

**Children First Collective San Diego
Vision, Mission, Goal, Structure, Expansion, Norms, and Letters of Support**

Last Update: 09/2024

Children First Collective brings together passionate voices in San Diego's child care ecosystem; this includes system leaders, child care professionals and early educators, parents, and employers. Together, we are creating a local movement across San Diego County, with an urgent mission: to make quality, affordable child care available to every working family that wants and needs it, as well as to ensure that providers and child care workers are compensated, supported, and respected as the professional educators that they are.

The vision, mission, and goal of the Children First Collective (CFC) San Diego are:

Vision

“What we believe in is simple: everyone deserves to live and thrive in a world that is just, equitable, and provides resources to all families. The future depends on access to education and training opportunities for all children, youth, and adults in our community.”

Mission

“We bring together an effective group of organizations and people dedicated to improving access, quality and equity of child care throughout our San Diego County communities.”

Goal

Striving always to lead with an equity lens and with the values of compassion, empathy, and hope, the goal of the Children First Collective San Diego is to ensure policy and systems-level changes for the early care and education sector that benefit working families and the entire child care ecosystem including children, families, and providers.

The remainder of this document discusses the structure, process for joining the Working Group, and participation norms of the Children First Collective San Diego. We may adapt these as needed to remain responsive to the needs of the Children First Collective San Diego and the wider child care community.

Structure

In order to achieve the vision of the Children First Collective of San Diego, we begin by recognizing that:

- We must have a structure that allows for increased engagement and inclusion of interested and impacted people and communities not traditionally engaged in child care advocacy, such as health care, housing, labor, and business, and;
- We should strive not only for parent and provider voices to set the direction of the Collective, but as much as possible, to facilitate the inherent power of parent and provider policy advocacy and decision-making by those most impacted by outdated and unjust systems.

We acknowledge that the organizations participating in the Collective so far offer some of the expertise needed to achieve systems-level change for the early care and education space, but not all. We also acknowledge that the organizations participating have the means to compensate employees for their participation, whereas more grassroots participants and interested individuals do not have the same means, and so we should make all efforts to meet these voices where they already convene. The ethos of this structure is intended to be strength-based, acknowledging the different gifts and capacities of members and voices of the Collective:

- The Collective: The term ‘Collective’ is meant to encompass the entire body of organizations and individuals that consider themselves part of the broader community pursuing and strengthening local cross-sector collaborations that improve access to quality, affordable child care. This includes participants of monthly Town Hall meetings and ad hoc working groups on specific issues and opportunities.
- The Collective Working Group: The Working Group of the Collective consists of organizations and Subject Matter Experts (SME) that together drive the work forward—putting ideas on paper and structuring advocacy goals and tactics based on community input—which are governed by [consensus decision-making](#), and meet every Thursday morning at 8:15am.

Process for the consideration of new members into the Working Group

Authentic relationships and trust—built largely over the COVID-19 crisis—have been cultivated within and across the Collective Working Group. For this reason, we take great care in considering new Working Group members, their contributions, and their impact on the existing group dynamic. We also seek utmost uniformity and transparency in our processes. The following is the process agreed upon by consensus by existing Working Group members (as of July 2022) in considering new membership to the Collective’s Working Group:

- After attending at least one Town Hall or CFC event, and meeting with a Collective member who walks through our expectations, values, and norms, an interested organization is invited to introduce themselves to the Collective, specifically on why they’d like to join the Thursday-morning Working Group;
 - Individuals, by default, are joining the Working Group as representatives of their organizations, and as such, should have organizational approval;
 - Organizations may be represented by more than one individual, but all representatives should attend regularly enough to be up-to-speed on Working Group activities;
- The organization is given 5-10 minutes to share, then all Working Group organizations are invited to ask questions, express concerns, etc.; We ask that Collective Working Group organizations be forthright and specific about any concerns they might have.

