



Center for
Strategic
Partnerships



fostertogether
NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

Rising to Critical Challenge

Standing Strong

It's challenging to land on an adequate adjective to describe the past year. An insurance crisis threatened to displace over 1,600 of Los Angeles' foster children and to shutter longstanding nonprofit partners. Barely three months later, wildfires ravaged homes of foster families and staff alike. Days later, federal policy shifts and local budget challenges undermined our physical and mental health. As the years pass, it's become harder to find superlatives. "Unprecedented"? 2020. "Cataclysmic"? Very 2024. It is easier to define what has been consistent.

What has proven consistent amidst these crises is the extraordinary way that we continually rise up with an unwavering commitment to children and families. When you've built a network of people who genuinely care about children and families, that network doesn't just dissolve in the face of the unforeseen. Zoom meetings and conference rooms may see more than their fair share of tears, but the work gets done. Even as the world might be burning, the data declares that LA County children are safer than they were five, ten years ago. And the tears flow again, but this time in celebration.

Through the following pages, you'll see how we've learned from every crisis that's come before, that we've listened to the parents and youth we serve, and that we have done our best to level up. We got creative. We became extra resourceful.

We remain ever grateful to our partners and to the funders who supported FTN and its pilots this year (the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Department of Youth Development, Anthony Pritzker Family Foundation, David Bohnett Foundation, and Specialty Family Foundation.) Without your fuel, we couldn't innovate and evolve so effectively through these crises.

The fire may forge us, but it doesn't define us.
We will be here... standing strong.

Sincerely,

The Center for Strategic Partnerships Team

Rochelle Alley, FTN Director

Kate Anderson, Center Director

Kila Burton, FTN Executive Project Coordinator



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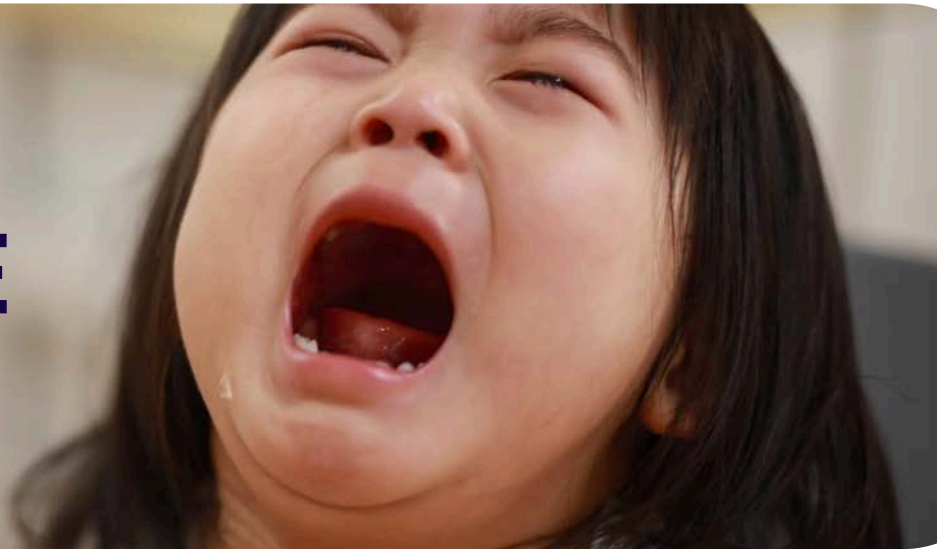


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INITIATIVES BEARING FRUIT



2024 INSURANCE CRISIS



How is a crisis defined? As something that blindsides you completely? Or is it a potential catastrophe creeping up on you slowly? The 2024 Foster Family Agency (FFA) Insurance Crisis fits both seamlessly...

When the CA Legislature passed AB 2496 in July 2024, it arrived with acknowledged challenges as well as hoped-for improvements, but the bill also left FFAs unprotected from lawsuits—making them risky ventures for insurers.

The Nonprofits Insurance Alliance of California (NIAC)—which insured approximately 90% of FFAs operating in California—announced they would no longer renew FFA insurance unless liability-related policies were changed.

Without insurance coverage, FFAs could not operate. Not only would this destroy long-standing programs supporting youth in Los Angeles, but it threatened the stability of approximately 1,600 children and the families caring for them, as those families would be forced to move to a different organization or no longer provide foster care.

