

CARING. COMMITTED. CONNECTED.

*Serving the Child Care
Community for 40+ Years*



“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

- Anne Frank



OUR MISSION:

To build a stronger future for children, families, and communities through high-quality child care resources, education, and guidance.

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“I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

- Albert Schweitzer



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends & Stakeholders,

I am honored to serve as Executive Director of Connections for Children (CFC), an agency with a long and admired history in the field of early care and education. For nearly 20 years, I have worked to support the well-being of children and families, so it is no surprise that my career led me to this incredible organization.

Prior to joining CFC, I advocated on behalf of young children and their families at First 5 LA, the largest funder of early childhood in the state. I collaborated with public sector leaders, municipalities, school districts, early childhood advocates, service providers, and business leaders to improve education and health outcomes for children, families, and communities across Los Angeles County. While in New York City, I had the privilege to design and facilitate education and family programs at the Brooklyn Children’s Museum and to lead innovative after-school initiatives in hundreds of schools throughout the NYC public school system. I returned to my hometown of Los Angeles more than ten years ago and continue to focus my career on improving the lives of our youngest residents.

I joined CFC during an exciting time in the agency’s history. In 2019, CFC moved to a new office location in Westchester which is more centrally located within our service area. We also continue to provide satellite office hours at partner locations within Santa Monica, including the Santa Monica Public Library. The relocation of our headquarters presents an opportunity for CFC to continue serving our existing clients, maintaining our high level of engagement and excellent customer service, and to expand our awareness and increase services to clients in the South Bay.

Our new office is welcoming to parents seeking child care referrals and financial assistance, and to child care providers who attend our regular professional development workshops. Our staff in the main office and those working daily in the field are caring, knowledgeable, and committed to helping parents find child care solutions and access to resources that will help their children and families thrive. We are particularly proud to celebrate our long-term employees in this Annual Report. They’ve collectively provided more than 200 years of service to CFC.

Building upon CFC’s strong foundation as a child care resource and referral agency, we have expanded our role in supporting our clients’ well-being. Families come to CFC for child care, yet we recognize they often have other needs which we can help address through cross-agency relationships, referrals, and support. Therefore, we have committed to strengthening our ability to better serve

families who have experienced trauma and help build resiliency among clients and staff. We share more about this evolving work in our Trauma-Informed Care feature. We are also increasing our efforts to advocate, in partnership with other early childhood stakeholders, on behalf of policies, programs, and resource allocations that impact the lives of children and families in LA County.

I am grateful to the visionary leadership of our founders and previous leaders, including Betsy Hiteshew, Terry Ogawa, Karen Kaye, and Patti Oblath, who helped CFC evolve into the agency we are today. This strong foundation has prepared CFC to move into our next phase of organizational growth and increased impact. I invite you to join us in our effort to build a stronger future for the children and families in our community.

In Partnership,

Jennifer Cowan
Executive Director



“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

CORE SERVICES

Committed to Children, Parents, and Educators

For more than 40 years, Connections for Children has been the leading expert on early education and child care in the Westside and South Bay communities of Los Angeles County. Every year, we help thousands of parents find the solutions they need to help their families thrive by providing an array of programs and services.



Child Care Referrals

Every parent in our service area – no matter their income level – is welcome at CFC, where they will be guided towards safe, experienced, and quality licensed child care that meets their families’ individual needs and values.



Financial Assistance

We help eligible low-income parents obtain affordable quality child care for infants and toddlers as well as preschool and school-age children up to 12 years old. This frees parents to stay in the workforce and seek better earning opportunities through continued education.



Enrichment Programming

CFC creates innovative enrichment programs based on a wealth of cognitive and developmental research to optimize outcomes for every family. Playgroups, early literacy, healthy nutrition, physical activity, and social and emotional well-being are addressed by these unique programs.

