

Public Policy Platform 2020-2023

The San Mateo County Child Care Partnership Council (CCPC) advises the County Board of Supervisors and the County Superintendent of Schools on child care and early learning program and policy issues, and takes the lead in planning and advocating for quality child care and early learning for all children, *from birth to age thirteen*, in San Mateo County. This Public Policy Platform captures long-standing priorities and positions of the CCPC, as well as emerging concerns. It is not organized in order of importance, and is intended to describe values and comprehensive positions.

Child care and early learning programs contribute to children's overall healthy growth and development, and strengthen families while enabling them to go to work or school. The CCPC's vision is that every child and family in San Mateo County has high quality child care and early learning opportunities. **We believe that these opportunities should be accessible for all children regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, ability, language, economic status, immigration status, and geographic location. We seek to address inequitable practices in the child care and early learning system so that success and failure are no longer predictable by child identity - racial, cultural, economic, or any other social factor.**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 created significant upheaval throughout our community. During the pandemic, child care has been elevated as a critical support for healthcare professionals, first responders and other essential workers, as well as for the long-term recovery of our community. While some programs temporarily closed their doors due to shelter-in-place orders, many remained open, particularly family child care providers. As child care and early learning programs adapted to the pandemic, the need for additional resources quickly became apparent. Programs need financial and other supports to meet public health guidance that calls for new and increased health and hygiene practices and limiting the size of groups of children to maintain physical distancing. Schools remaining closed for distance learning have also magnified pressures on programs to support young children in new ways.

Notably, the child care and early learning system was fragile prior to the onset of the pandemic as public funds and family fees have not met the cost of operating quality programs and compensating the workforce adequately, particularly in a high-cost county such as San Mateo, and the demand for affordable child care and early learning programs has outpaced the supply. Working families struggle with the combined high costs of housing, child care, and other living expenses in our county. As such, child care and early learning is at a critical juncture as demands on the field have altered considerably and the stress and uncertainty for families has grown.

The importance of Local Child Care and Development Planning Councils (LPCs) across the state, such as the CCPC, has been magnified in these crises – coordinating across counties

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and mixed delivery systems to leverage information and resources to support the field. LPCs offer a public forum to hear issues that matter most to the field and galvanize a coordinated response by engaging parents, early educators, public and community-based agencies, institutions of higher education, and philanthropy with policy makers and other local partners to strategize response and action plans.

This public policy platform addresses the following areas of highest priority in San Mateo County:

1. Systems, Financing and Administration
2. High-Quality Program Implementation
3. Availability, Accessibility and Affordability
4. Workforce
5. Facilities
6. Health and Safety

SYSTEMS, FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION

To ensure and support a comprehensive, high-quality child care and early learning system serving children *from birth to age 13*, we advocate for increased, protected and stable funding for that system, and we recognize a need for investments that sustain the child care and early learning infrastructure as programs grapple with financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To achieve the most cost-effective, equitable, and accessible system of child care and early learning, we support policy proposals such as:

- Increased investments for infant and toddler care and other high need populations;
- A streamlined, single subsidy reimbursement system that reflects the actual, current cost of providing high-quality care that adequately compensates the workforce to achieve salary parity with the K-12 system;
- Streamlined and efficient administration, including adequate resources for Local Child Care Planning Councils, and coordinated regulatory, contracting and reimbursement processes;
- Strong systems coordination between state and local agencies that support child care and early learning, physical and/or mental health, prevention/early intervention, TK-12 and higher education, community and economic development, family support, food/nutrition, social services and recreation services;
- Programs that emphasize trauma-informed care to address the needs of unique populations;

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- A system that supports a smooth transition for children and families from infant/toddler programs into the PreK/TK-12 system, with collaboration to align PreK and TK/K-3rd grade standards, curriculum, credentialing, and assessment;
- Opportunities to pilot new ideas and innovative services to improve outcomes for young children and their families in San Mateo County; and
- A streamlined data collection system that provides opportunities to understand children’s Kindergarten readiness through a universal assessment, the various needs of children and families, their participation in various services, and the impact of those services on child development and school readiness, and family self-sufficiency and stability.

HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure the best outcomes for young children *ages birth to 13* and their families, we support a sufficiently funded system that ensures high-quality programs that include:

- Developmentally appropriate curriculum grounded in research and evidence-based practices;
- A culturally/linguistically responsive approach;
- Inclusive environments conducive to learning and development for all children;
- Robust and authentic family engagement;
- Meaningful connections to comprehensive services and early identification and intervention processes; and
- Effective evaluation, monitoring and support.

We also support the use of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to assist families in choosing quality programs, to support programs to engage in continuous quality improvement, and to encourage public / private entities to invest in services that meet higher levels of quality.