Our Response: Foster Together Network (FTN) mobilized immediately, convening critical stakeholders from Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA), the Office of Child Protection, the California Alliance of Caregivers, and individual FFAs. We:

- Facilitated urgent discussions between state, county, and agency leadership to disseminate information and identify immediate solutions, including alternative insurance carriers to explore, merger support, and Board of Supervisor related actions
- Supported advocacy efforts for AB 2894 and other legislative pathways
- Facilitated conversations with philanthropy, advocates, and County leaders around potential philanthropic support for long-term solutions, such as risk pool analyses

Results and Reprieve on the Horizon: Help is now on the way both at the local and State level. LA County has committed to providing short-term financial subsidies for agencies struggling due to increased insurance and to analyzing long-term risk pool options. The California 2025-2026 budget also includes \$31.5 million in bridge funding on a one-time basis (for a two-year period) for FFAs to continue operations and services for children and youth in foster care. While challenges still remain, there are now both short-term reprieve available and strong momentum to ensure sustainable solutions.

2025 LA WILDFIRES

Barely settling into the aftermath of the insurance crisis, our networks—along with the rest of Southern California—were once more put to the flames as wildfires swept through in January 2025. Whole neighborhoods were lost, displacing entire families as well as staff supporting them.

Our Response: Drawing on our established network of partnerships, FTN quickly activated emergency protocols to support affected families.

Through our partners at DCFS and community organizations, we provided:

- Immediate fire recovery support coordination
- Disbursement of more than \$200K by philanthropy to displaced families, staff, and organizations
- Philanthropic coordination and fundraising focused on fire-affected resource families, congregate care facilities, agencies and staff
- Resource connection for displaced foster families
- Trauma-informed guidance for caregivers supporting youth through disaster-related stress
- Advocacy for expedited services and flexible policy implementation during the emergency period





REINVIGORATING CROSS-SECTOR CARE

This past year, FTN launched a new initiative—*Reinvigorating Cross-Sector Care*—that combined the power of our prior Data and Cross-Sector workgroups to focus on enhancing the sustainability of FFAs as specialty providers within our Continuum of Care.

We couldn't be more excited about the positive impact this work will have on the youth and organizations we serve. So far, we:

- Completed an [inventory and analysis of funding streams relevant to FFAs](#) and optimizing the full continuum of family-based care; this analysis lifted up top opportunities to address systemic fiscal challenges and grow the capacity of FFAs to serve our youth, especially those with complex needs.
- Hosted a well-received, productive Action Challenge round table in February 2025 that explored and identified action steps to improve FFA sustainability and capacity to meet the needs of our youth who are falling through the cracks.
- Collaborated with public and private partners to implement the next steps developed from that challenge, including launching and co-leading a workgroup focused on Innovative Models of Care funding to provide improved stability, placement, and care for youth with complex care needs.

Key highlights of the plan approved by the DCFS Executive Committee coming out of our Action Challenge included:

- **Untapped Funding Streams:** Clarifying policy and providing staff education around enhancing care rate use.
- **Kin Support:** Exploring enhanced kin support and an FFA-led Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) respite pilot.
- **Therapeutic Shelter Homes:** Scaling the transitional shelter home model.
- **Small Family Homes:** Exploring roles for FFAs in helping improve small family home use in LA.
- **Crisis Continuum Pilot:** Engaging Intensive Services Foster Care FFA providers to participate in the crisis continuum pilot.
- **Youth with Regional Center diagnoses:** Enhancing the capacity and funding for FFA care of Regional Center youth.
- **Innovative Models of Care:** Implementing recommendations to help FFAs access capacity-building funds and Innovative Models of Care (IMC) approval.

The untapped funding stream scope was completed by summer 2025, providing improved clarity and access to funds for enhanced care across both FFA and non-FFA homes. Two of these —kin support and therapeutic shelter homes— were determined to represent long-term strategies for diversification that FFAs might access by applying for potential contracts that could be released as early as 2027.

The Regional Center and Innovative Models of Care workstreams have made big leaps in clarifying interested FFAs, establishing models & funding steps, and mapping training resources. This work will continue with technical assistance and philanthropic links to realize these opportunities for our youth and FFAs.

We are on the brink of transformative changes and are pushing forward with enthusiasm to make these plans a reality.



