Over the last five months, it has become painfully clear that our child care structure is collapsing under the weight of COVID. The child care structure was already unstable due to years of increased costs to provide care, matched with inadequate financial supports and resources for providers caring for our most marginalized children. Rising costs of care are especially amplified in a region with such high costs as Puget Sound. For parents with ample resources, securing child care is a challenge – for parents working multiple jobs to live in this region, commuting long hours, and needing child care that costs less than 75% of their income…almost impossible. This is not a sustainable system, and we have seen it unravel further since March.

Public and private philanthropy, as well as community organizations, have been scrambling to find ways to sustain child care so that children in need of a safe, consistent, and quality early learning experience – in the midst of COVID – would have a place to go. This includes children of essential workers, parents with no choice but to go to work, and the most significant segment needing child care…no surprise…school aged youth without school. As we near Fall, the crisis will only increase.

At Child Care Resources, our coaches and trainers have heard first hand from providers what they need: a lifeline to keep their doors open and the supplies necessary to meet public health requirements. Well, we have delivered these supplies...
to over 1,000 providers and continue to. But it is the lifeline that we’re equally concerned about.

In May, the Department of Children, Youth and Families provided relief grants to child care providers across the state. This was a great start, though the most marginalized providers faced many challenges in accessing these funds and CCR dedicated a lot of staff time to supporting providers in overcoming the obstacles put in front of them. Since March, CCR has been raising dollars to create our own provider relief fund to be able to support providers in this marathon of COVID. Through the commitment and partnership of local foundations, we have raised $420,000. A significant portion of those dollars came from the Seattle Foundation in their Phase II of COVID funding. This success was largely due to our early involvement in the Public Health Pandemic Community Advisory Group. This group is now shifting to more of a community led approach and we have been asked to sit on the Community Executive Committee which will be directing the next iteration of this collaborative effort. Other funding partners include the Bamford Foundation, Sheng-Yen Lu Foundation, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, and Norcliffe Foundation. In addition, we are partnering with First 5 FUNdamentals in Pierce County to disseminate $500,000 of Pierce County, Dept. of Human Services, CARES dollars to providers, bringing the effort to almost 1 million dollars.

We are continuing to meet with providers formally and informally to gather information about what they need, what dollar amounts would be meaningful to them, and how to create a simple, barrier-free process to apply, receive and spend the funds. We are humbled by the trust of our community to disburse these dollars and the support for our child care structure. While we pursue longer term, system wide, and sustainable solutions for child care, we cannot let the supply of care we have today be compromised any further.

We enlist you to please join us in our efforts! To contribute to this fund please reach out to us at: getinvolved@childcare.org

Pierce County Allocates CARES Act Dollars to Child Care

We are thrilled as an early learning community that $2 million is dedicated to child care and will be invested in two programs - a child care voucher system for families and relief grants for providers.

Click here to read the press release about our work with Pierce County and First 5 Fundamentals.
Child Care Resources is proud to be included in the Phase 2 Childcare grants provided from the COVID-19 Response Fund, hosted by Seattle Foundation. This allows CCR to provide critical services to our community, especially those hit hardest by the outbreak. Click here to read the announcement.

1. What are you currently working on?
All sorts of fun things! It’s a moment of intense change and growth at CCR. Some of those opportunities come from CCR’s great work over the years and others have been dropped in our lap by a pandemic. On a day-to-day basis, this means helping Phoebe, the leadership team, and the Board think through budgetary and strategic decisions to maximize our mission to give every child a great start in school and life, not just today but for years to come.

2. What is your favorite part of your job?
Easy: the staff. CCR runs on the love and commitment that staff in every role give to our children and our communities. I learn so much from each one of them and the work they do—one of my personal goals for my term as Chair is to better get to know the entire staff and help the Board connect more holistically with the folks at the front lines of CCR's work.
3. What has been a recent challenge in your work?

Anti-racism, and the work of actively identifying and dismantling it, is laid out explicitly in CCR’s Mission Statement. That’s really exhilarating and inspiring work, but there’s no one playbook or clear finish line to it. It’s work that must be done in all spaces, on all fronts, at all times—that can be daunting to me but is another area in which CCR staff set an inspiring example. Daunting is good though. If our work for equity and justice isn’t challenging us, then we aren’t doing enough.

