

Bridging the Child Care Gap for California's Foster Children





Overview

- **The Need for Child Care for Foster Children**
- **Barriers to Accessing Child Care for Foster Children**
- **Bridging the Child Care Gap**

The Need for Child Care for Foster Children



The Need for Child Care for Foster Children



Recruiting & Retaining Foster Parents



Stabilizing Children in Family Placements



Addressing Trauma

Recruiting & Retaining Foster Parents

Changing Foster Parent Characteristics

Due to a shifting economy that requires more parents to work outside the home, the ability to **recruit and retain** foster parents is becoming more challenging. Compared to the average American parent, foster parents tend to be **older, possess fewer financial and educational resources**, and live in homes with **more children**. Foster parents are:

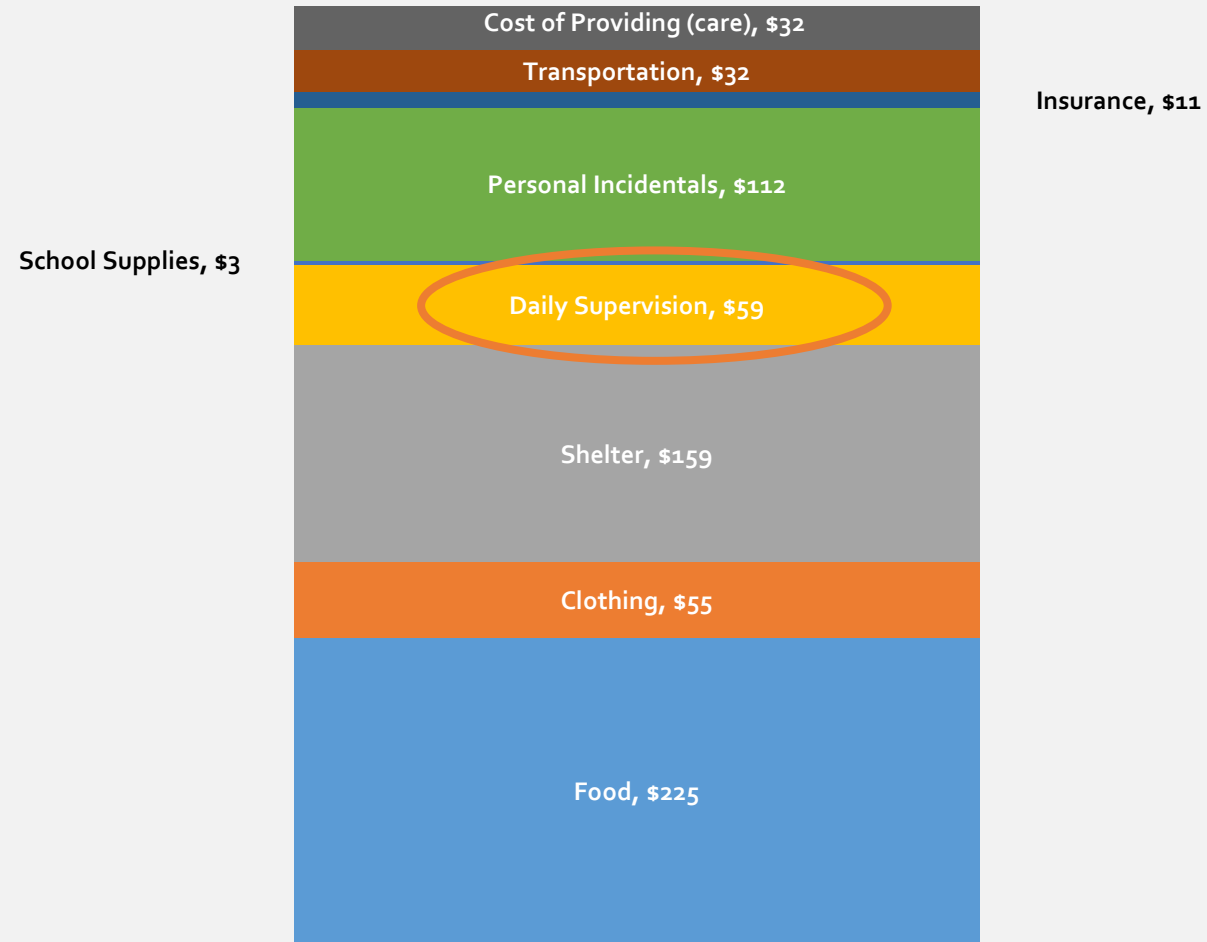
- Typically over age 40
- Most often married, although single foster parenting is on the rise
- Less likely to be college educated

A high rate of employment among the pool of potential foster parents necessitates access to quality child care.

