

We stand in the gap.  
We change the future.

We embrace the spirit of our name:  
we forge ahead,  
we find a way,  
whatever it takes.

## **Strategic Plan 2023–2028**





We began this strategic planning process as the world was emerging from one of the most disruptive periods of our lives. The pandemic was especially devastating for the most vulnerable children and families, including those in Wayfinder’s programs: people of color, low-income families and those with disabilities. We know that the road to recovery for our clients is not easy, but we are steadfast in our resolve to provide the expert support they need.

### The Process

In fall 2022, we launched strategic planning by taking stock of who we are as an organization, what distinguishes us from similar organizations and what we are most passionate about. In developing the plan, we drew upon insights from staff, board members, experts and community partners.

### Looking Back

COVID-19 and the related health, social and economic crises shook the world just one year into our last strategic plan. We responded nimbly and swiftly, ensuring that our programs ran without interruption. At the same time, we maintained focus on achieving our strategic goals. The prior strategic plan coincided with the end of Miki Jordan’s remarkable tenure as CEO and Jay Allen’s seamless transition into the role.

### Looking Forward

Jay became CEO on July 1, 2023. He has dedicated more than 20 years to Wayfinder, joining in 2000 as vice president of programs and serving most recently as president. The board of directors is thrilled that someone with his vision, commitment and integrity will steer Wayfinder into its next phase.

As we navigate the post-pandemic landscape, the only certainty is that things will be different and that Wayfinder is well-prepared to meet this moment. The five initiatives in this plan will keep Wayfinder on course: Expand Quality and Impact; Invest and Build Capacity; Strengthen Financial Sustainability; Advance Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility; and Enhance Governance.

As Wayfinder moves forward, we will continue meet the needs of the whole person through integrated, comprehensive services. On the facing page is an infographic that looks like the lens of a manual camera. This illustrates how our services can overlap or expand to meet a client’s individual needs. Our programs meet these needs in four key areas – health and well-being, educational success, economic opportunity and safety and resilience – which are the building blocks of human potential.

In the coming years of change, our partners and donors will continue to provide the vital assistance that helps Wayfinder meet the needs of children, adults and families facing complex challenges. Thank you for your generous support of our work!

Jay Allen, President and Chief Executive Officer  
 Glenn A. Sonnenberg, Board Chair  
 Elworth (Brent) Williams Jr., Immediate Past Board Chair





**OUR VISION** An equitable world in which every child and family has the opportunity to reach their full potential

**OUR MISSION** Wayfinder Family Services ensures that children, youth and adults facing challenges always have a place to turn.

**OUR VALUES** **Inclusive**  
We honor the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals. We strive to create a culture in which everyone is accepted and encouraged to fully participate.

**Empathetic**  
We seek to develop a deeper understanding of our children and families. We work to embed empathy into our decision-making, interactions, and actions.

**Collaborative**  
We can't do it alone and we must do it together. We work in partnership to address the holistic needs of children and families.

**Whatever it takes**  
We never give up. We will always be there for our children and their families.

**Innovative**  
We are agile and forward-thinking. We continually seek out better ways to help children and families thrive.

**Driven**  
We take every opportunity to move forward in our strategic direction and to create meaningful change.

**Family**  
We provide families with a supportive community and resources so they can thrive. We want every child to grow up in a loving family.





## What distinguishes Wayfinder from all the rest?

Wayfinder Family Services improves the health, well-being and quality of life for children, youth, adults and families who are facing difficult life and health circumstances. We are the only human services organization in California with specialized programs for 1) vulnerable children, youth and families and 2) individuals of every age with vision loss, or intellectual/developmental disabilities. We work beyond traditional silos and tackle the complex, intersecting issues faced by children and families. As Wayfinder Family Services, we stand in the gap and change the future, embracing the spirit of our name: we forge ahead, we find a way, whatever it takes.



## Five-year target

We believe that everyone deserves a safe haven, a loving family and a chance to thrive. Our goal is to meet the needs of at least 30,000 children, youth, adults and families across the state each year through comprehensive, promising and evidence-based practices; innovative programming; community-based prevention and intervention services; and collaboration across systems.



## The issues and trends that shape our strategy

**Upstream Intervention.** Preventing a health issue saves lives and costs less than downstream treatment. Upstream intervention, or primary prevention, addresses the social drivers of health, which are the underlying social and physical conditions that impact people’s lives and well-being.

**Health Inequity.** Even before the pandemic, low-income children and families of color, who make up most of Wayfinder’s clients, experienced disparities in access to health and mental health care. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these differences, and the long-term consequences continue to reverberate through Wayfinder’s programs and the social service sector.

**Mental Health.** The unfolding mental health crisis began before the pandemic. COVID-19 exacerbated the stresses youth already faced living in neighborhoods with minimal resources, leading the U.S. surgeon general to declare a “mental health pandemic” for youth. The impacts are especially severe for low-income Black and Latino children who are most of Wayfinder’s clients.

**Disproportionality.** Certain groups of children are overrepresented in the child welfare system: Black, Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, LGBTQ+, and those with physical, medical, developmental or mental health disabilities. These same populations are underrepresented in preventive programs and upstream intervention.

**Innovative Funding Approaches in Healthcare.** California has launched a multiyear plan to transform Medi-Cal so that it is more equitable, coordinated and centered on the whole person. California is investing in home- and community-based services in partnership with nonprofits and others to address the social drivers of health. Also, Medi-Cal and private insurers are shifting to value-based care, which reimburses providers for outcomes that improve quality of life.

**Partnerships.** No organization can do it alone. Wayfinder continues to cultivate deep partnerships with public agencies and private organizations to positively impact the ecosystem of human services. These partnerships across sectors are crucial to achieving meaningful impact for individuals and communities.

