



Covid 19- Ad Hoc Report on Childcare in Sonoma County

During the Sonoma County wildfires, power shut-offs, more wildfires, and then Covid-19- The entire sector of childcare has been affected. The Covid-19 Ad hoc has researched, analyzed data and reports, interviewed, and hosted a Childcare Radio show with top experts in Childcare. The interviewees are top leaders in Sonoma County including the following: Chair and 5th District Supervisor-Lynda Hopkins, Executive Director of 4Cs of Sonoma County-Melanie Dodson, CA Statewide Organizer Parent Voices-Mary Ignatius, Policy Director for 4Cs of Sonoma County-Lara Magnusdottir, CEO of California Parent Institute- Robin Bowen, Fifth District Commissioner- Jessica Wood, Director of Educational Services Sonoma County Office of Education- Charles Wilson, and Executive Director of First Five Sonoma County- Angie Dillion-Shore. The Ad hoc has attended the First Five monthly meetings, attended any and all 4Cs Zoom meetings and the Economic Development Board's Childcare Impact Panel of 2021-Economic Perspective. It has been our top priority to find out any and all information regarding childcare during Covid-19 in Sonoma County.

The Ad hoc asked the following questions during interviews

- 1) What do you see as the most immediate need in child care in Sonoma County/your area? Who do we contact for more detailed information? Is childcare just for the vulnerable population or what about the general population?
Are there enough child care facilities to meet the needsof working parents?
- 2) Why do you think there are still unserved or underserved populations in this county?
Knowledge? Fear?
Transportation? Why the disparity? If we have the funds and the social network to provide?
- 3) What are the parents' concerns about child care now more than before? Is it more than pre Covid? Before the fires? Describe or does Covid and fires just make it worse?
- 4) Are there child care deserts in Sonoma County? What about undocumented population? Or non-English speakers? Who looks after them? How does poverty impact availability? How does mental health concerns impact child care and child safety?
- 5) What about the child care providers? Support for them? Financial and physical? Staff training, certification? Recruitment? Supervision? Support?
- 6) What are your recommendations for policy and funding and outreach to underserved/vulnerable communities that we don't currently serve?
- 7) Legislation pending that we can support?

Key Findings

- ❖ **There are 1,493 Children who are waiting on the CEL (Central eligibility List) for subsidized childcare.**
- ❖ **Found out that Covid-19 was the straw that broke the camel's back in childcare family center**
- ❖ **Sonoma County has had 5 years of disasters and it all has impacted childcare**
- ❖ **In the Tubbs fire, 2017-14 childcare facilities were closed down**
- ❖ **As of March 2020, there was a total of 608 licensed/family owned childcare centers**
 - **NOW there are only 396 operating and serving at 45% capacity**
 - **217 childcare centers have closed down but may reopen**
 - **42 childcare centers have CLOSED PERMANENTLY**
 - **57% of childcare slots have been lost**
 - **CEL (Central Eligibility List) has 1,493 kids waiting to have childcare**
- ❖ **Current parents with childcare vouchers cannot use them as there is only a certain amount of spots available.**
- ❖ **First Five, Community Foundation and Chamber of Commerce invested \$400,000 to help childcare small businesses with grants of up to \$8,000 to keep their doors from closing.**
- ❖ **Childcare Deserts are found in Windsor, Geyserville, North County and in the undocumented families.**
- ❖ **Families throughout Sonoma County are mentally stressed out, don't have access to resources, children have been stuck at home**

Recommendations

- 1) Advocate and write letters of support for AB92
- 2) Follow Governor's budget and advocate for more state and local funding
- 3) Share the importance of childcare
- 4) Support 4Cs of Sonoma County, First Five of Sonoma County, Parent Voices of Sonoma County
- 5) Write letters and speak to the Board of Supervisors to help with a local tax ordinance for childcare
- 6) Attend Parent Voices Stand for Children Day at the Capitol to advocate for childcare
- 7) Masterplan needs to be pushed forward at the state level.