IMPROVING CAREGIVING FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH



Early in 2024, DCFS Director Nichols requested FTN's support to improve the stability and availability of care for LGBTQ+ youth, who had been too frequently ending up in shelters or homeless, instead of in family-based care.

Our Response: We engaged LGBTQ+ care expert Dr. Elizabeth Ollen (UCLA) and Dr. Argelis Ortiz (FTN) to develop and host eight (four in English and four in Spanish) "Reflective Dialogues" workshops with caregivers to improve the availability and stability of affirming care for LGBTQ+ youth.

In these initial pilot sessions, 33 dedicated prospective resource parents from Aviva Family and Children's Services, Niños Latinos Unidos, and Optimist Youth Homes were able to explore their emotions regarding providing affirming care and receive practical tools and insights into supporting LGBTQ+ youth. We are so grateful that these three agencies then also stepped up to carry forward the model within their own organizations and beyond by participating in Train the Trainer sessions that prepared their staff to facilitate the Reflective Dialogues workshops and coaching.

Moreover, we are excited to announce that the resulting curriculum and resources are now available on our [website](#) for you to explore and share. These materials offer valuable tools and insights to grow and support caregivers in creating affirming, supportive homes for LGBTQ+ youth. We owe a huge thanks to the David Bohnett Foundation, whose funding made this project a reality. We encourage you to share the online curriculum resources so we can continue expanding their impact on youth well-being.

Initiatives seeded in Foster Together Network...

...BEARING FRUIT

Mentorship Youth Nexus

In the months since its official independent launch, the LA County Mentorship Youth Nexus has been busy uplifting youth and improving bridges into mentorship.

Most notably, the Nexus developed a **Program Finder Tool** to connect youth with the right mentor for their needs.

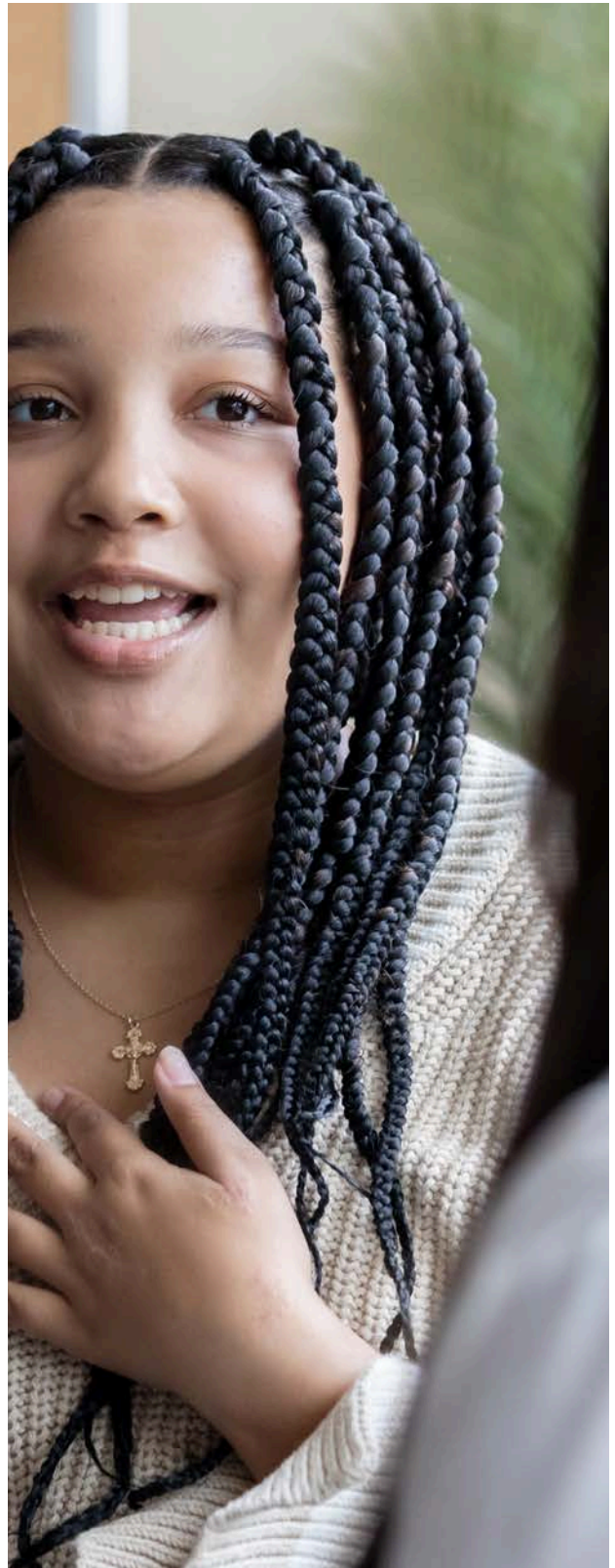
The Nexus spearheaded three impact studies testing different strategies for improving how DCFS youth can be connected more effectively with mentors. Twelve carefully vetted, trauma-informed mentorship agencies participated in relationship building with DCFS, expanded referral tracking, and resource fair tests, yielding the referral of 125 youth to mentorship support.

