

2023 Annual Report





A Message from our CEO

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride in the resilience and dedication of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services and Catalyst Center team, and the community-based organizations and partners that we work with towards our vision all children and youth thrive in healthy families and communities. Coming out of a global pandemic, service providers have faced unprecedented challenges, yet our shared commitment to the wellbeing of children and families in California has remained unwavering. We have worked to build and expand our advocacy, training and technical assistance to support those who serve California's most vulnerable citizens. Our collaborative efforts with partners and stakeholders have amplified our impact, allowing us to reach more communities in need. As we look forward, I am confident that our continued dedication and collective efforts will drive meaningful change, ensuring a brighter future for every child, young adult and family in our state.

-Christine Stoner-Mertz, CEO, CA Alliance and Catalyst Center

ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

Passionate representative for California's children and families facing vulnerable circumstances.

More than 160 organizations that serve California's most vulnerable populations trust the California Alliance to provide legislative and regulatory advocacy to the Governor and the Legislature, as well as a host of state departments, including: Health and Human Services, Finance, Healthcare Services, Social Services, Education, Healthcare Access and Information, Developmental Services, and Office of Youth and Community Restoration.

The California Alliance of Child and Family Services is the unifying force in the charge to lead change and provide support for the state's children, youth and families.

For those dedicated to improving the lives of these at-risk populations, the California Alliance stands apart as the champion and leading voice for organizations that advocate for children and families, and for advancing policy and services on their behalf.

The Catalyst Center is our training and technical assistance arm that leverages connections between research, policy, and practice to inform and lead capacity building efforts across the state of California for providers in the fields of child and family services. Services are available to all community-based providers, parents, youth and partners in service to children, youth and families.



The value of CA Alliance to its members:

Member organizations of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services (CA Alliance) receive many important benefits, centered around seven strategy platforms of the CA Alliance:



Policy and Advocacy

State Budget



In-Person Convenings

Media



Capacity Building

Training



Support Networks



The CA Alliance's Sponsored Bills: All signed!!



AB 373
(Gipson)

AB 665
(Carillo)

SB 407
(Wiener)

This bill aids California's foster care and homeless students by offering them priority enrollment in summer and winter school sessions. It helps them catch up on missed classes, closing the opportunity gap. If a student relocates during a program, their educational rights holder can choose their school. AB 373 is crucial for continuous academic program enrollment during school transitions.

AB 665 removes a barrier in California's Medi-Cal program, allowing youth equal access to mental health counseling regardless of their insurance type. This aligns Medi-Cal standards with private insurance, benefiting children of color, foster youth, and LGBTQ+ individuals, who often face worse behavioral health outcomes. This legislation aims to close the health outcome gap.

This bill updates the resource family approval process in foster care to ensure caregivers can support youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities, preventing discrimination. It requires caregivers to be willing to use available resources for issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity, without requiring belief changes. The aim is to provide foster youth with supportive and inclusive care environments.

[See our current list of Public Policy Priorities by clicking here.](#)



2023-24 State Budget Victories

- \$8 million for one-time supplement for Foster Family Agency rates– The Alliance sponsored request with the National Association of Social Workers- CA Chapter was included in the negotiated version of the budget with the Governor's office. We are working on implementation details with the Administration to get the funding out the door and the mechanism (i.e. will it be added to the per child/ per month rate). Additionally, the budget requires supplemental reporting requiring the Department of Social Services (CDSS) to consult with the Legislature and stakeholders on the progress to develop CCR permanent rates.
- \$4 million for the state to hire six additional staff to expedite Guardian background checks– The Alliance co-sponsored request for Guardian staffing alongside other CCL licensees, and co-led by the Assisted Living Association, was included in the negotiated version of the budget with the Governor's Office. We are working with our coalition partners to ensure that the state starts hiring and training staff quickly. Additionally, CDSS has let us know that they are going to start the stakeholder process to replace Guardian

Other Policy Achievements

In the past year, our organization has made significant strides in advocating for policy changes and reforms across various fronts, contributing to our broader mission of improving public health and welfare services.

Some of these include:

- Led Behavioral Health Payment Reform advocacy at state and local levels for equitable payment systems.
- Streamlined the Guardian background check process with State Community Care Licensing (CCL).
- Advocated for legislative changes to enhance Independent Adoption Facilitator standards.
- Published policy briefs on workforce challenges and licensing practice disparities.
- Contributed to over 15 working groups with agencies like CDSS, DHCS, CalHHS, and HCAI, influencing a wide range of policy discussions.





