Centers, afterschool programs, and child care centers. The key to prevention in a Community Pathway approach is engaging and strengthening the network of public and private service organizations that families often voluntarily approach when in need.



The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) made funding available for California to build capacity and to expand public-private partnerships for prevention.

California's five-year plan under the FFPSA was approved in 2022. Since that time, 53 counties and two tribes have opted in to provide community comprehensive prevention services, called Community Pathways. Community Pathways provide local prevention services to children, family members, and tribes without direct involvement of Child Protective Services.

In 2023, the California Child Welfare Council convened the Mandated Reporting Community Supporting Task Force. The Task Force developed five strategic priorities, including mandated reporting reform [and 14 recommendations](#). The recommendations are organized under five strategic priorities:

- 1) Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous Peoples, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.
- 2) Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California's mandated reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services to make consistent decisions to respond to families' needs appropriately.
- 3) Ensure that mandated reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.
- 4) Ensure that mandated reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.
- 5) Establish a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in mandated reporting reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.

In addition, the CDSS' Citizen Review Advisory Panel's 2024 report also recommended reforming the mandated reporting system, and the CDSS is restructuring the CalWORKs Linkages program in accordance with those recommendations.

The CDSS continues to work with counties implementing Community Pathways to build their capacity. In the meantime, the CDSS is embedding federal requirements and automation pieces, and some counties have already started offering prevention services with state funding.

5. Council Feedback on Disrupting Poverty and Supporting Community Pathways

The Council shared reflections and comments about policies that disrupt poverty and support Community Pathways for families. The following are themes from Council feedback:

- To provide these kinds of supports to families, it will be important to work across silos and approach the work holistically. Consider the use of resource and referral contracts as a leveraged partnership opportunity with Family Resource Centers.
- It is gratifying to see the efforts to address policies that have been historically racist, sexist, and classist. The shift from mandated reporting to mandated supporting is an example of that shift underway.
- Centralizing data systems within and across social service agencies will be a key component of reducing the burden on families to provide documentation and explanations of the same information multiple times across programs.
- There is a need to address support for youth transitioning out of foster care at the age of 18, particularly in the areas of job support and housing.
- Child care providers are often the first and primary source of support for families in need. Child care providers need more support in directing families to available resources.
- Young parents who are themselves in foster care need more support. Consider leveraging hospitals to provide some initial parenting training and support for young vulnerable teen parents immediately after delivery.

VI. Conclusion

Nearly four years ago, Governor Newsom announced California's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, which identified specific goal areas to improve access to quality early learning and care programs for children and families.

Over these four years, the Early Childhood Policy Council, with support from its Advisory Committees, has continued to be an important voice in guiding the state in

realizing the goals of the Master Plan in a manner that lifts the voices of children, their parents, and early care providers.

While California has made tangible and significant progress towards these goals, there is more work to be done.

In the year ahead, the Early Childhood Policy Council and its Advisory Committees will continue to support children, families, child care facilities, and the child care workforce in creating an equitable early learning and care system that fosters the best possible outcomes for children, families, and their communities.