When applying to become a member of the CFC Working Group, candidates should indicate whether they would participate (mainly) as representatives of an organization or (mainly) as individual advocates. While imperfect, this distinction helps other members understand in what capacity a candidate would be likely to contribute to the work of the CFC. The foregoing notwithstanding, during any given conversation, an inducted member may opt to clarify that a particular opinion shared should or should not be construed as representing that of their organization. A member inducted as a representative should ensure that their organization is represented consistently at CFC's weekly meetings, minimizing the amount of rotation of organization representatives. Please note that CFC members, whether representatives of an organization or individual advocates, are expected to promote the work of CFC.

- After the interested organization completes their introduction, they leave the meeting and the Working Group is open to discuss, this process may occur within the same Working Group meeting, or may extend to the next regular Working Group meeting. Again, Working Group organizations are asked to be clear and specific about any benefits they see or concerns they have, so that all Working Group organizations have what they need in order to make an informed decision.
- The Working Group then votes using consensus (1-5, anything above 3 considered passing).
- We will use this process so long as it serves the purposes of the Collective and the Collective Working Group. Should alternate methods be needed, those will be discussed and decided on via consensus by the Collective Working Group and all interested parties will be fully informed.

For all entities and individuals associated with the cause, open invites stand for monthly Town Halls and ad hoc subcommittee work.

Collective and Working Group Norms

The purpose of these norms are so that both existing and future Working Group organizations and voices can be held accountable to the same, consensus-agreed-upon guidelines.*

- All Collective members shall treat all other Collective members with compassion and respect, leading with hope to work collectively towards local solutions to the child care crisis. We appreciate that we all have our unique set of lived experiences, and in doing so, seek to understand where each person is coming from without judgment and honor when to “agree to disagree” while acknowledging the value of contrast;
- Working Group coordinators welcome feedback and suggestions for improvement in an ongoing manner, acknowledging that needs, dynamics, and demands of the Collective and its members' lives are all fluid;
- All Working Group organizations agree to participate fully and be held accountable. Active participation includes regular attendance at Thursday morning meetings, sharing ideas, contributing on tasks such as reviewing materials and giving feedback, upholding deadlines, and reaching out if you've missed something or need clarity;
- Collective Working Group members set aside organizational or business interest biases in favor of collective action and interests;

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- No Collective or Collective Working Group member shall use the name or logo of the Collective for their organizational or personal financial gain or prestige;
- Collective Working Group members shall exercise active listening skills, shall not talk over one another, and no member may monopolize conversation;
- Collective Working Group members are expected to read previous meeting notes before joining upcoming meetings;
- Individual organizations will be invited to take positions on policy recommendations, legislative action and public statements. Each organization can decide whether to opt-in and sign on and lend their name, or opt out;
- Collective strategy and Collective Working Group members' deliberations are confidential, and final decisions will be kept confidential until there is an agreement to share the decision publicly;
- Collective Working Group members will raise their disagreement openly within the confidentiality of the Working Group, be transparent about divergent strategies, and take no action that directly undermines, contradicts or sabotages the Collective's work;
- Topics shared and discussed relate to the Children First Collective Vision, Mission, or Goals and are for the greater good;
- The Collective is open to collaborating with other related groups, coalitions, and campaigns that are dedicated to the betterment of the child care ecosystem.

*If an organization participating in the Working Group violates these norms, any other Working Group member can bring that concern up as an agenda item to be discussed transparently within the confidentiality of the Working Group, for consideration of next steps (which can include Working Group removal). This discussion should include the member in violation so that they can hear any allegation and represent their organization in the discussion. Consensus would not need to include the score of the organization in violation.

Process for considering Children First Collective San Diego Letters of Support

Approved Letters of Support from CFC are reached in the following way:

- Draft should be received at least two weeks before it is needed;
- When draft is put forward to the Working Group in a meeting, it must achieve $\frac{2}{3}$ support from those present;
- Draft will be shared out in the follow-up email, and it receives no 'vetos' from Working Group organizations.

Note: All CFC Letters of Support also contain the following language : "The Children's First Collective is proud to support [insert specific initiative or policy]. While this support reflects shared values of our coalition, it is important to note that the individual organizations and agencies within the Children's First Collective may have differing positions and processes. Therefore, this support does not represent the official stance of each member organization."