4. What was your favorite book or game as a child?

My mom tells me my absolute favorite book was “Tootle,” about a little train who got fed up following instructions and jumped the tracks to rollick around meadows with horses, upsetting the townsfolk. Tootle ends up learning about rules and gets back on the tracks, eventually teaching other trains the importance of “Staying on the rails no matter what.” I hope that book gets reissued with a better ending. Tootle, if you’re out there, go get your meadow. Build your own damned rails.

5. What is one cool thing that most people don’t know about you?

I’m in charge of food service in our house; while I enjoy it, mostly I’m an aggressively average chef. But bring me a whole Ahi tuna and two hours and I can change your outlook on life.

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SURPRISE ZOOM CALL FROM SEAHAWKS

Two CCR staff members, Nayeli Mercado and Fajar Farimin, were honored by the Seattle Seahawks as community heroes for going above and beyond during the COVID-19 crisis. Nayeli and Fajar each received 2020 season game tickets and a surprise zoom call from a Seahawks player! Click here to watch the video.
MEET NAYELI MERCADO
INFANT TODDLER SERVICES LEAD

1. What are you currently working on?
We are working on continuing to innovate the services we provide not only to child care providers but families as well, by trying to facilitate the relationship gap between providers and families, because both are within the child’s microsystem of impact; and we want to acknowledge and bring attention to the fact that the family is their child’s expert.

2. What is your favorite part of your job?
That I get to be in conversations and collaborations not only internally but also with our external partners in both Pierce and King Counties. That my position allows me to be part of creating equitable systems that can have a great impact on providers, families, but most importantly our children.

3. What has been a recent challenge in your work?
I think currently one of the challenges has been having not only to relocate my day-to-day work to my home, because of the pandemic, but also to think outside the box of how I can be in community with the team I support, my colleagues, CCR and the community of providers and families we serve.

4. What was your favorite book or game as a child?
Growing up I do not think there was a “book,” when thinking about stories, and the significance of storytelling as part of not only my childhood but my culture, the my memory that I treasure, is of my Great Grand-Mother, Doña Otilia, sharing her experiences as a young girl growing up during the Mexican Revolution [1910-1920], and how that experience not only shaped who she was but it influenced the values she instilled on the generations to come.

5. What is one cool thing that most people don’t know about you?
Culture is shared through stories, through actions, through the doing. My great grandmother taught my grandpa, my grandpa taught my mother, and my mother taught me, the art of Papel Picado, [traditional cut paper art, it is mainly used to decorate the Day of the Dead altars, representing the Element of the Wind].
1. What are you currently working on?

For the past several months I have been part of the Mental Health/Behavioral health specialized group within CCR to respond and support our CCR community in dealing with this pandemic. I am also currently working on rolling out the Mental Health Consultation program at CCR. Our program goal is to strengthen the capacity of staff, families, programs and systems to promote optimal social and emotional development, and to prevent, identify and reduce the impact of mental health challenges among children and families.

2. What is your favorite part of your job?

When I was in the classroom I always found joy in interacting with the children, especially infants and toddlers at the sites. Currently, my favorite part of the job is to see and listen to our early learning community (Families, Providers, Coaches, Professionals) come together to support children and families in this time of hardship. There is so much strength in our community and it is so refreshing to see communities helping and supporting each other.

3. What has been a recent challenge in your work?

Direct connection and face to face interaction with the children, the providers and our CCR community. While the technology has been so helpful in maintaining our communication and connection with each other, I still miss the time that I could actually be physically “present” and just “being” with my community.

4. What was your favorite book or game as a child?

Is singing and dancing considered a game? As a child, singing and dancing always brought me happiness. As a teacher, I brought singing and dancing to the classroom to bring joy to the children and as an adult, singing and dancing never failed to lift up my spirit.

5. What is one cool thing that most people don’t know about you?

Teaching and education has always been a part of my background. Both my parents are (retired) teachers, and some of my siblings are still teaching. My dad ended up opening his own school and the house that I grew up in is located right in the back of the school. Since a very young age, I was surrounded by students, teachers and families who come together to pursue learning and education to enrich their lives and to make the world a better place to live.

Fajar (middle row, 2nd from the right) and his family