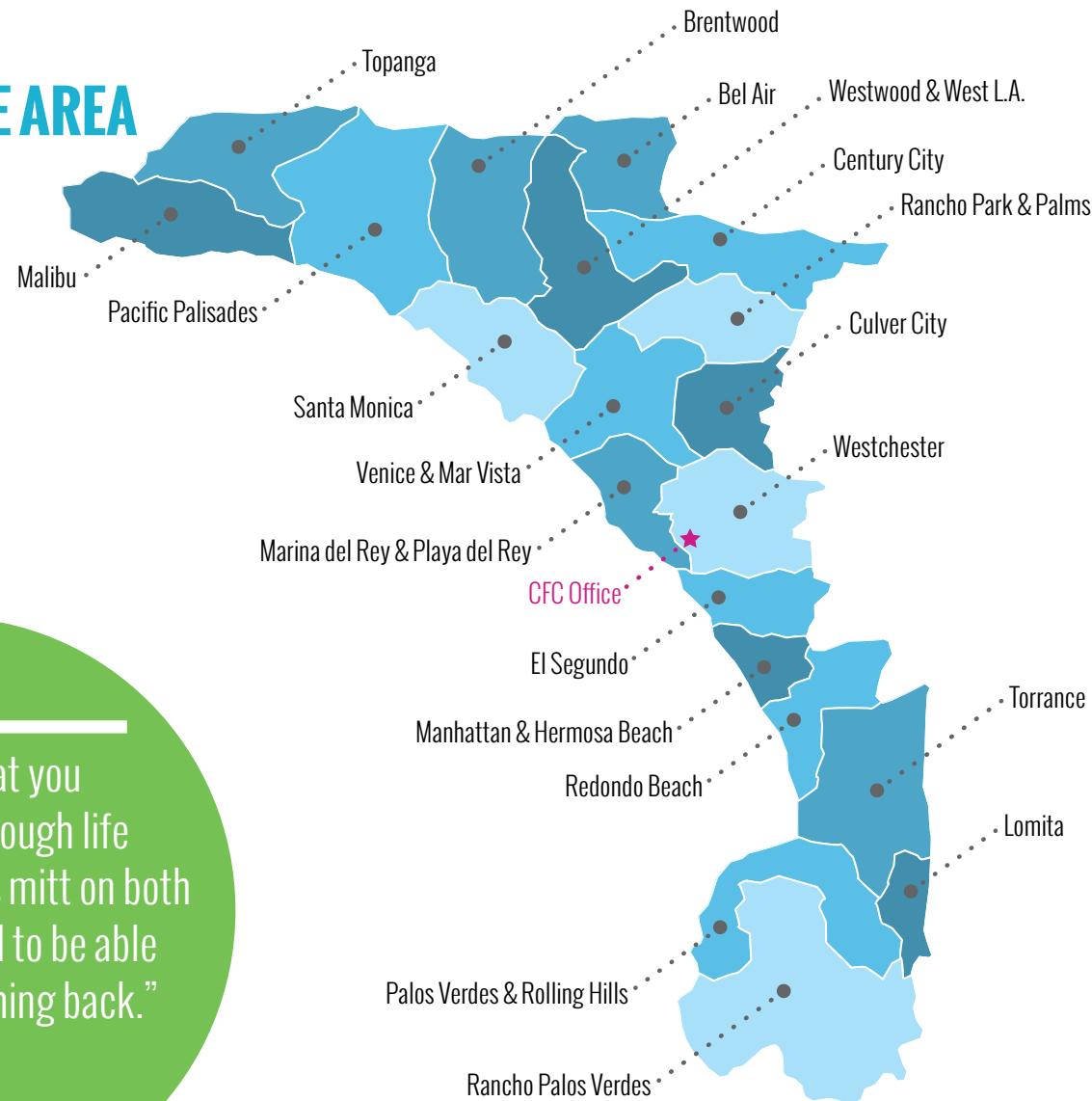


Professional Development

Child care providers of all experience levels can take advantage of our educational training, resources, and expertise in order to provide the best care possible. We also coach them on how to maintain quality standards and strengthen their child care businesses.

WE PROVIDE SERVICES TO
12%
OF LOS ANGELES' POPULATION

OUR SERVICE AREA



"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back."

- Maya Angelou

ADDING UP FOR GOOD

Since our inception, Connections for Children's efforts have helped over 180,000 families and pumped \$212 million dollars into the local economy. We are committed to our stakeholders and will continue to make a tremendous difference for the children, families, and communities we serve.

