

CITY OF OAKLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD ECOSYSTEM OPPORTUNITIES

[Oakland Starting Smart and Strong](#) (OSSS) is a citywide collaborative that advances racial justice, develops and amplifies community driven solutions, and advocates for changes in policy and resources to create an early childhood ecosystem that effectively serves children 0-5, their families, caregivers, and educators. As the City of Oakland implements the 23-25 Budget, OSSS would like to highlight the following priority areas that help increase access and opportunities for all young children and families in Oakland to realize their full potential.



Early Childhood Housing and Homelessness Solutions

The end of the pandemic eviction moratorium will destabilize housing for many Oakland families. **The City must concretely support families with young children through affordable housing funding, tenant protections and legal supports, and other housing resources.** We encourage Oakland elected officials, Housing and Community Development Department staff, and other city leaders to learn about early childhood housing and homelessness concerns.

- A key example of an early childhood support is the [Alameda County CARE Program](#), which provides child care navigation and help to families who are experiencing homelessness. The CARE Program is housed at BANANAS, Oakland's Resource & Referral Agency, and is the result of Parent Voices Oakland advocacy. Many OSSS partners are part of the CARE Collaborative.

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Family-Friendly Community Infrastructure

- Oakland's Fairyland, Chabot Space and Science Center, Asian Cultural Center, and Peralta Hacienda are treasured community assets that have long served families with young children. **While funding for subsidies for most of these programs was restored, we ask to continue to protect Oakland's cultural assets and family friendly spaces.**
- Oakland has many Capital Improvements projects in parks, recreation facilities, and libraries that reach young children, their families, and caregivers. **We ask to learn more about the City's Capital Improvement Program Scoring Process, so we can highlight opportunities to elevate family-friendly measures/scoring criteria.**
- With Oakland's challenges with community safety and cuts to the Department of Violence Prevention, **we need to protect and invest in joyous, safe, communal spaces for young children and their families.** Doing so strengthens community resilience and makes the City a welcoming place for all.



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Prioritizing Early Childhood in the New Department of Children, Youth, and Families

- As the City plans for the new DCYF, concretely include and support children 0-5, their families, caregivers, and educators, as well as the programs that serve them
- Actively engage community stakeholders in the implementation process for transparency, accountability, and building authentic relationships
- Follow a process that supports staff retention and preserving institutional memory



Cultivating Early Childhood Champions in Oakland

- We want all Oakland elected officials and city leaders to be early childhood champions, who also amplify other champions and leaders.
- OSSS has stakeholders across the Early Childhood Ecosystem, who are eager to connect with Oakland elected officials and cultivate accountability-centered relationships. Our stakeholders include staff from public systems, community-based organizations, and foundations, as well as early childhood educators/child care providers and families.



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Strengthening Oakland's Early Childhood Funding Streams

- Oakland's ECEcosystem is funded by a wide range of public and private funding streams. **Given the City's historic budget crisis, we would like to learn about the City's strategy to leverage public/private partnerships for early childhood and racial equity initiatives in Oakland.** For example, OSSS and Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center were recently [awarded grants from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott](#) to advance community-centered, equitable early childhood systems-building.
- Many OSSS partners are involved in the Oakland Children's Initiative (OCI), a new 30 year cradle-to-career funding stream that prioritizes OUSD and City of Oakland Head Start. **Because OSSS is the leading Oakland early childhood table, we can offer thought partnership around the needs and innovative strategies from the community, including Family Child Care Providers, who are not prioritized by OCI.** The vast majority of ECE programs remain underfunded, with over 10,000 eligible children, including 90.9% of eligible infants/toddlers, not receiving subsidized care or preschool.
- The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) is a critical funding stream for Oakland's early childhood programs. Many OSSS partners are concerned about whether the DCYF merger will impact OFCY and early childhood funding. **OSSS can help coordinate a process between early childhood grantees and OFCY to ensure that these funding relationships are fair and equitable, especially given ongoing changes with staffing, departments, and funding.**

About Oakland Starting Smart and Strong

The OSSS collective vision of success is that all children, families, and early educators flourish in Oakland. Over our history, we have moved from a focus on kindergarten readiness to a broader framework that addresses root causes of early learning, child well being, and family support disparities.

Our work proves that restorative, healing, and racially just work can take place when systems center the priorities of the most impacted early educators and families.

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