The Nexus and the Center also continued to support coordination among nonprofit and County partners around sustainability and best practices, including alignment with other DCFS transition-age youth and referral efforts, Dept. of Youth Development Networks, Office of Child Protection peer mentorship and sustainability analyses, and Horizons 32k workforce initiatives.

Lastly, but importantly, the Nexus, through the leadership of the Alliance for Children's Rights, has pursued these efforts hand-in-hand with youth with lived experience, hiring and supporting youth to guide the Nexus' advocacy and program efforts.

Many thanks to our Nexus funders!

Anthony Pritzker Family Foundation
Dept. of Youth Development
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation



And Still We Rise

The challenges we face are real, and they are significant.

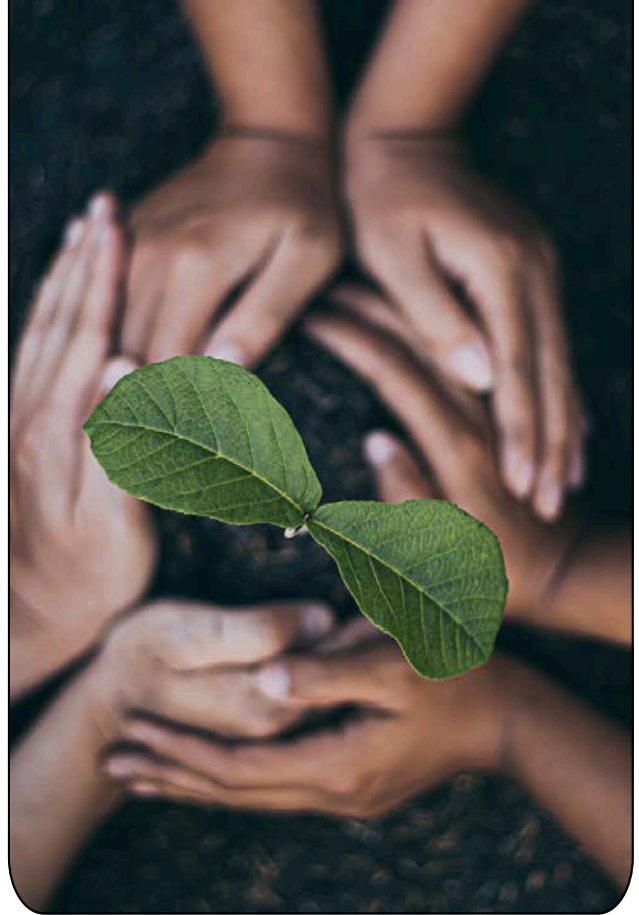
But so is our capacity to meet them.

Over the past year, we've seen government agencies adapt with flexibility, nonprofit organizations stretch resources to meet emergency needs, families open their hearts wider in times of crisis, and young people lead with wisdom.

Years of partnership have created something durable—a supple collective able to weather the unforeseen *and* stay the intended course. Crisis response and strategic innovation draw from the same collaborative infrastructure; even as we address immediate threats, our foundational work moves forward.

Foster Together Network still exists because we believe that our shared commitment to children and families is stronger than any single challenge we might face—what once was a mission now encompasses our shared lived experience.

With our current partners and those to come, we look forward to the positive impact our work will have on the youth and families we serve as we venture into 2025-2026...*together*.



THANK YOU!

**ANTHONY PRITZKER
FAMILY FOUNDATION**

**DAVID BOHNETT
FOUNDATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT**

**CONRAD N. HILTON
FOUNDATION**

**SPECIALTY FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

*Without whose financial
support
none of this would have been
possible.*

