



CHILD CARE AWARE® OF AMERICA

# Strategic Plan

## 2023 - 2025

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# Overview of the Planning Process

Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) is at a critical inflection point where the organization seeks to strategically position itself in the wake of multiple social, economic and health crises that upended the lives of children and families across the country. Given this important moment, CCAoA has engaged in a transformative strategic planning process, leading the field forward and continuing to center diversity, equity and inclusion in its work.

The goal of this planning process was to both expand CCAoA's ability to advance its mission and to deepen its commitment to focus on the lived experience of families struggling to access high-quality, affordable and accessible child care. It was critical for CCAoA to authentically connect with and enlist staff, members and other stakeholders, and center parents and families as partners, while ensuring cohesion and strategic alignment of the organization's direction.

To ensure its focus on parent voice, CCAoA partnered with Community Wealth Partners to facilitate a Parent Listening Team. This group of 15 parent leaders represented the diverse spectrum of families across the nation while prioritizing the voices of those that faced the greatest personal barriers to accessing affordable, quality child care in their communities.





Drawing on their lived experience, personal connections, relationships and resources, the Parent Listening Team surveyed and interviewed over 500 parents/caregivers to answer the question they most wanted to ask: “What are the greatest barriers to quality child care for those who have been historically marginalized and systematically denied access to it?” As a result of their work, the Parent Listening Team provided a recommendations report that will be central to our push for quality child care in the years to come.

In parallel, a group of staff and board members (including Child Care Resource and Referral agency representatives) formed a Strategic Action Group to guide the planning process. This group focused on the inclusion of staff and all partner voices in pushing forward four key strategic initiatives determined to be priorities for the strategic plan:

1. Advance policies that demand quality child care for all.
2. Influence and architect the national infrastructure that delivers quality, affordable and accessible child care.
3. Deliver innovative thought leadership that transforms the field of child care.
4. Strengthen CCAoA's Human Capital and Organizational Excellence.

The following strategic plan is a result of the recommendations from the Parent Listening Team and the work of the Strategic Action Group who together charted our path forward for the next three years.





## Strategic Initiatives

CCAoA is a learning organization. We are on a journey, and we are committed explorers in search of meaningful actions embodied in our strategic planning and implementation process.

The **equity commitments** listed below are in pursuit of putting diversity, equity and inclusion at the center of all our actions. This work will be imperfect in language and process, which is why we will ensure the voices of those who experience injustice in the most basic forms are partners, leaders and decision makers in service to our mission and vision. CCAoA is positioned to do this and will rise to the occasion in advancing these strategic initiatives.

A young child with dark hair is focused on playing with a wooden shape-sorter toy. The child is wearing a light-colored, patterned shirt. The toy is a wooden box with various shaped holes (circle, triangle, square) and corresponding wooden blocks. The child is holding a square block, ready to insert it into the square hole. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting.

# Strategic Initiative 1 – Demanding Quality

**Child Care Aware® of America will advance policies that demand quality child care for all through the following actions:**

- Advocate for public and private investment to ensure families have access to high-quality, culturally responsive and inclusive child care that centers the whole child experience.
- Mobilize and grow advocacy networks and elevate the voices of communities that are routinely marginalized and underserved.
- Champion policies that equitably compensate and respect the child care workforce and profession.
- Implement quality standards, backed by research and data, that honor family voices as experts and leaders on the needs of their children and families (examples prioritized in **Parent Listening Team Report** include safety, communication and training standards).

**We will move forward the following equity commitments throughout this initiative by ensuring:**

- Families have choices of quality programs that are culturally responsive and economically accessible.
- All children, especially Black and Brown children and children living in poverty, have access to quality child care.
- The child care workforce is respected, compensated and honored in the work they do for children and families.