2023 CA Alliance Conferences: Uniting Voices, Advocacy, and Action for Children, Youth, and Families

The 2023 CA Alliance conferences, including the Fall Conference in San Diego and the newly introduced Winter Summit and Advocacy Day, were pivotal in advancing our mission for children, youth, and families. These events showcased our commitment to bringing together influential voices in our field.

The Fall Conference in San Diego offered enriching workshops and inspiring speakers, fostering a platform for learning, networking, and reigniting our collective passion. It was an invaluable opportunity for reconnection and collaboration among our members.

The Winter Summit and Advocacy Day, a significant new addition, emphasized our advocacy focus. This event provided an in-depth exploration of policy initiatives and featured the Advocacy Day, where CA Alliance members and policy staff held critical meetings with California legislators to discuss key policy areas. This direct engagement with lawmakers was instrumental in conveying our priorities and influencing policy.

Both events strengthened our community, offering networking and partnership opportunities. These gatherings were crucial in revitalizing our commitment and enhancing our collective impact.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in these successful events. The dedication and enthusiasm of all participants were key to our success and inspiration of these events. We eagerly anticipate future conferences to continue our united efforts in advocacy and improvement of children, youth, and families' lives.





The CA Alliance's and Members in the Media:

In 2023, the CA Alliance team diligently worked to amplify our members' exceptional efforts across a variety of media platforms, including traditional media outlets and social media channels. This concerted approach had a dual purpose: to bolster our policy initiatives and to bring deserved recognition to the remarkable achievements of our members. By strategically placing engaging content and positive news stories in prominent media spaces and utilizing the power of social media for wider reach and engagement, we were able to effectively showcase the impactful legislation and policies we championed, as well as highlight the substantial contributions made by our members.

We take immense pride in the compilation of articles and social media campaigns that have been successfully executed and featured across these platforms. These communications are a testament to the hard work, commitment, and innovative strategies employed by our staff. They also represent the collective efforts of our organization in using every available tool to advocate for our cause and connect with a broader audience. The integration of social media has allowed us to interact with our community more directly, share real-time updates, and engage in meaningful dialogues, further strengthening our impact and presence in the field.

[To access these articles and delve into the inspiring narratives that have emerged from our work, we invite you to visit our online repository by clicking here.](#)



Enhancing Services through Capacity Building:

In our capacity building efforts this year, we've achieved significant milestones that have strengthened our member organizations and their services. We provided targeted technical assistance to Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs), focusing on enhancing their Mental Health programs to better meet the needs of those they serve. Additionally, we've emphasized the importance of Trauma-Informed Care, conducting comprehensive training sessions to ensure that staff across various organizations are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support individuals who have experienced trauma. Furthermore, understanding the complexities of Payment Reform, we've offered both training and technical assistance to our member organizations, helping them navigate and adapt to these changes effectively. These initiatives are part of our broader commitment to building capacity and ensuring high-quality care within our network.



Strengthening Support Networks:

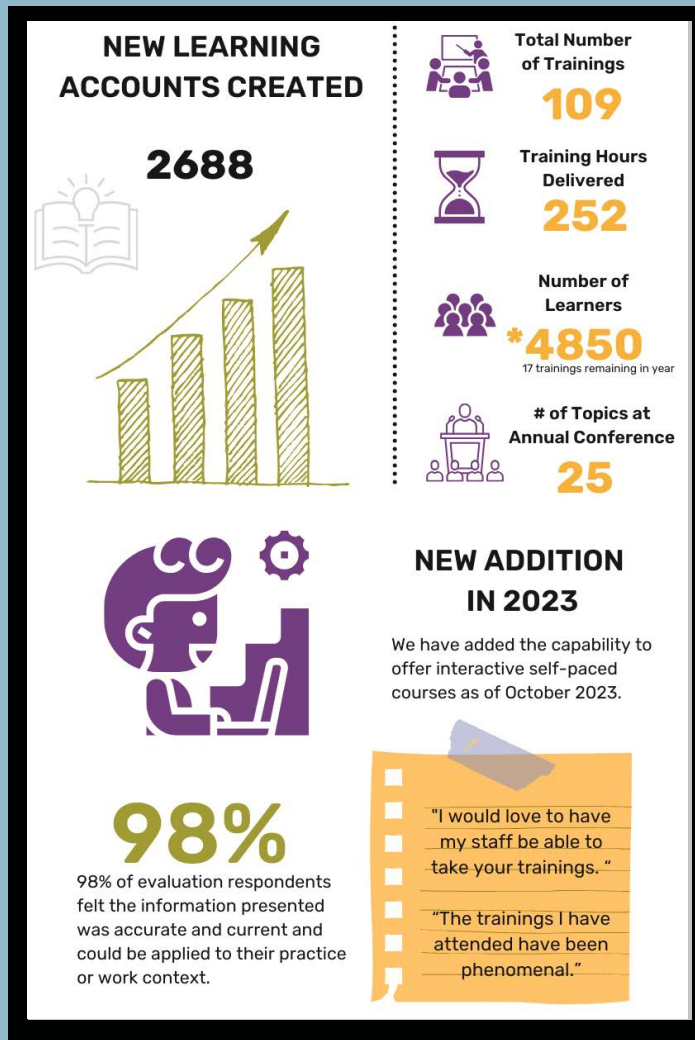
This year, we have made notable progress in enhancing support for system partners and families. We launched the Youth Resource Group, designed to empower young individuals by offering resources and support that cater to their specific needs. Additionally, we initiated the Full Circle Health Network, to serve as a network intermediary between community-based organizations and Medi-Cal managed care plans. We also expanded our statewide placement database, improving our capacity to swiftly and accurately match individuals with suitable placements. These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to fostering a more responsive and inclusive support framework for our partners and the families we assist.





