



MAY 9, 2022

INFORMATION **ACTION**

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY CHILD CARE BRIDGE PROGRAM EVALUATION

Strategic Priority Area II: Child Development

Goal: All children birth through age 5 have high-quality, nurturing environments that ensure their learning readiness.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

In 2017, California's Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children (Bridge Program) was created to provide kinship caregivers or other caregivers emergency child care. Overseen by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the Bridge Program works to link the child welfare agency and early childhood education systems in each county across the state to provide emergency child care vouchers, child care navigators, and trauma-informed care training and coaching to child care providers.

During 2020 and 2021, First 5 California (F5CA) funded the research team of the Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) to conduct an evaluation of the Bridge Program. Additional co-funders included First 5 San Bernardino and the Heising-Simons Foundation. In spring 2022, CCRC (www.ccrcca.org) completed the study. Data were collected via caregiver interviews, caregiver surveys, and administrator interviews in 12 counties at three stages of program implementation (early, mid, late). Key study topics included counties' challenges and successes with the program, changes made to the program, and how COVID-19 has affected the program.

For this agenda item, CCRC research staff will present a summary of study findings. Complete study findings are summarized in CCRC's report: *Strengthening California's Emergency Child Care Bridge Program: Final Study Report, 2020-2022*. The report concludes: "Despite the difficulties associated with implementing a statewide program with broad regulations that allowed each county to design a program that meets the needs of its constituents, the strong partnerships between Child Welfare and Resource & Referral agencies across the state helped to make the Bridge Program a success. By providing caregivers with child care vouchers, a child care navigator to help caregivers

navigate not only the child welfare but also the ECE systems, and by providing trauma-informed care training and coaching opportunities for providers, the Bridge Program has helped thousands of children in need of a loving and stable home.”

To improve foster bridge support and extend services to additional families, the final report makes the following recommendations:

- Restructure and enhance funding to ensure equitable access for those who need it most by:
 - Keeping implementation process changes made in response to the pandemic to maintain accessibility and increase convenience for foster families and child care providers
 - Extending the length of the Bridge voucher to follow the child after reunification or adoption. Vouchers may assist biological parents as well
 - Increasing funding to allow for expanded eligibility (e.g., more age groups, child care provider types, sibling sets, and out-of-county placements)
- Provide additional support in marketing, outreach, and advertising about trauma-informed care training and coaching
- Ensure equitable access to trauma-informed environments for California's most vulnerable children

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION

During 2020 and 2021, the Commission was provided updates on study progress during the Executive Director’s reports.

FISCAL DETAIL

F5CA contributed \$149,999 from the Research and Development account via its evaluation contract with CCRC (CFF 7568).

ATTACHMENTS

- A. *Strengthening California’s Emergency Child Care Bridge Program: Final Study Report, 2020—2022*. CCRC Research Team, 2022.
- B. California Emergency Child Care Bridge Evaluation PowerPoint.