Recruiting & Retaining Foster Parents

Foster Care Payments Do Not Cover the Cost of Child Care

Foster care payments are not income



2016 Foster Care Rate
ages 0 to 4 (\$688)

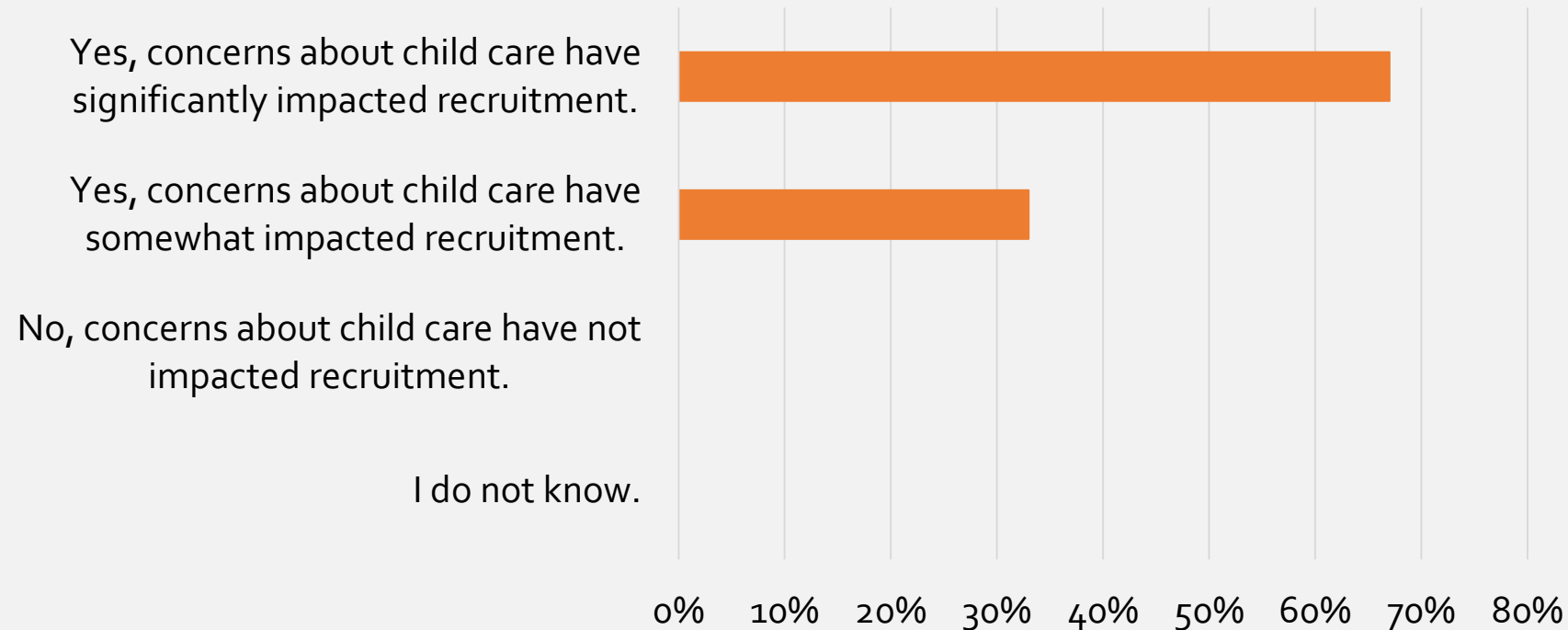
Recruiting & Retaining Foster Parents

Lack of Child Care is Major Barrier

The lack of child care is a major barrier to finding foster homes for young children. According to focus groups conducted by Los Angeles DCFS, **child care is one of the top three barriers to placing children under five.**

In 2015 in Los Angeles County, more than 2,000 young children, ages 0 to 5, spent time at the county's Children's Welcome Center. Welcome Center social workers charged with finding homes for these children estimated that **25% of denials for placement were due to the lack of child care.**

In an October 2015 survey of foster family agencies, **100% of FFAs cited that concerns about child care affect recruitment** and the willingness of foster parents to accept young children into their care.