HELPING FAMILIES

Requests for Child Care Info, Resources & Referrals

2018-19

2,954

SINCE INCEPTION

181,600

Families Securing Financial Assistance

2018-19

1,069

SINCE INCEPTION

28,000

EARLY EDUCATION

Children Benefitting from Financial Aid

2018-19

1,589

SINCE INCEPTION

40,900

Children & Parents Benefitting from Family Time

2018-19

667

SINCE INCEPTION

9,300

CAREGIVER DEVELOPMENT

Hours of Training & Coaching Provided to Caregivers

2018-19

1,748

SINCE INCEPTION

45,600

Training Sessions Offered

2018-19

64

SINCE INCEPTION

3,200

PUMPING UP THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Dollars Contributed Back Through Payments for Child Care

2018-19

\$8,112,992

SINCE INCEPTION

\$211,900,000



CONNECTING PEOPLE + SERVICES

Connections for Children's services and innovations require a complex set of skills that range from working with Federal, State, and local agencies to providing educational leadership and techniques that help children flourish, parents thrive, and providers gain greater expertise.

Family Services

Resources & Referrals

Helps parents find child care that best meets their families' needs. Assists child care providers to improve the quality of care and maintain and/or expand the supply of child care. Collects, tracks, and disseminates information on child care supply and demand.

Family Time: Early Learning Playgroup

Facilitates weekly playgroups for caregivers and children ages 0-5 that promote adult-child bonding and early literacy skills. Features developmentally appropriate and engaging activities that encourage reading, talking, and singing as the tools to build children's vocabulary and readiness to read.

Parent Cafés

Offers an emotionally safe space for parents and caregivers to share successes and challenges. Parents learn about the Protective Factors and create strategies from their own experiences to build resiliency and help strengthen their families.

Financial Assistance

Alternative Payment Program (CAPP)

Assists eligible parents who are seeking employment, working, are students, or seeking housing by providing subsidies for children from birth up to age 12.

Santa Monica Family Support

Supports vulnerable Santa Monica families with child care subsidies, offers

assistance identifying child care options in Santa Monica, and facilitates linkages to other community resources for children birth up to kindergarten.

CalWORKs Stage 1 (SICC)

Helps families who receive cash aid to gain stability by providing immediate subsidies for children from birth up to age 12.

CalWORKs Stage 2 (C2AP)

Assists eligible CalWORKs parents who are seeking employment, working, are students, or seeking housing by providing subsidies for children from birth up to age 12. Subsidy is available up to 24 months after cash aid terminates.

CalWORKs Stage 3 (C3AP)

Assists eligible CalWORKs parents of children up to age 12 who previously received Stage 1 or Stage 2 subsidy, and need child care to continue to work, attend school, or seek housing.

Provider Services

Child Care Initiative Program (CCIP)

Builds child care supply with an emphasis on infants and toddlers. Provides professional development trainings and technical assistance to help Family Child Care providers become licensed, expand their program capacity to serve more children, and improve program quality.

Gateways for Early Educators

Professional development training series aligned with California Early

Care & Education (ECE) Competencies to improve the quality of child care and strengthen the workforce. Providers earn a Gateways Passport by completing at least 2 trainings in each of the 12 topic areas.

Santa Monica Quality Support

Promotes Santa Monica providers' participation in Gateways for Early Educators training series. Offers curriculum enhancements for providers serving children in the Santa Monica Family Support subsidy program.

Quality Start LA: LA County's Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)

Coaching to state-funded preschool and infant/toddler classrooms to help ECE educators reach and maintain statewide quality standards.

Trauma-Informed Initiatives

Emergency Child Care Bridge Program

Stabilizes children in the foster care system by providing resource (foster) families with short-term vouchers that pay for child care and then assists those families in securing long-term subsidized child care. Facilitates trauma-informed trainings and coaching for child care providers.

Innovations

Helps families who have experienced trauma by connecting them to child care resources and to community partners for additional support. Facilitates trauma-informed trainings and coaching for child care providers and for CFC staff to better

serve families and support self-care and resiliency.

Health & Safety Programs

CPR & First Aid Training

Offers CPR & First Aid certification trainings for child care providers, educators, parents, and caregivers throughout the year.

Health & Safety Training Scholarships

Provides reimbursement to eligible child care providers for the cost of bi-annual CPR & First Aid certification.

California Preventive Health & Safety Practices Trainer Program

Provides training and resources for child care providers across LA County in order to meet requirements for licensure and promotes best practices in health, safety, and emergency preparedness.

