

BRANDED CONTENT
APRIL 14, 2025

Child Wellness & WELFARE AWARENESS



IN TODAY'S FAST-PACED WORLD, THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF CHILDREN HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE CRITICAL — OR more complex. This special section of the Los Angeles Business Journal is dedicated to raising awareness about child wellness, a cornerstone of public health and a priority for families, healthcare providers, educators and policymakers alike. As health challenges evolve, staying informed on the latest trends, emerging research and innovative care models is essential.

Here, we take a closer look at the multifaceted landscape of pediatric health. From strategies for disease prevention and early intervention to the latest treatments and support systems for children facing illness, our curated articles offer insights from leading experts in medicine, public health and industry. We also spotlight how businesses and institutions are investing in child wellness, exploring initiatives that support both physical and mental health.

Whether you're a healthcare professional, business leader, or concerned parent, this section aims to equip you with the knowledge and inspiration to take action — because when we prioritize the health of our children, we invest in a stronger, more resilient future for everyone.

CHILD WELLNESS & WELFARE AWARENESS

Protecting Our Children

Every child deserves safety, a loving home and a future free from exploitation. But for many youth in crisis across Los Angeles County, those basic rights have been stripped away. The commercial sexual exploitation of children is not just a distant crisis – it’s happening here, in our own backyard.

Olive Crest, a leading nonprofit dedicated to preventing child abuse and strengthening families, is meeting this crisis head-on. With the opening of its new Youth Drop-in Center in southeast LA in the City of Bellflower in January, and another center on Figueroa Street in Downtown LA, Olive Crest is expanding its services and facilities to provide, safety, healing and hope to minors who have been sexually exploited.

THE UNSEEN CRISIS IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles is a hub for sex trafficking, with its sprawling geography and vast entertainment and tourism industries. Among those who are targeted are children who have experienced abuse, neglect and homelessness. Nearly 60% of children who are sexually exploited come from the child welfare system. Traffickers prey on these vulnerabilities.

“This is a silent epidemic,” said Diane Saunders, Olive Crest trustee. “Most people think trafficking as an international issue, but in reality, it’s happening in our backyards, schools and communities. And those being affected are our children and our neighbors.”

THE PREVENTION AND RESTORATION OF MINORS WHO HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY EXPLOITED (PROMISE)

Olive Crest’s response to child exploitation is both proactive and restorative. Prevention begins with strengthening families before a crisis occurs – providing parenting education, counseling, emergency support and safe housing to reduce factors that traffickers exploit.

For youth who have already experienced exploitation, Olive Crest offers specialized programs to meet them where they are at – with compassion, without judgment, and with a commitment to their long-term healing.

“Our approach is centered on relationships,” explained Annamarie Dachtler, executive director of Olive Crest in Los Angeles. “Exploited youth have been betrayed by adults. Trust doesn’t come easily. We focus on building caring connections over time.”

This philosophy underpins the launch of Olive Crest’s latest initiative: new youth drop-in centers and 24/7 rapid response teams, dedicated to youth impacted by exploitation.

A SAFE SPACE IN BELLFLOWER AND DOWNTOWN LA

Opened on January 7, 2025, the new Youth Drop-In Center in Bellflower, is the first of seven in Southern California that is designed specifically for young survivors of exploitation – many of whom have nowhere else to turn. The next drop-in Center will open in Downtown LA on Figueroa Street.

The Bellflower center is part of the new Children and Family Resource Center, which provides immediate resources like food, hygiene supplies, clothing and a safe space to rest. But more importantly, it offers something exploited youth rarely experience: unconditional care and support.

“The drop-in center is often the first safe space a young person encounters after life on the streets or in a situation where they are being exploited,” said Dachtler. “It’s a bridge between crisis and restoration.”

Here, youth can meet trauma-informed staff, access case management, and participate in life-



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ANNAMARIE DACHTLER
Olive Crest

skills workshops.

BUILT WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Youth Drop-In Centers represents a powerful collaboration between Olive Crest, local leaders, and private donor support who recognized the urgent need for these resources in our community.

“There was a gap in services for exploited youth in this region,” Dachtler said.