*“As one of the few families of color living in our community, I’ll never forget going around to different daycares and preschools. The looks on the teachers’ faces when I asked what they have for training were astonishing. But that became my question because I walked in being judged.”*

**(41-year-old mother of two in Shelburne, NH)**

## Strategic Initiative 2 – Building Systems

**Child Care Aware® of America will influence and architect the national infrastructure that delivers quality, affordable child care through the following actions:**

- Be the national voice of collective knowledge, learning and training that facilitates child care systems building.
- Position Child Care Resource and Referral agencies as a collective force, cooperating to provide data, expertise and programming that families, providers, communities and governments can rely on.
- Increase offerings and experiences, grounded in diversity, equity and inclusion, that build the capacity and competency of organizations and leaders who deliver child care services.
- Expand human-centered products, services, tailored tools and technology systems that advance the child care industry's societal, economic and digital needs.

**We will move forward the following equity commitments throughout this initiative by ensuring:**

- A network of strong, diverse and inclusive organizations that reach every community.
- Leadership that reflects the communities they serve.
- An infrastructure that promotes equitable and just practices that support the potential of every child.

*"Funding is needed, more centers need to be opened. Local news is shining a light on the child care crisis. There's a labor shortage across the board, but for people to be able to go back to work, they need child care. People without kids need to know about this too. I think it boils down to money and funding."*

**(Pre-K teacher and mother of two in Springfield, MO)**



# Strategic Initiative 3 – Transforming the Field

**Child Care Aware® of America will deliver innovative thought leadership that transforms the field of child care through the following actions:**

- Prioritize quality, innovative and comprehensive research and data collection that is centered in family, child care provider and community experiences.
- Activate and implement policy, practice and research solutions from our findings that dismantle barriers to child care equity.
- Forge strategic partnerships to influence and innovate child care solutions and shape a vision for the future.
- Expand our role as lead expert and authority on the design, implementation and evaluation of child care systems – including military, state systems, education and health and human services.

**We will move forward the following equity commitments throughout this initiative by:**

- Supporting policies, practices and systems that uncover and dismantle systemic racist practices.
- Continuously learning from and **with** communities we serve and support.

*“We need educators who are trying to understand family dynamics better [rather] than judging parents and children”*

**(Mother of five in Las Vegas, NV)**



# Strategic Initiative 4 – Strengthening our Organization

**Child Care Aware® of America will strengthen human capital and organizational excellence through the following actions:**

- Continue to be a Great Place to Work, where diversity and inclusion are celebrated and where staff are respected, well-trained and equitably compensated.
- Improve processes, resources and systems by investing in human-centered delivery.
- Strengthen organizational equity through internal alignment and collaboration among individuals and teams.

**We will move forward the following equity commitments throughout this initiative by:**

- Allocating resources toward diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that are informed by staff experience.
- Cultivating a culture that continually challenges assumptions and revising our policies, practices and processes so that everyone feels valued, respected and has a sense of belonging.

*The Parent Listening Group was asked what success would look like five years from now and one of their responses was: “**Child Care Aware® of America is a household name:** every family and parent of a young child is aware of the supports available to them and can easily access those supports. CCAoA is positioned perfectly as the leader in all things child care, and they successfully share that leadership.”*

# Acknowledgements



Our deepest appreciation to the leaders of this strategic planning process for guiding Child Care Aware® of America's path forward. The collective voice and leadership of parents, staff and Board ensured our strategic plan is responsive and relevant to the needs of those we serve, and we are grateful to each of you!

## Parent Listening Team

Akua Danqua  
Anthony Swartz  
Ashley Dines  
Asia Crowfield  
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Christina Romero  
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Hannah Wingo  
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## Strategic Action Group Members

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## 2022 Board of Directors

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Taran Schneider  
Terri Helms

*\*Also on the Strategic Action Group*

*\*\*Strategic Action Group Initiative Leaders*



# About Child Care Aware® of America

Child Care Aware® of America is our nation's leading voice for child care. CCAoA works with state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and other community partners to ensure that all families have access to quality, affordable child care. CCAoA leads innovative projects that increase the quality and availability of child care, and advance the early childhood education profession. CCAoA also conducts research, and advocates for child care policies that foster equity and improve the lives of children and families.

To learn more, visit [childcareaware.org](https://childcareaware.org).

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