Other Initiatives

Santa Monica Kindergarten Readiness

Collaboration among the city, school district, and community partners to collect and analyze data on kindergarteners' well-being as it relates to developmental milestones and school success. Leads efforts to utilize data to assess and inform policies and early childhood investments.



BRIDGING THE GAP

How the Bridge Program is Changing Child Care for Foster Kids

Is where a child goes for early child care more important than where he or she goes to college? It could be. Studies have shown that children, especially disadvantaged or traumatized children, who receive quality care during early childhood (when their brains are still forming) not only improve their academic skills but behavioral skills like self-esteem, motivation, and social abilities.* It may also prevent struggles later in life with addiction, dropping out of school, violence, and even mental health issues like anxiety, PTSD, and depression. To ensure foster children and their foster families receive the quality care they need when they need it most, the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program was created.

Connections for Children, together with a coalition of early childhood advocacy organizations, collaborated to provide the families of the state's foster children with a higher level of child care and learning. That coalition, in partnership with the LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the LA County Board of Supervisors, created the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program. The Bridge Program was adopted into law by state legislature in 2017 and implemented in 2018. CFC has been actively involved in the program since its inception, adding both a Navigator to help foster children find exceptional care and a Trauma-Informed Care Advisor to train child care providers. Since it began, over 45 counties across California

have administered the Bridge Program, with over 3,700 foster children served statewide.

Foster children often have trouble being placed into schools due to the separation anxiety they experience or traumas they've endured in the past. They may have trouble adapting to new social environments. The Bridge Program effectively "bridges" the gap between foster care families and child care, making it easier for them to access services that take their special circumstances into consideration.

"With the Bridge Program, we are building a more trauma-aware community. Instead of child care providers asking, 'What's wrong with this child?' we want them to ask, 'What can we do to support this child?'"

- Jennifer Cowan, Executive Director, Connections for Children

Connections for Children's Trauma-Informed Care Advisor, Christine Tafoya, works one-on-one with child care providers, giving them the training, tools, and coaching they need to decrease certain behaviors and avoid re-traumatization by helping the child stay in one setting. The Bridge Program also supports providers in building their own resiliency to different circumstances by promoting self-care and reminding them to support their own health as much as they do others.

Placement in the Bridge Program begins with CFC's Navigator, Perla Velasquez. The Navigator is tasked with working with the foster family to ensure child care placement and develop a plan for long-term care appropriate to the child's age, education level (preschool or elementary school), and needs. In cases where a foster parent requires immediate

child care, the Navigator may place a child in a child care center within a day or two, but placement usually occurs within five to 10 days. The program provides parents with a six-month voucher for child care to take the pressure off the foster family. During that time, CFC works to obtain any needed funding for additional child care. To date, the Bridge Program at CFC has helped more than 120 foster children.

"Child care is a real need for most foster parents. Sometimes they can't take time off from work or they'll risk losing their jobs, or they may require child care at night or in an emergency. It's my job to make sure each child finds the right fit so they can flourish."

- Perla Velasquez, Bridge Program Navigator, Connections for Children

Many children helped by the Bridge Program are difficult to place, having been traumatized in ways it's hard for most people to understand. The Bridge Program's goal is to help children during a time when their ability to learn and grow is tremendous. It helps negate the problems they've experienced by providing quality education in a safe setting where they can interact with other children and develop trusting relationships with adults. Trauma has a tendency to pass from one generation to the next, but with the Bridge Program, disadvantaged foster kids are connecting to a healthier, stronger path. The program is more than about finding child care, it's about building bridges to better futures.

Those who have adverse childhood experiences are **2X more likely** to experience physical health issues **3X more likely** to experience mental health issues **1000X more likely** to suffer their own adverse experiences**

*Porter, Eduardo. "Investments in Education May be Misdirected." New York Times, 2 Apr. 2013.

**"Innovation 2." Westside Infant-Family Network (WIN), 31 Mar. 2020, winla.org/innovation-2.w

STRONG PURPOSE = STRONG COMMITMENT

Celebrating Our Long-Term Staff

This year, we are proud to honor employees who are celebrating work anniversaries ranging from 15 to 26 years. While non-profit agencies have an above average turnover rate compared to other sectors, Connections for Children has shown that its commitment to a positive, supportive, and caring work environment makes a measurable difference. Our dedicated group of individuals continually helps build the connections that further our mission and benefits the lives of so many in our community. With deep gratitude, we say, thank you!



