



## FURTHER TOGETHER: Stories of Systems Change

CHILD & FAMILY WELL-BEING | ECONOMIC SECURITY | YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & EMPOWERMENT | HEALTH EQUITY

### Securing Child Care for Essential Workers During COVID

When schools and child care centers were forced to close their doors in March 2020, Los Angeles County faced a significant challenge. With each passing day of lockdown, thousands of essential workers—including many low-income, Black and brown front-line staff—were scrambling to find reliable, affordable care that would allow them to continue their critical work while keeping their young children safe and healthy.

Federal funds from the CARES Act and Head Start were on the way, but they would fall short of the need and take time to arrive. Neither parents nor the health care system could wait.

LA County Department of Health Services Director Dr. Christina Ghaly knew that if the County could not move quickly to prop up the child care system, develop and implement new COVID-19 safety standards, and find funding to subsidize the costs for working families, thousands of children would lack safe, quality care, and the County's health care and other critical systems would be at risk of collapse. She reached out to Center director Kate Anderson for help.

#### SOLUTION: A “One-Stop Shop” Emergency Child Care System

In partnership with government, philanthropic, and nonprofit leaders, the Center for Strategic Partnerships played a pivotal role in quickly pulling together a coordinated emergency child care system that allowed essential workers to continue providing services when the disaster hit. They then turned their efforts to ensuring that the system was funded until federal support became available.

Anderson tapped experienced Center consultant Rochelle Alley, who worked closely with the LA County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education to identify and prioritize needs. Director Debra Colman was already in communication with fellow community leaders Becca Patton at First 5 LA, Cristina Alvarado at Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, and Keesha Woods at the LA County Office of Education. **All held pieces of the solution.**



"As a single parent during COVID, **the free child care support was a huge relief.** I knew my son had social interaction, was doing his school work, and was safe. **The program gave me and others on the frontlines one less thing to worry about while we addressed the crisis.**"

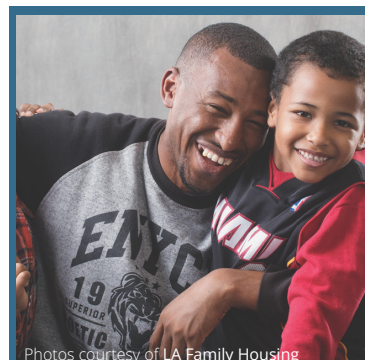
— **Samantha Peache**, Patient navigator, UCLA Radiation Oncology Dept.

## IMPACT

Alley coordinated with partners, including Center strategic liaison Kaci Patterson of the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment, The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, First 5 LA, and the Mayor's Fund, to bring in critical foundation support. "Philanthropy really came through," Colman says. "They saw the collaborative efforts being coordinated the Center for Strategic Partnerships, so making the case for funding was done much faster and with greater success than if the efforts were not coordinated."

### The Center helped partners work together to:

- ★ **Deliver subsidized care options for low-income essential workers**, including hospital and emergency response teams. They established a coordinated system, ensured it was funded, and helped to identify staff in need of support.
- ★ **Keep existing child care centers open for essential workers**, and ensure that the centers had adequate supplies of scarce items such as personal protective equipment and toilet paper.
- ★ **Increase the availability of safe, quality child care options** by staffing, screening and supporting additional "pop-up" child care sites.
- ★ **Help families locate these new options** by integrating them into the existing Child Care Resource and Referral Network, in partnership with the Child Care Alliance.
- ★ **Ensure maximum leverage and alignment** by bridging City, County, nonprofit, and philanthropic efforts.