Local leaders including Los Angeles County Sheriff, Robert G. Luna and Los Angeles County District Attorney, Nathan Hochman, voiced their support for the project, citing the new centers as essential investments in the safety and well-being of our kids.

The center’s funding came from a blend of private funding including local foundation grants, corporate sponsors and individual donors committed to combating trafficking and supporting survivors.



A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Olive Crest’s work is a powerful reminder that the exploitation of minors is not just a law enforcement issue — it’s a community issue. Keeping kids safe is everyone’s business. And it takes a united effort from businesses, nonprofits, civic leaders and the community to address it.

“At Olive Crest, we know ‘Everyone Can Do Something. What’s Your Something?’ There is a role for everyone to play,” Dachtler emphasized. “Local businesses can provide employment opportunities for survivors. Donors can fund critical services. Volunteers can mentor or provide meals. Every contribution matters.”

As Olive Crest looks to the future, it hopes

to expand its prevention and restoration programs even further — especially as demand for services continues to rise.

“Our vision is a strong family for every child,” according to Olive Crest’s CEO Donald Verleur. “And until that day comes, we’ll keep showing up—with open arms and open hearts — for the kids who need us most.”

To learn more about Olive Crest’s work in the prevention and restoration of minors who have been sexually exploited, visit olivecrest.org/promise

For partnership opportunities or to donate, contact Yvonne Tejeda, at yvonne-tejeda@olivecrest.org or (562) 866-8956, ext. 6010.

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CHILD WELLNESS & WELFARE AWARENESS

Future of Parenting Report Reveals Key Trends for the Next Generation

The Bump, a leading community-centric resource for new and expecting parents, has unveiled its second annual “Future of Parenting Report,” offering an in-depth look at the trends shaping the evolving landscape of parenting. Featuring data and research from The Bump in partnership with WGSN Mindset, the report is structured around four key emerging trends: Cultural Celebration, Connected Parenting, Modern Wellness and Experiential Parenting.

“Parenting is evolving faster than ever, and this report highlights the major shifts in how families are raising the next generation,” said Jen Lee, head of marketing and content for The Bump. “Our data and research gives a raw look at how the realities of today’s society have created many new considerations for modern-day parents and demonstrates their thoughtful response in prioritizing cultural awareness, wellness and experiences-over-things, while also setting mindful boundaries with technology.”

KEY TRENDS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF PARENTING

CULTURAL CELEBRATION

Cultural parenting is shaping a more inclusive future, with 65% of parents actively seeking resources to teach their children about different cultures. Parents are becoming cultural teachers, sparking curiosity by celebrating differences and helping children find their place in a diverse world.

- Cultural education is a priority, with 78% of parents wanting their children exposed to more cultural diversity than they experienced growing up, and 90% emphasizing respect for cultural differences.

- Eighty-eight percent of parents believe children should learn about their cultural heritage, fostering early cultural pride, from choosing meaningful baby names to ensuring their children learn a second language (60%).

- Families are expanding their children’s horizons, from inclusive books and toys to international foods, museums and cultural events.

CONNECTED PARENTING – AI & TECHNOLOGY

With 77% of parents agreeing that technology is a valuable tool in caregiving, today’s parents are navigating a delicate balance of leveraging AI and technology to support education, creativity and connectivity, while also setting mindful boundaries to ensure a healthy lifestyle.

- Over two-thirds of parents believe that technology can foster essential skills such as problem-solving, social interaction and creativity, while 90% emphasize the importance of imagination and self-expression in early learning.

- The digital village is expanding. More than two-thirds use AI tools for caregiving, including voice assistants (60%) and educational apps (82%), and 69% of millennial and Gen Z parents prefer online advice over family input.

- While 68% of parents worry about technology’s impact on social skills, 82% actively monitor their child’s screen time weekly, reflecting a shift toward more mindful tech use.

- Many millennial parents, nostalgic for their phone-free childhoods, are enforcing screen time limits and creating tech-free family moments to ensure a healthy balance between digital and real-world connection.