Chanté Bernard
Deputy Director
15 years of service

Oversees the agency's administrative, technology, and human capital functions. Leads and supports CFC's efforts to ensure high-quality and efficient agency operations

and employee engagement strategies. Serves on the Executive Leadership Team to help formulate and implement plans and policies that advance the agency's mission and objectives.

"We have an amazing and passionate staff that keeps advancing their expertise in early childhood and child care. That's why CFC can give parents and providers the tools they need to be successful. When the people we serve succeed, I've succeeded."



Consuelo Gonzalez
Subsidized Programs Specialist
20 years of service

Works with parents to determine whether they are eligible to receive financial assistance with the costs of child care and helps enroll eligible families in our various child care subsidy

programs. Ensures parents understand the program requirements and follow procedures so that their selected child care provider receives payment for their services.

"The work we do helps people build their self-esteem. I'm fortunate to be part of the CFC team that helps parents overcome the obstacles that make it difficult to get child care, so they can work or take classes to improve their skills and make a better life."



Debra Grant
Provider Specialist
19 years of service

Works with providers to determine whether they are entitled to receive reimbursement for the child care services provided to the families we serve through our

subsidy programs. Ensures providers understand the program requirements and follow procedures so that payment for their services is accurately processed and issued.

"We make sure that child care providers know about the training and workshops we offer. It's very satisfying for me to know that we are teaching best practices, so kids have a head start when they begin grade school."



Juan Estrada
IT Coordinator
19 years of service

Maintains CFC's technology systems and networks, and provides technical support to staff to ensure functionality, efficiency, and contract compliance.

"Over the years, CFC has helped thousands and thousands of families. Knowing that I've indirectly had a part in making this possible by ensuring that our staff has the technology to do their work and enroll families in our programs is very satisfying."



Khisa Brown
CalWORKs Stage 1 Program Supervisor
21 years of service

Manages outreach and enrollment of families into our CalWORKs Stage 1 subsidy program. Trains and supports specialists working with families and providers participating in

the Stage 1 program and works with the County to ensure quality control and contract compliance.

"It's extremely rewarding to me to actually see parents reach their goals as a result of our services. It's a great feeling when a parent has become self-sufficient while using our services, and then calls to let us know they no longer need financial subsidies."



Lisa Paxton
Subsidized Programs Specialist
18 years of service

Works with parents to determine whether they are eligible to receive financial assistance with the costs of child care and helps enroll eligible families in our various child care subsidy

programs. Ensures parents understand the program requirements and follow procedures so that their selected child care provider receives payment for their services.

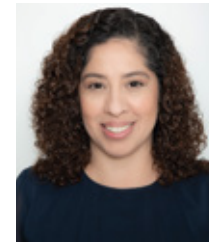
"CFC provides the child care resources to help families go back to work or attend school to improve their skills. I feel especially good when a parent tells me that they're off public assistance and, even better, that they no longer need our services."



Lupe Amador
Payments Specialist
18 years of service

Reviews and confirms hours of care that children in our subsidy programs received based on attendance sheets submitted by providers, and processes subsidy payments to child care providers.

"Our child care providers work hard; it's every day and long hours. I make sure that they get paid on time and accurately. I really appreciate the peace of mind that this gives to providers, so they can focus on teaching and making their child care center a better place."



Margarita P. Mejia
Subsidized Programs Supervisor
19 years of service

Manages outreach and enrollment of families into our CalWORKs Stage 2, Stage 3, Alternative Payment, and City of Santa Monica child care subsidy programs. Trains and supports specialists working with

families and providers participating in the various subsidy programs and works with partner agencies to ensure quality control and contract compliance.

"Yes, we help to subsidize child care services, but even more, we're helping parents to succeed in life because they are receiving something that is going to help them work, go to school, and get a career."



Maribel Camargo
Staff Accountant II
18 years of service

Helps maintain CFC's financial records and ensures that financial transactions are properly recorded. Prepares invoices and financial reports for contracts and other agency reporting. Processes

staff timesheets and payroll.

"One of the most important and personally gratifying services we provide is helping parents feel secure because we find them child care options that they know are safe and have quality activities every day."