To achieve high-quality program implementation in both publicly and privately funded child care and early learning programs, we support policy proposals such as:

- Inclusion of a broad representation of centers, family child care homes, and alternate settings in Quality Counts San Mateo’s quality improvement efforts that encompass a diversity of modalities (i.e. coaching, mentoring, trainings, etc.);
- Technical assistance, professional development, training and coaching that remove barriers and support quality improvement;
- Increased state and local funding to grow and sustain quality improvement implementation and make these activities more accessible to all programs;
- Inclusive environments for all children within a mixed delivery system;

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- Rigorous program evaluation to determine which quality improvement strategies result in improved kindergarten readiness for our most vulnerable children; and
- Supports for programs that serve school age children to improve the quality of their services.

AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

To ensure all families and their children benefit from high-quality child care and early learning services, including equitably addressing the needs of unique populations of children and their families such as infants/toddlers, dual language learners, children at risk and/or with special developmental and health care needs, children experiencing homelessness, children under the supervision of the child welfare system, children and families experiencing domestic violence, and children of teen parents, we support investments and strategies that increase the availability, accessibility and affordability of inclusive, high-quality services provided within a diverse delivery system.

To achieve equitable and universal availability, accessibility, and affordability, we support policy proposals such as:

- Increased funding to serve all children from low-income families in need of subsidized child care and early learning services regardless of immigration status;
- Easy enrollment and verification processes for families accessing subsidized child care and early learning with adequate funding for the agencies/entities that support families so that timely and responsive services can be provided in the family's home language;
- Greater assistance for families to help them learn about child care and early learning options, particularly for families with children with special needs and in the family's home language;
- Family eligibility standards that promote continuity of care for children and families;
- A higher income eligibility threshold for subsidized child care and early learning services due to the high cost of living in San Mateo County;
- Thoughtful income supports or other strategies, such as family-friendly workplace policies, to improve the short- and long-term stability of families and healthy outcomes for children; and
- Capacity building supports for all providers to help them serve underserved populations.

WORKFORCE

To ensure that a qualified workforce cares for and educates our diverse population of young children, we promote public and private efforts and systems that recruit, retain, and support a

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diverse, well-educated, well-compensated child care and early learning workforce that is inclusive of center-based, family child care, and “family, friend, and neighbor” staff.

To achieve an increase in the number of qualified child care and early learning professionals who are paid commensurate with their education and expertise and with parity to the K-12 system, we support policy proposals such as:

- Improved access to high-quality, coordinated educational and professional development systems that address financial, cultural, linguistic, and literacy needs on a continuum from entry-level through degree attainment;
- Adequate compensation for the workforce to achieve salary parity with the K-12 system;
- Coordination between local providers of professional development and higher education and support;
- Professional development opportunities that help the workforce develop expertise to support vulnerable and unique populations of children and families; and
- Campaigns to raise awareness of the child care and early learning workforce as valued professionals.

FACILITIES

To ensure an adequate supply of high-quality child care and early learning facilities, we advocate for public policy changes and strategies that reduce the complexity and remove barriers to developing new spaces.

To ensure that children are cared for and educated in high-quality, inclusive environments within a diverse delivery system, we support policy proposals such as:

- Increased public and private capital resources, at the federal, state and local levels, that are equitably distributed to increase the number of facilities;
- Technical expertise available to develop, finance, and maintain new and existing high quality child care and early learning facilities;
- City and county planning and land use policies that promote the inclusion and expansion of child care and early learning facilities, including the integration of these facilities in land use, housing, transportation, and economic, workforce and community development; and
- Policies that encourage employers to create child care facilities for their employees.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

To ensure all children are cared for and educated in safe and healthy environments, we must have a sufficiently funded and staffed Community Care Licensing system that monitors and

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provides technical assistance and resources to current and future licensed programs and providers. Child care and early learning programs also need technical assistance, training and resources to meet child and staff health and safety needs and respond to emergencies or disasters.

To achieve child care and early learning programs with the highest standards for health and safety, we support policy proposals such as:

- Annual monitoring visits for licensed centers and homes;
- Intra-departmental coordination between Licensing and the administration of child development programs shifted from the California Department of Education to the California Department of Social Services;
- Capacity-building within the child care and early learning system/workforce to meet all of children's health and safety needs including mental, physical, and developmental; responding to medical or situational crises; and ensuring safe routes to schools;
- Supports for all child care and early learning settings, including licensed and license-exempt, to ensure environments are safe and healthy;
- A more robust emergency response system for child care and early learning providers to ensure timely access to information and resources in the event of future disasters or emergencies;
- Representation of child care and early learning on local, state and federal COVID-19-related task forces; and
- Streamlined, clear and consistent regulations across license types.

For more information about the San Mateo County Child Care Partnership Council, please visit www.smcoe.org/about/child-care-partnership-council/.