Training and Technical Assistance

In 2023, the Catalyst Center, our training vehicle for the child and family services sector, partnered with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), the center provides diverse trainings, ranging from policy updates to innovative practice techniques.



California Provider Helpline - 1-833-99YOUTH (999-6884)

Through our DHCS partnership, we used our expertise to guide Short Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP) providers as they navigated new regulations that would result in them being designated as Institutions of Mental Disease (IMD). Through our partnership with CDSS, we delivered technical assistance through our California Provider Helpline, guiding foster care and youth residential care providers with tools, tips, and resources in effort to improve the quality and consistency of care provided to youth within our California systems.

Helpline Year by the Numbers

Total Cases	Cases Closed	Avg. Min. Per Case
691	612	33
# of Distinct Callers	Avg. Days Cases Open	Avg. Min. Per Contact
161	0	33

Through both partnerships, our dedicated staff delivered compassionate customer service to ensure providers had the guidance and resources needed to make well-informed decisions for the benefit of their staff and the youth and families they serve. As a result of this work and other training and technical assistance efforts, our CDSS and DHCS partnerships will not only continue, but also expand in scope.

Full Circle Health Network:



The Alliance launched a subsidiary company called Full Circle Health Network (Full Circle) in January to serve as a network intermediary between community-based organizations and Medi-Cal managed care plans. The mission of Full Circle is to advance health equity by connecting vulnerable children, individuals, and families across California to a cohesive network of high-quality, community-based providers that addresses their unique needs through culturally congruent and trauma-informed care. In just 12 months, Full Circle has secured contracts with six Medi-Cal managed care plans that cover 25% of enrollees statewide and built a network of more than 70 providers across 32 counties. Full Circle has an exclusive, statewide arrangement with Kaiser Permanente Health Plan to be the network lead entity for CalAIM services available to children and families. To fund this work, Full Circle has received more than \$10 million in start-up grants of which about 60% is for direct support to providers. By the end of 2024, Full Circle expects to have contracts with managed care plans covering more than 75% of Medi-Cal enrollees and a statewide presence.

The Catalyst Center

The Catalyst Center is a leading training and technical assistance center representing the interests of child and family serving professionals in the state of California and beyond.



Catalyst to Wellbeing in Community Apprenticeship Program Partnership

The “Catalyst for Wellness in Community Apprenticeship Program” launched in Alameda County, approved by the Department of Labor. Of 88 applicants, 11 are active in the program, each with personal experiences relevant to the field, in public social services, juvenile justice and behavioral health systems. They are employed by organizations like Seneca and Fred Finch, earning at least \$20/hr, and are currently taking English and Psychology courses. The program pairs each apprentice with a trained mentor for guidance and support. As we gear up for the next cohort, our diverse group of apprentices is making significant strides in both their professional and personal development.



Thriving into Adulthood Project

Launched last year, the ongoing Thriving into Adulthood Project focuses on mitigating homelessness risks and enhancing housing and service capacities for transition-aged youth. Building on our established partnerships and forging new collaborative relationships, we are dedicated to identifying and providing the necessary supports for youth to successfully transition into adulthood. To facilitate this, we’ve been hosting a series of both virtual and in-person convenings, engaging directly with transitional age youth to better understand and address their needs. This project is generously funded by the Conrad Hilton Foundation and continues to evolve as we learn from and with the youth we serve.



Leveraging Connections Between Research, Policy, and Practice While Promoting the Health, Well-Being, and Safety of Children, Youth, and Families in California.



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Get in touch

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