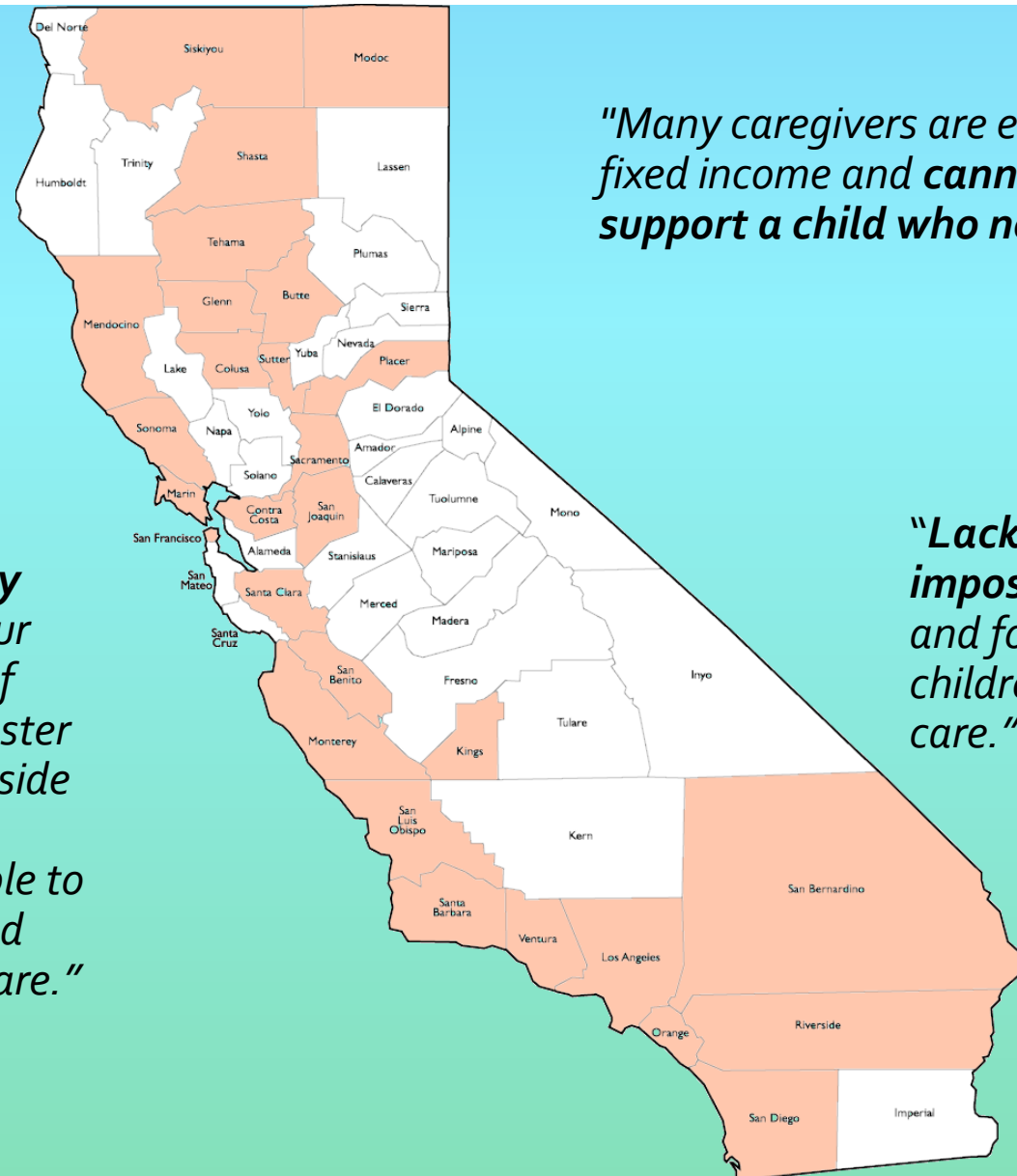


Recruiting & Retaining Foster Parents

County Child Care Proposals for Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention & Support Funding