**Staff Wellness and Retention.** Staff wellness promotes retention, which is a critical issue across health and human services. Wayfinder, like other providers, must continue to focus on staff wellness and growth to retain our excellent staff.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

EXPAND QUALITY AND IMPACT

INVEST AND BUILD CAPACITY

STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

ADVANCE INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

ENHANCE GOVERNANCE





### EXPAND QUALITY AND IMPACT

Scale our impact to meet the needs of at least 30,000 vulnerable children, youth, adults and families across the state each year through promising evidence-based practices, innovative programming and collaboration across systems.

The stakes for California children, youth and families are high. California ranks 35th of all states in children’s overall well-being. Wayfinder is dedicated to meeting the complex needs of children, youth and families throughout California through comprehensive prevention and intervention services. Our services are needed now more than ever, and we are determined to do whatever it takes to bring our high-quality services to more communities throughout California.

### GOALS

1. Launch at least five new promising and evidence-based, trauma-informed services that address the social drivers of health.
2. Deliver high-quality programs in more counties between San Diego and Sacramento.
3. Further integrate Wayfinder’s core programs and services to increase client access and deliver comprehensive services in every region.
4. Work in partnership with trusted community providers and leaders to strengthen the social service ecosystem in the state.
5. Consider merger or acquisition opportunities.

### INVEST AND BUILD CAPACITY

Invest in the people, systems, processes and practices that promote organizational excellence and agility.

Investments in people, systems and spaces are necessary for an organization to thrive. We will ensure we have a strong, resilient workforce and the infrastructure to make a lasting, positive impact on the communities we serve. As a high-impact organization, Wayfinder will continue to thrive by preparing for change and responding nimbly to shifts in the sector and world around us.



### GOALS

1. Enhance the employee experience by investing in staff wellness, growth and development.
2. Determine the highest and best use of real estate and locations.
3. Invest in data and technology infrastructure to support program and operational design, planning and implementation.





## STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Optimize existing and emerging revenue streams to fund the vision of Wayfinder Family Services now and into the future.

Wayfinder will continue to fortify its financial stability in order to have maximum impact on the people we serve. The organization has stewarded funds wisely and pursued diversified opportunities to support our life-changing work. While strengthening financial stability, we will always seek funding that advances our mission and vision, and benefits children and families.

## GOALS

1. Invest in a strong, sustainable fundraising program in California.
2. Maximize operational efficiencies across the organization.
3. Maximize our public partnerships, contracts and reimbursement rates. Ensure rates contribute to financial sustainability.
4. Leverage new public-sector funding opportunities that advance whole-person care.

## ADVANCE INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Integrate the values of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility into all aspects of the organization.

Advancing IDEA has been at the heart of our work throughout our 70-year history. Working together as a diverse group – with different points of view, perspectives, lived experience and backgrounds – is an integral part of our success. Wayfinder will expand opportunities and make certain that individuals feel respected and valued while being their authentic selves.



## GOALS

1. Continue to align board composition and governance to reflect the principles of IDEA.
2. Implement business practices and policies that reflect Wayfinder's commitment to IDEA.
3. Provide staff from historically marginalized communities with opportunities for growth and leadership.
4. Train all staff in IDEA.
5. Ensure Wayfinder's programs are recognized as LGBTQ+ inclusive.
6. Leverage staff and client voice to drive program quality and improvement.





ENHANCE GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors of Wayfinder Family Services will be well positioned – today and into the future – to advance and accelerate the impact of Wayfinder Family Services.

The Board of Directors of Wayfinder Family Services is committed to positive social impact and the communities we serve. In addition, the Board of Directors values best practices in governance and interconnection among its members. The board is fully invested in Wayfinder’s mission and integral to the organization’s success.

GOALS

1. Conduct two of the four annual board meetings in person and include presentations from experts to help board members examine emerging trends and key issues in the sector.
2. Enhance the onboarding experience for new board members, including a new-member orientation and mentoring program.
3. Promote diversity and representation on the board by continuing to recruit new board members who reflect the demographics and life experience our clients.

LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERS

Board of Directors

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Vice Chair  
Linda Myerson Dean

Secretary  
Scott M. Farkas, Esq.

Treasurer  
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Immediate Past Chair  
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Jean Minton (Co-Chair)  
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Anna San Juan  
Dave Wraa

Senior Leadership Team

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President and  
Chief Executive Officer  
  
Dawn Vo-Jutabha, PhD  
Executive Vice President and  
Chief Operating Officer

Fernando Almodovar  
Executive Vice President and  
Chief Financial Officer

Blythe Cotton Maling  
Executive Vice President  
and Chief Philanthropy and  
Corporate Affairs Officer

Carmen Garcia  
Executive Vice President and  
Chief People Officer

Donna Roberts  
Senior Vice President and Chief  
Administrative Officer

Allison Burdett  
Vice President, Visual  
Impairment and Developmental  
Disabilities Services

Senior Leadership Team (cont.)

Sugey Dominguez  
Vice President, Finance and  
Accounting

Carol Ramirez  
Vice President and Chief Program  
Officer

Ani Sargsyan, LCSW  
Vice President, Quality, Risk and  
Performance Improvement

Tony Weaver  
Vice President, Clinical and Housing  
Services

Key Experts and Partners

Richard Louis III  
Vice President - West Region  
Open Minds

Lee Nasehi  
President & CEO  
VisionServe Alliance

Brandon Nichols  
Director  
Los Angeles County Department of  
Children & Family Services

Jeff Schaffer  
President  
JMC Philanthropic Services

Joe Xavier  
Director  
Department of Rehabilitation





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