WELLBEING AS A PARENTING PRIORITY

Now more than ever, wellness is a top parenting priority, with a growing emphasis on physical activity, nutrition and mental health. Amid rising concerns about adolescent anxiety, parents are embracing stress management, nutrient-rich foods and postpartum care to build lifelong healthy habits.

- Families are breaking stigmas, embracing



emotional expression, and turning to creative coping strategies like sensory-friendly spaces and toddler yoga, which has seen a 28% surge in online searches.

- Mind and body health are top priorities. Ninety-two percent of parents prioritize emotional well-being, and 68% focus on mental health awareness from an early age.

- With nutrition evolving, 90% of parents are focused on healthy eating, with a rise in probiotic-rich and microbiome-supporting foods for kids.

- Inspired by traditions like cuarentena — a 40-day period dedicated to rest, recovery and bonding — new moms are embracing wellness retreats, nourishing meals and holistic recovery practices, as postpartum support grows.

EXPERIENTIAL PARENTING

With 88% of parents believing experiences hold more value than material items, and 87%

stating that shared experiences strengthen family bonds, parents are replacing traditional consumerism with hands-on learning, immersive travel and outdoor activities, fueling the rise in “experience over things” movement.

- Unstructured play is making a comeback. In response to packed schedules, parents are embracing unstructured play, with 52% encouraging outdoor exploration and measured risk-taking.

- Outdoor adventures are on the rise, with 68% of parents taking their kids — even infants — on activities like hiking, skiing and rafting.

- Multigenerational travel is trending, with 76% of grandparents prioritizing family bonding and 67% of parents seeing their children become more curious about other cultures through travel.

Learn more at TheBump.com.

Study Identifies Potential Biomarkers to Predict SIDS Risk

Researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health have linked abnormal patterns of certain metabolites in infant blood samples to a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Although further research is needed to confirm the results, the authors say that the findings could potentially lead to ways to screen infants at risk of SIDS and help identify its causes.

The study was conducted by Chad M. Aldridge, D.P.T., MS-CR, Keith L. Keene, Ph.D., Fern R. Hauck, M.D., M.S., and colleagues at the University of Virginia. It appears in *eBioMedicine*. Funding was provided by NIH’s Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of an infant younger than one year of age that remains unexplained after a complete inves-

‘Our hope is that this research lays the groundwork to help identify — through simple blood tests — infants who are at higher risk for SIDS and to save these precious lives.’

tigation, including an autopsy, a death scene review, and complete family and medical histories.

To help identify potential causes and

risk factors for SIDS, researchers are leveraging scientific and technological advances. For example, metabolomics is the study of chemical processes involving metabolites, which are small molecules that play a role in metabolism. By using the latest analytical and computational techniques, researchers can identify patterns of metabolites in tissue samples and check if these patterns are associated with SIDS. However, prior studies conducting metabolomic analysis of SIDS cases were small, and their results have not been confirmed by larger studies.

For the current study, researchers conducted a metabolomic analysis on blood samples from 300 infants, including 195 classified as SIDS cases and 105 classified as other causes of death.

The researchers identified higher concentrations of certain metabolite biomarkers in samples from infants who died of SIDS, com-

pared to samples from the other infants. These included metabolites involved in nitrogen metabolism, lipid and fatty acid metabolism, stress response, nerve cell communication, hormone regulation and the body’s ability to detoxify free radicals (unstable oxygen compounds).

“The results of this study are very exciting. We are getting closer to explaining the pathways leading to a SIDS death,” said the study’s senior author, Dr. Hauck. “Our hope is that this research lays the groundwork to help identify — through simple blood tests — infants who are at higher risk for SIDS and to save these precious lives.”

The authors cautioned that more research is needed to determine if the metabolite patterns discovered in the study contribute to SIDS.

Learn more at NIH.gov.



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CHILD WELLNESS & WELFARE AWARENESS

Juice Consumption Before Six Months May Increase Cardiac Risks During Middle Childhood

Children who began drinking fruit juice before age 6 months were more likely than children introduced to fruit juice after age 12 months to have higher blood pressure and other signs of cardiac risk at ages 8 to 10 years old, suggests a study by researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other institutions. The authors called for additional research on how fruit juices and other sugar-containing beverages may affect children's cardiovascular risk.