In 2015, the Legislature set aside \$17.8 million to support foster parent recruitment and retention activities. **28** of the 54 counties that submitted funding requests, **proposed to use funds to provide child care to foster children.**

*"This is the **number one most frequently identified barrier** for foster parents in our county being able to accept placement of non-school age children... Most of our foster parents and relative caregivers work outside the home and child care costs are not affordable to these families to also be able to cover the costs of daily food, clothing and shelter needs of foster children in their care."*



*"Many caregivers are employed or on a fixed income and **cannot financially support a child who needs child care.**"*

*"**Lack of child care makes it impossible** for many of our relative and foster families to care for children and pay for full-time child care."*

Stabilizing Initial Foster Placements

- Research shows that the initial stage of placement is when children are at greatest risk for experiencing placement instability, especially in the first six to seven months.
- Evidence also suggests that infants experience the most placement moves during the first month of their placement as compared to older children.
- Children are more likely to experience instability when placed in a home where the foster parents have children of their own under age 5.
- Adequately supporting initial foster placements—including providing access to child care—is key in reducing placement instability.



Addressing Trauma

The Benefit of Early Education



Stress can be buffered by **supportive relationships** with family and caregivers and through **access to community supports and services**.

Early care and education for young children in foster care can:

- Support caregivers
- Enhance child development
- Bring additional nurturing adults into children's lives
- Support children and help them recover from trauma

High quality early care and education programs have been shown to improve **social and emotional well-being** and **readiness for school**.

Barriers to Accessing Child Care for Foster Children



Barriers to Accessing Child Care for Foster Children

Eligibility for Foster Children



Children receiving Child Protective Services or who are identified as being at-risk of abuse or neglect **are not required to meet income or need requirements.** To be eligible the family must have:

- (a) A written referral from a county welfare department worker certifying that the child is receiving CPS services and child care services are needed as part of the case plan; or
- (b) A written referral from a legally qualified professional from a legal, medical, or social services agency, a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths, a Head Start program, or an emergency shelter for child at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation stating that child care services are needed to reduce or eliminate that risk.

Barriers to Accessing Child Care for Foster Children

Priority Enrollment for Foster Children

A

CalWORKs Families: Families receiving CalWORKs are **entitled** to child care.

B

Non-CalWORKs Families

- **1st Priority:** Non-CalWORKs CDE child care programs must **prioritize enrollment of children who are receiving CPS services** or who have at-risk status.
 - *"First priority shall be given to neglected or abused children who are recipients of child protective services, or children who are at risk of being neglected or abused, upon written referral from a legal, medical, or social services agency."*
 - *"Within the first priority for services stated in Education Code section 8263(b)(1), children receiving protective services through the local county welfare department shall be enrolled before children identified as at risk of being neglected or abused."*
 - If an agency is unable to enroll a child in the first priority category, the agency must refer the family to the local resource and referral agency.
- **2nd Priority:** Families that are income eligible, with lowest income families admitted first.
- Contractors must maintain a current waiting list in accordance with admission priorities or participate in a county child care centralized eligibility list.

