Children's Bureau Strategic Plan 2021 - 2025

Vision

*Children thriving in strong families and communities*

Mission

*Protecting vulnerable children through prevention, treatment, and advocacy*

A Century of Commitment to Vulnerable Children

Moved by the plight of vulnerable children, Mrs. E. K. Foster, a Los Angeles community leader, formed a volunteer group in 1904 which successfully advocated for legislation to protect children. In the 1920s Children's Bureau became a vital partner in starting the local Community Chest – now the United Way. During the same period, the organization began to recruit and train foster parents and established its own training program for social workers. The agency became one of the first professional providers of foster care in the nation. Formed first as an advocate for vulnerable children, the organization expanded to include direct services, which over the decades became the centerpiece of our mission. Today, we return to our advocacy roots, with an emphasis on prevention.

Strategic History

Children's Bureau had become an $11.3 million organization by 2000, delivering mental health services, foster care and adoption, and prevention programs. The Board established a bold new direction in its 2001 Strategic Plan to expand prevention, primarily focusing on the early development years. With this plan, the Magnolia Community Initiative (MCI) was launched in 2008 as a state-of-the-art prevention program.

Prevention has remained a centerpiece of Children’s Bureau’s strategy for the past 20 years. While early strategic plans recognized the potential impact of Advocacy in addressing the needs of large numbers of vulnerable children, that founding goal has garnered neither the attention nor the financial investment needed. Today, Children’s Bureau is actively involved in policy advocacy to expand public funding at local, state, and national levels, and is poised for significantly greater impact through advocacy.

During the 2017 - 2021 strategic plan period, Children’s Bureau invested significantly in infrastructure and systems that were instrumental in sustaining the program growth of that period, and program quality as well as staff wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic. This 2021 – 2025 strategic plan continues to clarify and focus on the organization’s core competencies and greatest opportunities for impacting the widest numbers of children and families, largely through investment in staff.
We Are a Prevention Organization

Children’s Bureau is an integrated, comprehensive prevention organization dedicated to protecting vulnerable children.

Our largest programs in 2021, represented with the largest bubbles in the chart below, are the mental health and foster care & adoption programs. These programs focus on supporting individual children and their families (to the left of the chart) in situations where trauma, and sometimes very deep trauma, has occurred (in the bottom of the chart). They build children’s coping skills and break intergenerational cycles of abuse. Public funding is most available in this region of the matrix.

Going forward, Children’s Bureau aims to increase bubble size in the top right through increased private giving as well as with increased public funding, perhaps with a permanent source.

2021 Program Analysis
Total Budget = $46 million

**Primary Prevention**
through relationships, knowledge, support, equitable and effective systems

**Secondary Prevention**
address traumatic experience(s) with targeted services & resources

**Tertiary Prevention**
tackle serious issues with intensive services

Legend:
- = government funding
- = private funding

Bubble size reflects relative program budget size
Advocacy has no dedicated budget at this time

Focus of Change >>> Wider impact
Strategic Direction

One dollar invested in primary prevention can save $8 - $18 in future public spending.

Children’s Bureau can impact the largest number of children by ensuring that public policy and distribution of public funding support primary prevention. To expand this work, we must dramatically amplify our unrestricted funding.

Our widest impact comes from investing in community-level change. Strong communities support strong families, which lead to strong and healthy children. This reinforces families’ resilience and prevents traumatic experiences from happening in the first place and leading to the need for services and intervention.

2025 Program Direction
prioritizing effort and unrestricted dollars
where they have the broadest impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Prevention</th>
<th>Expand in high-need areas of Los Angeles County, including Antelope Valley, and Orange County</th>
<th>Top Priority greatest return on investment for unrestricted dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Prevention</td>
<td>Sustain with targeted expansion to support back office expenses</td>
<td>Partner and cross-refer when asked to serve adults without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Prevention</td>
<td>Limited new programs that do not require support from unrestricted private sources</td>
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Our demonstrated results exceed expectations when we focus on the needs of the most impacted children. For programming through 2025, Children’s Bureau will prioritize:

- Effort and unrestricted dollars where they have the widest, earliest impact,
- Investing in advocacy and community collaboration, and
- Expanding the proven family resource center model in high-need areas of Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Children’s Bureau will continue to provide government-funded mental health and foster care & adoption programs for those children and families that have experienced trauma. The organization will continue to anticipate and respond to changes in these funding sources in ways that recognize our strengths and best support families.
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Mission

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2025 Strategic Imperatives

1. Grow prevention

2. Multiply private giving to expand prevention

3. Advocate for public policy and funding that support prevention

Enabled by:

- **Client impact:** demonstrated, quantified, compelling
- **Brand communication:** bold, clear, concise
- **Volunteer leadership:** reach, perspectives, and roles

With sustainable **funding** and excellent **People**
Planning Process

Building on largely successful implementation of its 2017 strategic plan, the Board launched a new planning process in the fall of 2020. Amidst the Covid-19 global pandemic, the organization seized the opportunity to incorporate bold long-term visioning with the creative reimagining required by virtual service delivery.

A strategic planning committee of Board members, Trustees, and the CEO led an engaged planning process from September 2020 – May 2021. The process intentionally integrated ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts throughout the organization, informing all aspects of the plan.

- The Board and Trustees identified issues, provided input, and guided the strategy through an online survey; discussion at the regular Board meeting in December; a joint meeting in February; the Board meeting in May; and a virtual Board retreat in June.
- Staff brought perspectives from clients and communities through an online survey (326 respondents, 79%), with additional discussions at team levels and at five staff town halls.
- Stakeholder interviews with four public sector leaders and four private foundations identified shifting opportunities for Children’s Bureau in the coming years, including attention to partnerships and advocacy.
- Community input came from existing interviews in the Antelope Valley and through pre-covid surveys, plus an extensive discussion with the MCI Leadership Academy participants about their experiences accessing resources and supporting their children.
- Board members, Trustees, and staff participated in a program deep dive discussion of to better understand Children’s Bureau’s prevention-based approach, programs, funding, and impact.
- The Executive Leadership team and Leadership Team engaged in regular discussions to understand data and develop alternatives.
- Board committees and Trustees groups reviewed emerging strategy from the perspective of their own roles, building buy-in and support for implementation.
- Small workgroups analyzed data and developed strategy related to Advocacy; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Fund Development.

Strategic Planning Committee

Co-Chairs: Surendra Jain, Marc Washington
Other board: Lisa Gritzner, Martin Jacobs, Ricci Ramos, Matt Wilson
Trustees: Tom Casarella, Steve Moore,
Staff: Ron Brown   Consultants: Elizabeth Sadlon, C Reed
Implementation

The Board of Directors adopts this strategic plan to articulate its long-term vision and mission, affirm strategies for creating impact, create focus through priorities, and guide decision making. The plan is a living document. The Governance Committee is responsible for oversight of progress toward the priorities, and for leading the revision of the plan together with management as necessary.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will develop an implementation plan with goals, detailed activities, metrics, and a tracking tool for Governance Committee review and comment. Using a similar format, the Governance Committee will develop an implementation plan for Board-led goals.

The first year of this plan period will be a time for stabilizing and returning from pandemic-driven remote work while building fund development, impact, marketing and communications. After six to twelve months, the Board and ELT will assess additional opportunities within the framework of this plan, adjusting goals as appropriate.

Monitoring

The ELT will update the Governance Committee at each of its four meetings annually on progress toward objectives. The Board will review progress at least once each year to ensure that activities are moving the organization toward its goals to advance the mission, asking, “So What?” and “What’s Next?” Based on this annual review, the ELT and Board will update respective implementation plans each July for the coming year.