

# RAPID-CYCLE RESEARCH

## Findings from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

### CONTEXT

To understand community responses to the pandemic and families' experiences accessing resources before and after the onset of COVID-19, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago conducted surveys and interviews with 244 families with toddlers, stakeholders in each community, and system leaders from three communities (Palm Beach County, Fla., Alameda, Calif., and Los Angeles County, Calif.) participating in the Evaluating Community Approaches to Preventing or Mitigating Toxic Stress study.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent is there a difference in the level and nature of social service and concrete resource needs experienced by families during the pandemic?
- In what ways did communities with prepandemic collaboration in health care and early childhood mobilize to meet family priorities and needs during the pandemic?

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Existing robust development of the core components aids local response to crises.



System strengths in the core components — purpose, governance, financing, and data — that existed prior to the pandemic can assist in communities' agility in the crisis. Where these core components prove mutually reinforcing, they can powerfully contribute to enhancing the timeliness and relevancy of information needed to guide decision-making in a crisis.

#### Widening gaps in family access to critical supports elevate the need to pay attention to the end user and equity.



Families reported that needs essential for survival — family emergency needs for money, food, housing, and health insurance — were lacking, despite significant federal investment in the economy and introducing substantial flexibility in distributing resources. Variation in unmet needs by community points to the importance of community-driven strategies even in global or universal crises.

#### Investing in aligning across sectors may improve future response to public health emergencies.



Infusing local investments in cross-sector alignment represents a critical aspect of the solution to meeting the needs of the community. Offering frameworks and infrastructure can assist in flexibly funneling supports to families with young children in future public health emergencies.

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