Martha Gonzalez
Subsidized Programs Manager
23 years of service

Provides leadership and direction to the Subsidized Programs Department, which administers six different child care subsidy programs: CalWORKs Stage 1, 2, and 3, Alternative Payment,

Emergency Child Care Bridge, and City of Santa Monica Family Support. Responsible for compliance with fiscal and programmatic requirements for each subsidy program and coordinating services with partner agencies.

"We give parents peace of mind, and that's very gratifying. Parents know their kids are being taken care of in a quality pre-school, and that gives them the comfort level they need to go to work or school and do whatever is needed to keep their home together."



Sonia Madix
Resource & Referral Supervisor
26 years of service

Manages and supports staff delivering core Resource & Referral services. Oversees CFC professional development and training programs for child care providers and CFC's Family Time

early learning playgroups for children, parents, and caregivers.

"We offer an array of training opportunities to child care providers, whether they work in a home, center, or school. The ones who work at home especially benefit from the sense of community and common purpose. Letting them know they belong and are important is a very rewarding experience for me."



"Commitment is what transforms a promise into a reality."

- Abraham Lincoln



FISCAL YEAR 2019 FINANCIAL REPORT*

Committed to Sustainability + Innovation

Connections for Children ended the fiscal year in a healthy financial position. Audited financials show 3.4 months of liquid unrestricted assets, providing the organization with a safety net for unexpected situations, as well as resources to support opportunities that further our mission and impact.

Connections for Children has adopted a reserve fund policy that allows our organization to protect against risk and serve innovation. These policies ensure we have designated the necessary resources to support the stability of our programs, employment, and ongoing operations and to provide a source of funds for organizational priorities such as program opportunity, community impact, and capacity building.

In addition, we are proud to be a recipient of the GuideStar's Platinum Seal of Transparency in 2019, their highest form of recognition for financial transparency. This seal is earned by non-profits who share financials and program metrics used to track their progress towards fulfilling their mission and strategic goals.



Statement of Activities

Source of Revenue

Federal Awards	35.4%	\$4,167,239
State Allocations	42.8%	\$5,040,601
Other Grants & Contracts**	19.2%	\$2,259,623
Parent Fees	1.5%	\$178,701
Contributions	0.7%	\$85,879
Other Revenue	0.4%	\$49,200
Total	100.0%	\$11,781,243

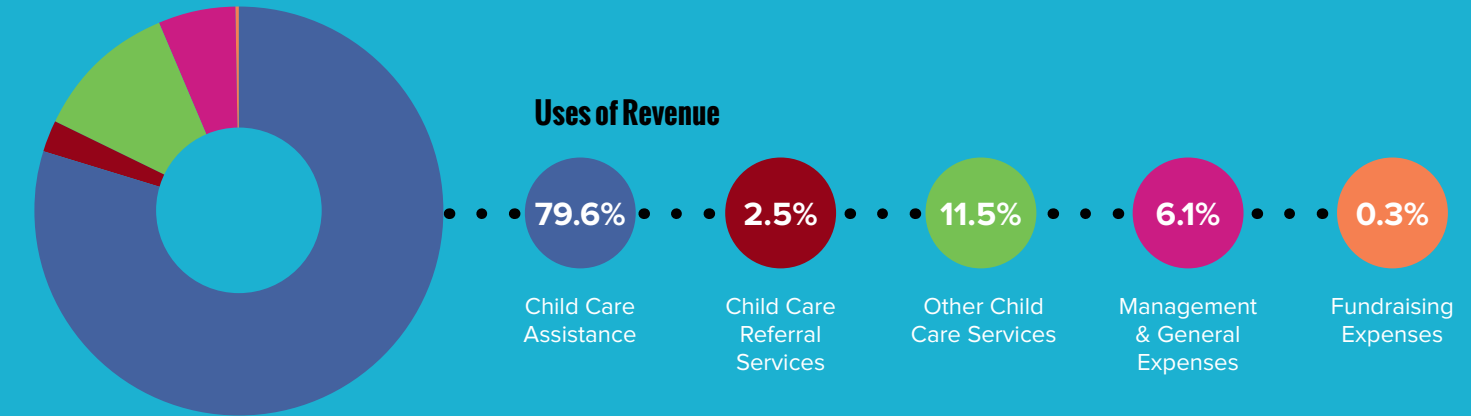
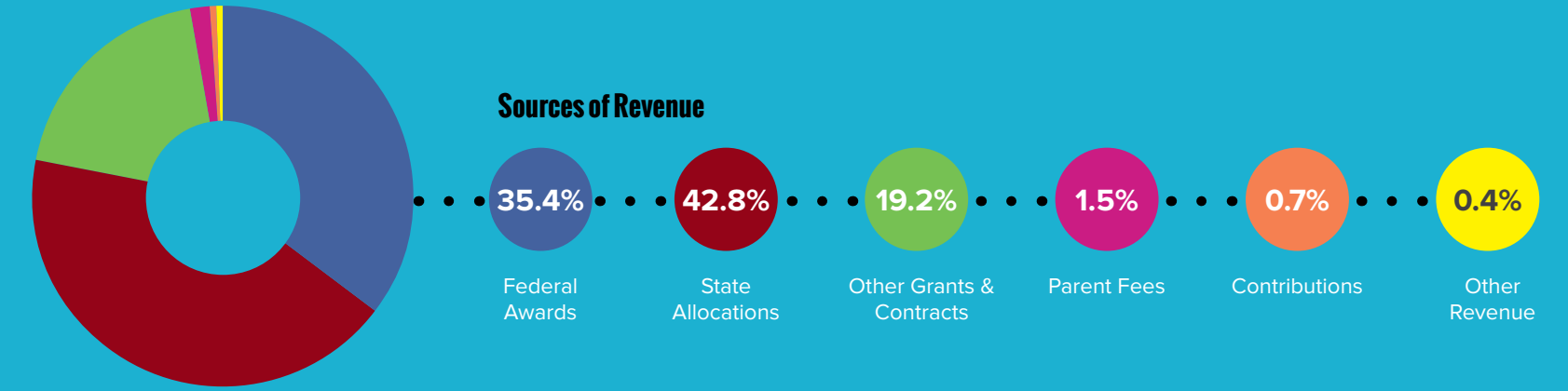
Uses of Revenue

