

Extraordinary Families Strategic Plan 2022-2024

Executive Summary

Extraordinary Families' vision for 2022-2024 brings together innovative strategies in youth services and enhanced community engagement to meet the unique needs of the children, youth, and families we serve. Grounded by our strong history of success, ExtraFam plans to amplify our impact by going broad and deep with our high-quality foster care and youth services. The next three years we intend to better serve more children and youth by decreasing their barriers, building up child-family bonds, and investing in our staff development. We will strengthen our ongoing commitment to equity and inclusivity in all we do. We will build partnerships with special interest groups and community partners to extend our reach within the community, and our leadership in child welfare will grow through this enhanced collaboration and visibility.

As a framework, ExtraFam is a small, specialized foster care, adoption, and youth services agency centered on the personalized approach. Our core values guide the culture and foundation of our organizational family — from our diverse Board and staff leadership to the intentional design of our programs, to our ongoing commitment to best practices of trauma-informed care. We are committed to child-centered policies and data-informed decision making to ensure sustainable operations for years to come.

During 2019-2021, ExtraFam continued to transform our foster care and adoption services to align with the Continuum of Care Reform's (CCR) ultimate goal of maintaining stable, permanent families for children. We exceeded reform standards by obtaining a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The agency encouraged organizational succession with the internal promotion of our Chief Executive Officer. ExtraFam also rose to the challenges of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, never closing our doors to those in need and nearly doubling our service outreach and support. We embraced a hybrid service delivery model to increase resource (foster) family recruitment, strengthen child-family case engagements, ensure child-family connections, grow our support groups, and provide safeguards for our transition-age youth to remain healthy, stable, and housed during this unprecedented crisis. Our commitment to our advocacy in child welfare was elevated at the local and state levels.

Today, as we look toward the future, it is only with sound infrastructure and investment that ExtraFam can rise to meet the challenges of our region with continued growth and success for the next three years.

Organizational Background

Mission: Our mission is to help children and youth in foster care to have the childhoods and futures they rightfully deserve.

Vision: Our vision is that every child, youth, and family in child welfare will have the ability to achieve their hopes, fulfill their dreams, and thrive.

Core Values: Dedication, Empathy, Integrity, Collaboration, and Justice.

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Philosophy: We put children and families at the center, considering their desires, values, and culture, and work alongside one another to achieve the best outcomes.

For more than 28 years, ExtraFam has been a leader in foster care and adoption in Los Angeles, joining thousands of children and youth with families, and as an advocate for child-centered policies. Our work consists of four primary efforts along a continuum of care: 1) training and supporting resource parents to care for children in the foster care system, 2) joining children with forever families through adoption, 3) supporting young adults with trauma and child welfare history as they transition into adulthood, and 4) advocacy and public policy to impact systemic change. We take tremendous pride in our work to reduce childhood trauma, encourage safety and stability, and empower children and youth to thrive.

Strategic Planning Process and Findings

Between April and October 2021, ExtraFam underwent a comprehensive process to assess relationships between its program model, fund development model, and operations model to achieve highest impact. This process involved staff, leadership, Board of Directors, constituents served, and external stakeholders. Feedback from a diverse pool of constituents played a critical role in the development of this plan. Under the direction of a Strategic Planning Committee – consisting of staff leadership and Board members – the process involved:

- landscape analysis: comprehensive scan of the field to identify trends and lessons to learn from high-performing peer organizations
- staff committee: eight staff members from ExtraFam participated in a series of six planning sessions
- Board committee: five board members and two leadership staff from ExtraFam participated in a series of three planning sessions
- surveys: staff, board, resource (foster) families, ambassadors, volunteers, donors, youth participants, and youth mentors provided feedback on ExtraFam culture, programs, strengths, and opportunities to influence the organization’s strategic direction and goals

Given the significant changes that occurred as a result of Covid-19 and the focus to plan for a sustainable future, the six-month strategic planning process was guided by the following core objectives:

- learn how ExtraFam sees itself now and in the future
- learn from high performing peers how to build sustainable, transformative organizations
- integrate learning from ExtraFam’s plan for change

Findings from the landscape analysis, staff and board committees, and surveys revealed important themes about how ExtraFam is perceived internally and externally, the role it plays in the larger child welfare community, its organizational strengths, and the most pressing challenges and opportunities.

Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities
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<p>High quality foster/adopt programs, family supports, reputation, and staff</p> <p>Strong stakeholder awareness of our ability to effectively recruit, train, approve and support resource families for children</p> <p>Ability to be nimble and adapt services to meet the needs of children and youth</p>	<p>Limited in-person activities during the pandemic left people feeling disengaged</p> <p>UP4Youth program needs more support and partnerships</p>	<p>Grow direct services by going broad and deep</p> <p>Nurture staff development and organizational culture</p> <p>Increase marketing and visibility to secure more private fundraising</p>
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Impact Goals

Based on the findings described above, five overarching impact areas with goals were developed, one for each core function of the organization. These goals serve as a high-level guide for expanding, deepening, and refining services in line with ExtraFam strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Foster Care and Adoption

This is the core of our work. Our unique approach is focused on finding families for children, not children for families. Our social workers take extra care to intimately know our prospective resource (foster) parents so we can match a child with a family that will help them thrive. We provide evidence-based training and use peer support groups to help new resource parents understand and address the unique traumas of children in foster care. Our work focuses on rebuilding the child-family bond - and including the resource family in those conversations - to promote and provide safe and thoughtful reunifications. In every way, shape, and form, our focus is on the child. The goal for the next three years is to go broad and deep with our foster care services so that children and youth remain safe and stable while under our care. Key initiatives include:

- Serve more children and enhance support for our youth
- Increase support for primary (birth) families
- Decrease barriers to mental health supports for children and families

Unlimited Possibilities for Youth

Youth aging/aged out of foster care are at a fragile crossroads – they are faced with the need to heal from their years of trauma while also being expected to live independently. Our work is to lift them up and empower them to become self-sufficient, thriving young adults. Our continuum of care model focuses on adult mentorship, helps to illuminate and develop strengths, provides education and employment supports, and offers relevant case management tailored to youth’s unique needs. The goal for the next three years is to enhance youth recruitment and services whilst building upon our core program pillars – resource coordination, education, employment, and mentorships. Key initiatives include:

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- Serve more transition-age youth
- Enhance youth programs and services
- Create a bridge with our youth programs

Advocacy and Collaboration

Our work on the frontlines – developing best practices and reducing childhood trauma – are impacted by policy. It is our role to advocate for policy that best complements the needs of our children, youth, families, and mentors. The goal for the next three years is to deepen connections with local changemakers and partner agencies in child welfare. Key initiative include:

- Influence public policy
- Build partnerships with interest groups to enhance our work

Philanthropy and Development

We have a solid track record of success, strong staff and board leadership, and an efficient, high impact organization – with 92% of revenue going directly to our high impact programs. By all accounts, every new partner and every new investment in our work serves to expand the impact we can make for children, youth, and families. General operating investments are of crucial importance to our work because they are flexible. The goal for the next three years is to strengthen our private fundraising and increase visibility in the community. Key initiative include:

- Raise more private revenue
- Expand community engagement – people, goods, and services
- Increase digital presence with compelling, sharable content

Culture and Operations

Grounded by our core values – Dedication, Empathy, Integrity, Collaboration, and Justice - we integrate cultural competence and respect into our daily operations. In order for our working environment to be (and feel) open and inclusive, we implement practices that remove barriers for people who may have felt excluded. We place an emphasis on person-first language in all our communications (internal and external) and encourage all staff to continuously participate in trainings and professional development. The goal for the next three years is to invest in our staff and operations, and continuously build towards authentic allyship and anti-racist practices in everything we do. Key initiative include:

- Improve staff recruitment and retention
- Enhance professional development and training
- Enrich diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts
- Enrich operations and business continuity

Strategic Plan Implementation

ExtraFam's leadership and Board of Directors play an active role in ensuring effective implementation of this plan through a special committee that meets regularly to monitor and assess progress, reporting quarterly to the full Board.

Go broad and deep with our high-quality foster care and youth services

Enhance support for children and families in foster care

- 105 children in care per month
- Secure partnership to join immigrant children with family members or sponsors in the US
- 90% of our children experience only one foster home while under our care

Enhance support for our transition age youth

- Support 95 youth each month
- 20% increase in adult mentor recruitment
- Provide bi-annual events for parenting youth

Decrease barriers and build child-family bonds

- 25% of resource parents open to caring for siblings
- Provide bi-annual events for primary (birth) families
- Co-locate mental health services and partner with mental health providers close to families

Build partnerships with interest groups and community partners

- Partner with interest groups to enhance our resource parent, youth, and mentor recruitment
- Partner with community and faith-based groups in Long Beach area to enhance service region

Invest in our team and those we serve

Enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts

- 70% of our staff and board have cultural and/or lived experience
- Enhance our equity committee work by employing DEI trainings and workshops across agency functions and hierarchy

Enrich staff training, professional development and retention

- More training to enhance competencies on other types of parenting (i.e., older children)
- Reduce staff turnover by 10% and increase retention
- Sustain a hybrid model of work

Raise private funds and increase visibility

Raise more private revenue

- Grow private revenue by 20% over a three year timeframe
- Expand corporate giving to 15% of private revenue
- Increase volunteer engagement and in-kind donations by 20%

Increase digital presence with compelling, sharable content

- Grow social media following and engagement by 25%
- Generate earned media attention to improve awareness of ExtraFam and our impactful work in child welfare.