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Reinvent vs. Rebuild: Let's Fix the Child Care System

By Louise Stoney

The child care industry was already facing serious sustainability challenges when COVID-19 stopped our nation in its tracks. As our leaders struggle to ensure that first responders are able to work, public and private funders are making dollars available to shore up the child care industry. The scramble to get recovery funding to child care businesses quickly means that these dollars are not designed to address many of the structural problems that have plagued the sector for years. While recovery dollars are essential to ensuring that child care programs can continue to operate and re-open, for much of the sector, short-term recovery subsidy, grants or loans will, at best, only plug holes in the status quo.

Change is possible. With smart, strategic investments, recovery dollars can help re-invent the child care industry. [Opportunities Exchange](#) has been focused on ECE system reform for over ten years. This [issue brief](#) summarizes key lessons learned, identifies action steps that could be game changers for the field, and outlines how public and private sector leaders can champion a "Child

Care Come-Back Plan” that includes both short- and longer-term policy revision and investments.

COVID-19 has turned our world upside down. Coming back from the pandemic will not be easy for any business, and the sad truth is that many small businesses—including child care centers and homes—will not make it. Leaders in the early care and education sector need to forge a pathway forward that is strategic and focused on ensuring that high-quality programs, especially those serving vulnerable children and families, not only survive, but thrive. We can use recovery as an opportunity for change if we are guided by careful thinking and a pathway aimed squarely at results.

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