The study was conducted by Priscilla Clayton, Ph.D. and Edwina Yeung Ph.D., of NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and their colleagues. It appears in *The Journal of Nutrition*.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Markers of heart disease often first appear in childhood and research suggests that beverages containing sugar, such as fruit juice and beverages with added sugar, could contribute to cardiovascular disease risk. Although 100% fruit juices contain vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, their overall sugar content and the types of sugars they contain is similar to beverages sweetened with sugar. Unlike whole fruit, 100% fruit juice is also low in fiber. In 2017, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that parents wait until after their child is 12 months of age before intro-

ducing fruit juice. Previously, parents were advised not to give their children juice before 6 months of age. However, many parents give fruit juice to children younger than 6 months of age.

For the current study, researchers analyzed data from the Upstate KIDS study, which enrolled more than 5,000 mothers and more than 6,000 infants. Parents reported their children's juice consumption on questionnaires when the children were 4, 8, 12 and 18 months old. The study authors classified juice introduction as occurring before 6 months, between 6 and less than 12 months, and 12 months and older. The authors compared age of juice introduction to the children's cardiovascular health records, which were taken during middle childhood, when the children were from 8 to 10 years old.

Roughly 18% of the children were introduced to juice before they were 6 months old, 52% between 6 and less than 12 months, and 30% at 12 months and older.

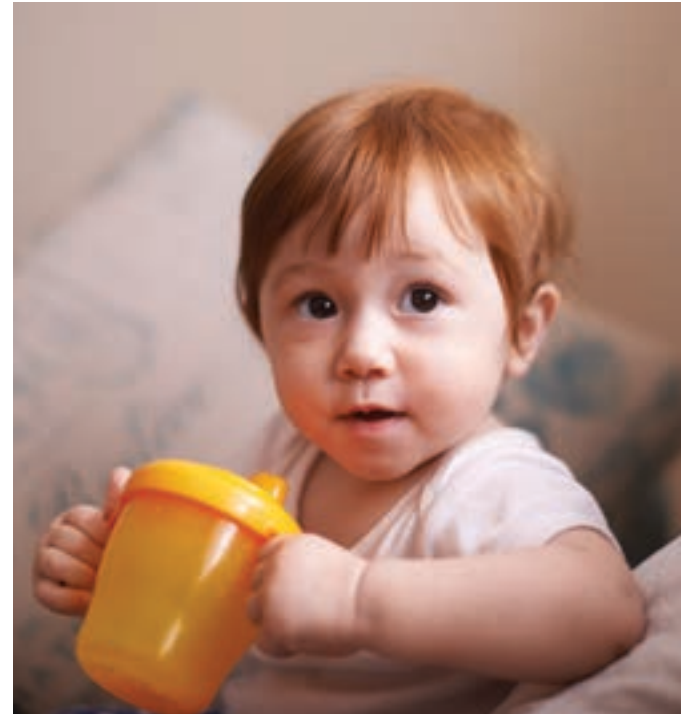
Children given juice before 6 months had an average systolic blood pressure reading that was 3.13 millimeters of mercury (mmHg) higher than the systolic blood pressure reading of children who first received juice at 12 months and older. Compared to children introduced to juice at 12 months and older, children first given juice before 6 months also had a faster heart rate, and higher arterial

pressure (the average pressure in a person's arteries from one heart-beat to the next).

Children introduced to juice between 6 and less than 12 months also had a heart rate that was 3.21 beats per minute faster than that of children first given juice at 12 months and older. However, the two groups did not differ significantly in blood pressure measures.

The authors concluded that introducing children to juice before 6 months of age was associated with higher systolic pressure, heart rate, and mean arterial pressure in middle childhood, all indicators of increased cardiovascular risk.




The authors called for future research on how different types of sugar-containing beverages, such as 100% fruit juice and juice with added sugars, may influence childhood cardiovascular risk factors.



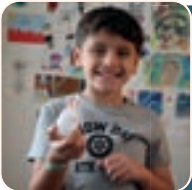
They also called for research on how age at juice introduction may interact with dietary preferences to influence cardiovascular risk.

Learn more at [NIH.gov](https://www.nih.gov).



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