

# Foster Care

Need for High Quality Trauma Informed Caregiving



A Child of CA's  
Foster Care System

Addressing the Needs of Young Children

# To Foster (fos`t r, fos'-), v.t.

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1. To Promote the growth or development of;
2. Further; encourage.
3. To bring up or rear,  
as a foster child.
1. To care for or cherish.
2. Obs. To feed or nourish. –n.
3. A cherisher.
4. Nourishment.
5. Syn. See **Cherish**





**Infants** are the fastest growing category of children entering foster care in the United States

(Dicker, Gordon, & Knitzer, 2001).

**Infants** removed from their homes and placed in foster care are at risk for mental health problems, a prevalence of health concerns, and for developmental delays.

(National Center for Children in Poverty. Sept. 2010).

# The developmental trajectories

of these young children are profoundly influenced by their environment and more specifically, their caregivers & childcare staff who interact with them.





**Jacob**  
a “Safe Surrender  
Newborn”

- **Young children** are most likely to be involved in the child welfare system because they have the highest rate of victimization of maltreatment compared to other age groups due to their vulnerability and dependency on adults.
- **Before their first breath**, often they experience homelessness, addiction, malnourishment, domestic violence, lack of prenatal care, & high levels of stress.

**Almeida, M.C. PhD Infants and Toddlers in the Child Welfare system Court Team Project for Maltreated Infant and Toddlers, Milwaukee, 10.13.2007.**

**Adverse Experiences**, such as prenatal substance exposure, child abuse, neglect, malnutrition and/or other trauma **including removal** from a primary caregiver, creates “**toxic stress**” – a condition that interferes with developing brain circuits – undermining their emotional well-being and interfering with normal development.



**Theresa Arias & Her Beautiful Daughters**

# Stats

July 2021

## What do we know about young children in the Child Welfare System?

- In CA, **19,895** foster children were newborn to 5 years old; representing **34%** of the total population of children in foster care (July 1, 2021).
- Nationwide, **45%** of infant placement into foster care occurs within 30 days of birth

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2021 Quarter 2 Extract. Program version: 2.00 Database version: 73F3CE87 Please consult the methodology for detailed placement type definitions.



Sometimes adults say,  
***'They're too young to understand.'***

However, young children are  
affected by traumatic events, even  
though they may not understand  
what happened.

# Young Children are Especially Vulnerable:

Trauma is experienced through their senses: Their sense of safety can be shattered by images, noises, or violent movements.

- They have vulnerable, rapidly developing brains.
- They depend exclusively on parents and caregivers for survival and protection—physical and emotional. Therefore, when the trauma impacts the parent/caregiver, the relationship between the caregiver and the child may be strongly affected.
- Without the support of a parent/caregiver to help them regulate strong emotions, children may experience overwhelming stress.
- With little understanding of cause and effect, they believe their thoughts, wishes, and fears have the power to become real.
- The younger the child, the less able they are to keep themselves safe.
- They may blame themselves, a misconception of reality.
- Young children cannot express in words their fears or how they feel.

From “Early Childhood Trauma” August 2010 The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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Children ages zero to five who have experienced trauma and/or maltreatment and are involved with the foster care system **require specialized care and specialized services** to reduce the negative impacts on brain development.



# Child Abuse in America

- Every 10 seconds a report of child abuse is made.
- More children, 4 and under, die of abuse than any other cause of death.
- Domestic violence is strongly associated with child abuse.

# Infants and toddlers who are maltreated –

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Are **6 times** more likely  
than the general  
population to have  
developmental delays

Zeanah, Charles, MD 2009

# Important Information for Caregivers & Child Care Staff

## The Voice of a Resource Parent Theresa Arias



# Imperative Need for High Quality Child Care

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- Child Care BRIDGE Program
- Child Care SUBSIDY Program

# Child Care Bridge Program

- The **Bridge Program**, funded through the CDSS, consists of **three** components:
- (1) **Emergency childcare vouchers**
- (2) **Childcare navigators**
- (3) **Trauma-informed care training and coaching.** The program will be administered by county welfare departments and county welfare agencies in those counties that choose to participate in the program.

# The goals of the Bridge Program are to:

1. Increase the number of foster children successfully placed in home-based family care settings,
2. Increase placement stability,
3. Increase capacity of childcare providers to meet the needs of foster children in their care, and
4. Maximize funding to support the childcare needs of eligible families.

# Emergency childcare voucher

- Families may receive a time-limited voucher to assist with childcare costs for children in the foster care system birth through age 12, and for youth with exceptional needs up to age 21.
- A voucher may be issued for up to six-months or until the child is successfully transitioned into long-term, subsidized child-care.
- Eligibility may be extended an additional six-months at the discretion of the county.
- All vouchers must be paid in accordance with the Regional Market Rate (RMR) ceilings\* for subsidized child-care payment rates. Counties may issue vouchers directly or enter into a formal agreement with their local Alternate Payment Program (APP) and/or R&R Program.

\*Visit the [Reimbursement Ceilings for Subsidized Child Care page of the California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\) website.](#)

# Little ones in Foster Care need special attention



# Removal and disruptions:

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- Disturb social relationships
- **Interferes with developing brain systems**
- Is traumatic for little ones; particularly those who have experienced abuse and maltreatment
- **Leads to a dysregulation of behavioral, emotional and biological systems**

# Promoting **Resiliency** and Building Healing Homes



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# It is known

Infants and young children in the child welfare system biologically and emotionally need a **stable, secure relationship with one caregiver.**



# For our Little Ones, What is Required to Heal?

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- Stable, nurturing experiences
- Good nutrition & opportunities to explore
- Early intervention, high quality childcare
- Safety & protection
- Taking care of the caregivers