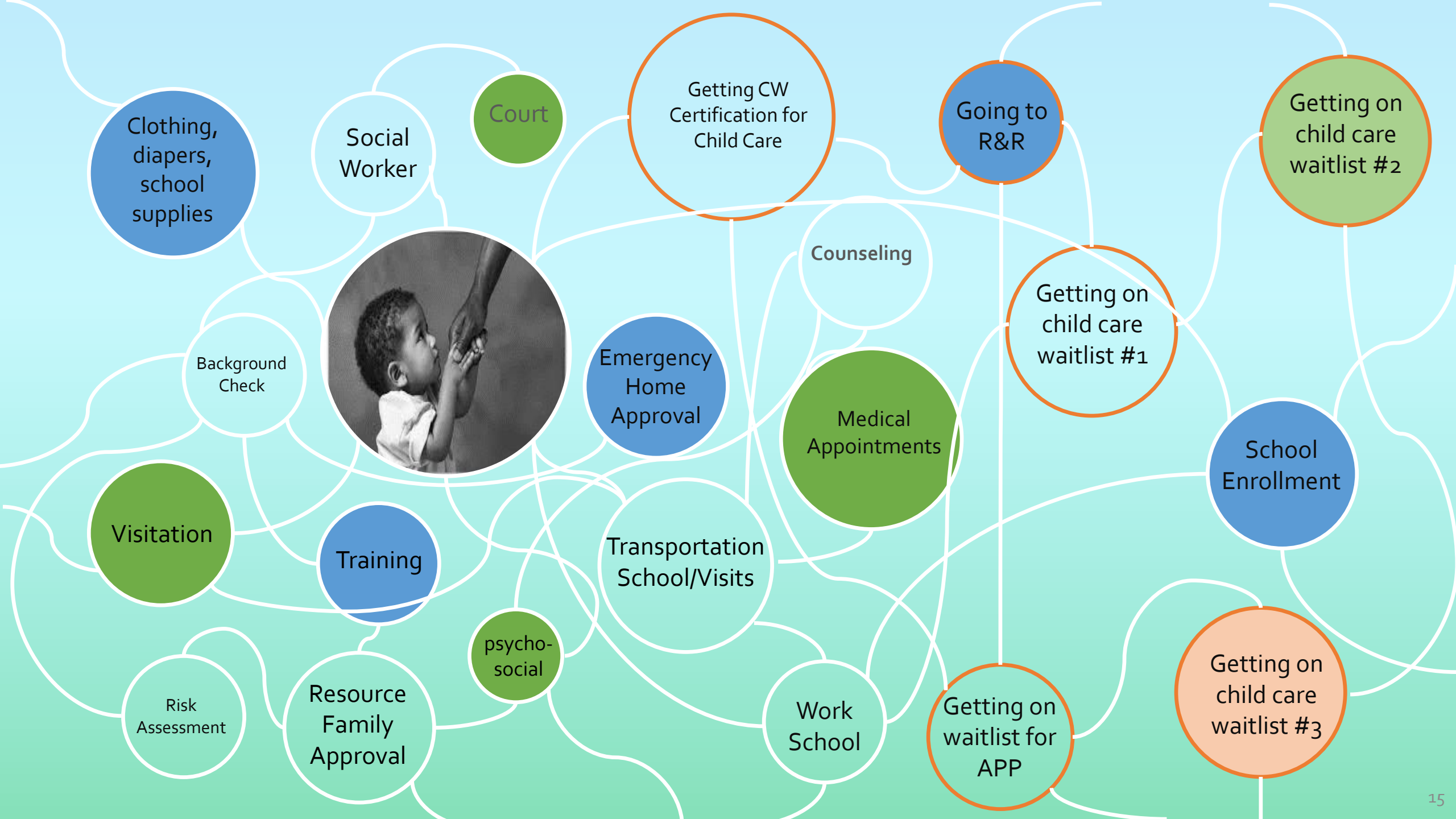
Barriers to Accessing Child Care for Foster Children

The Timing Gap

Even with **categorical eligibility** and **priority enrollment**, foster children and families still struggle to access subsidized child care:

- Child Care Centers and Alternative Payment programs are almost **always full, have long waiting lists, and very short periods of enrollment**.
- **Foster families are formed in an instant** and are not able to anticipate the need for child care and get on waiting lists. This is especially true for relative caregivers.
- **The moment a foster child is placed rarely coincides with the availability of a child care slot.**





Clothing, diapers, school supplies

Social Worker

Court

Getting CW Certification for Child Care

Going to R&R

Getting on child care waitlist #2

Counseling

Getting on child care waitlist #1

School Enrollment

Medical Appointments

Emergency Home Approval

Background Check

Transportation School/Visits

Work School

Getting on waitlist for APP

Getting on child care waitlist #3

Visitation

Training

psycho-social

Risk Assessment

Resource Family Approval

The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children



The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children

a Budget Proposal



Emergency Child Care Voucher

- Provided immediately upon placement
- For up to 6 months, with extensions when needed
- \$22M