Child Care Assistance	79.6%	\$9,247,760
Child Care Referral Services	2.5%	\$291,333
Other Child Care Services	11.5%	\$1,332,819
Management & General Expenses	6.1%	\$711,699
Fundraising Expenses	0.3%	\$30,320
Total	100.0%	\$11,613,931

*Fiscal year is July 1-June 30

**Includes local government

Pie Chart Data 2019





BOARD AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Executive Leadership

Jennifer Cowan
Executive Director

Chanté Bernard
Deputy Director

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President/CEO
Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce

Lynne Thomas
Director of Sales & Marketing
The Lobster



“The meaning of life is to
find your gift. The purpose
of life is to give it away.”

- William Shakespeare

IN APPRECIATION OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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RAND Corporation
Rotary Club of Santa Monica
Smart & Final Charitable Foundation
The K Foundation
The Ruth Group
The Ryding Company
United Way of East Central IA
Vaco
Woman's Club of Redondo Beach

Major Funders

California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division
California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
City of Santa Monica
First 5 LA
Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services
Los Angeles County Office of Education



DID YOU KNOW?



The long-term benefits from an influential early childhood program targeting disadvantaged families show that it has substantial beneficial impacts on health, children's future labor incomes, crime, education, and mothers' labor incomes. Lifetime returns show an overall rate of return is 13.7% per annum, and the benefit/cost ratio is 7.3.

"The life-cycle benefits of an influential early childhood program." National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016.



When parents have access to high-quality early care and education (ECE), they are able to increase their earnings. Many women in the workforce in California are breadwinners for their families, but they often take up low-wage or part-time work. Lack of access to ECE fuels this problem. Nationally, problems with child care cost parents \$8.3 billion in lost wages. Investment in ECE can help working parents recoup these losses.

Investing in Early Care and Education: The Economic Benefits for California. Berkeley, CA: UC Berkeley Labor Center, 2019.

**THANK YOU
VOLUNTEERS-
YOU'RE MAKING
A DIFFERENCE!**

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless."

- Sherry Anderson, star athlete

"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito."

- Betty Reese, officer and pilot

Credits:
With sincere appreciation to the children and families of Family Time and educational centers for permission to take their photos. Special thanks to Mathieu Young Photography, Jeff Giniewicz Design, Writer Julie Schlax-Patrick, and Annual Report Wrangler and Board Member David Shaw.



Connections for Children
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