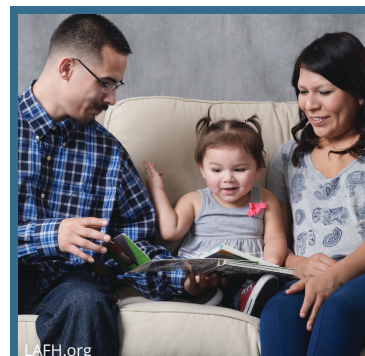
**2,555**

**Essential Workers**  
received child care  
vouchers



**3,747**

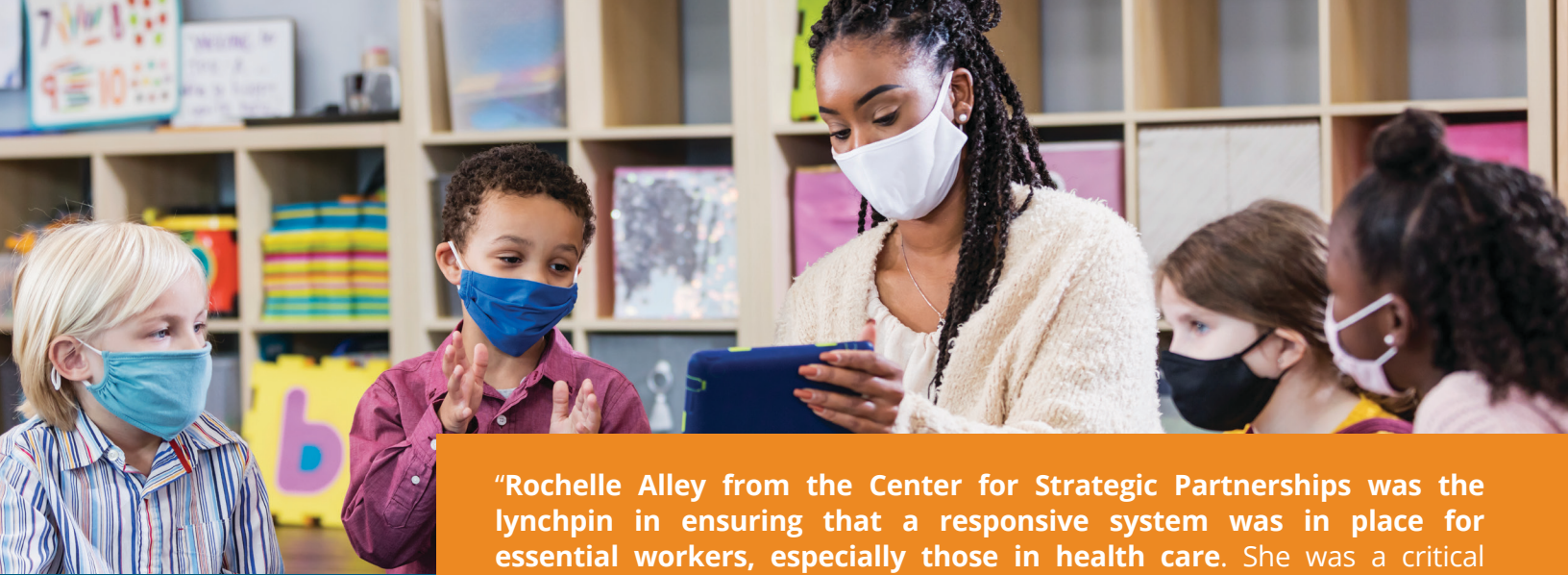
**Children**  
were safely placed  
in subsidized care



**9,955**

**Families**  
were connected  
to child care





**“Rochelle Alley from the Center for Strategic Partnerships was the lynchpin in ensuring that a responsive system was in place for essential workers, especially those in health care.** She was a critical connector in bringing together the LA County Department of Health Services, the City of Los Angeles, and the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles to ensure that County hospital staff received the support they needed in connecting to referrals, resources, and financial support.”

— **Debra Colman**, LA County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education

## INITIATIVE PARTNERS

### Center Team Members

- Rochelle Alley, Big Orange Spot, LLC
- Kaci Patterson, LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment

### County Partners

- LA County Department of Health Services
- LA County Department of Public Health
- LA County Department of Children and Families
- LA County Chief Executive Office
- LA County Office of Education
- First 5 LA
- City of Los Angeles

### Private and Community Partners

- The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
- The Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation
- Amgen Foundation
- Reissa Foundation
- The Stein Early Childhood Development Fund
- W. M. Keck Foundation
- California Community Foundation
- The Greater LA Education Foundation
- Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles and member agencies
- Child360
- Hospital Association of Southern California

## SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

The systems put in place through this collaborative effort are more than just stop-gap measures. They include systems changes that have the potential to strengthen not only the child care sector but others that are learning from these experiences. **Because of this early groundwork:**

- Los Angeles was better prepared for an increase in demand for emergency child care when the next surge of cases hit in December.
- Families across the County now have better, faster ways to locate affordable child care. The expanded referral system will continue to serve working families well beyond the COVID crisis.
- The County and City have developed a closer working relationship in the child care arena, yielding vastly improved coordination across other child care and child well-being efforts.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

The COVID crisis exposed the myriad difficulties that the child care sector faces in providing quality care that working families can afford. In the short term, LA County public and private partners ensured that developing youth did not lose the important supports they needed for growth during the pandemic.

Going forward, the Center and its partners will continue to explore how Los Angeles County can use what it learned during this crisis to highlight the importance of a strong early care and education system for the health and well-being of all families.