Child Care Navigator

- Facilitate use of the emergency voucher
- Work with the family to transition or stabilize the child in a long-term, high quality, licensed setting
- Administered by Resource & Referral Agencies
- \$4M



Training in Trauma-Informed Care

- Support and training in the area of trauma-informed care for child care providers
- \$5M

The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children

Emergency Voucher

- Emergency child care vouchers will be available to foster parents **at the time of placement**. Foster parents will be eligible to receive the emergency child care voucher if
 - The child care is needed because the **foster parent is working or in school** or is required to engage in activities related to becoming or being a foster parent. (This is required to draw down Title IV-E funds.)
- The amount of the voucher will be **tied to the regional market rate**, set by the California Department of Education.
- Foster parents may use the emergency voucher to purchase child care, including both **licensed and license-exempt care**.
- Vouchers will be available for **up to 6 months**. The vouchers will terminate early if the family is able to find subsidized child care prior to the end of the 6-month period and may be extended beyond 6 months, under certain circumstances, if the family has been unable to find subsidized child care.



The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children

Child Care Navigators

Each Resource & Referral Agency will have a Child Care Navigator on-staff. Child care navigators will:

- Be **on-call to accept warm handoffs** from child welfare agencies
- Assist families in finding emergency child care as quickly as possible. Given the realities of child care provider capacity, it is likely that many emergency vouchers will be used for family-based child care, as opposed to center-based child care. When accessing family child care, one of three pathways would be supported:
 1. the R&R would contact providers in local Family Child Care Home Networks to identify open & appropriate placements;
 2. the R&R would contact local Foster Family Agencies to identify already-certified foster parents and respite caregivers who may be able to provide immediate care; or
 3. the relative caregiver/foster parent identifies a family, friend, or neighbor and the R&R helps them complete the Trustline requirements.
- Help families assess their ongoing child care needs
- Ensure families who need long-term child care secure a subsidized child care slot as quickly as possible



The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children

Training in Trauma-Informed Care for Providers

- To maximize the effectiveness of child care programs in **helping children heal from trauma**, child care providers will be trained in how to provide “trauma-informed care” to foster children.
- The training program will be modelled after the successful “Special Needs Training Project” which helped child care providers better meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- R&R agencies throughout the state may hire a trainer with knowledge of best practices in trauma informed care for young children, as well as knowledge of the child welfare system
- Group training will be provided and trainers will also work directly with providers as foster children come into their care. Trainers will be available to provide **hands-on coaching and support** at the child care site as well as to answer specific questions and connect providers with additional resources.
- Title IV-E federal foster care funding is available to off-set the cost of providing this training and support to child care providers.



The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children

Financing

The child care bridge program would leverage a combination of state general fund and federal Title IV-E (foster care) funds. **This program can leverage a new funding stream.**

- **By working together,** child care and child welfare advocates can begin to pull in this new funding source (Title IV-E) at the same time we advocate for an increased investment in child care funding for all low-income, working families.
 - Enhanced data collection processes – e.g., linking data systems between early care and education contractors and county child welfare agencies – can improve our ability to claim this new funding source.
- **Through parallel tracks,** we can collectively advocate for increased child care investments through both the child welfare budget and the education budget.



Re-Cap:

- **Foster Children Need Subsidized Child Care** so they can find loving foster families, be stable in their foster placements, and heal from the trauma they have experienced.
- **California's Child Care System** provides foster children with categorical eligibility for, and priority enrollment in, state subsidized child care programs, but due to implementation barriers few foster children are able to access child care.
- **Barriers to Accessing Child Care**, including the timing gap, lack of information about subsidized child care, and difficulty navigating the complex system are preventing foster children from accessing subsidized child care.
- **The Child Care Bridge for Foster Children** builds a bridge between the child welfare and child care systems that will allow foster children and families to overcome the timing gap, and other barriers, so they can access the subsidized child care they need.

Questions?

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