



**DULCE**  
An initiative  
of CSSP

# DULCE OVERVIEW

Developmental Understanding and Legal Collaboration for Everyone (DULCE) is an universal approach based in the pediatric care setting that proactively addresses social determinants of health, promotes the healthy development of infants from birth to six months of age, and provides support to their families. It operates through an Interdisciplinary Team — clinical staff, community systems leaders, and legal partners — that meets weekly to review family needs. DULCE is transforming the way families experience health care so that every child has a healthy start.

## WHAT WE WORK FOR



Stress in early life can have both short- and long-term effects on children's health and well-being, and on their parents. Many conditions contribute to stress, including poverty, inadequate housing, and lack of adequate nutrition. Unfortunately, these are more likely to impact families with low income, families of color, and immigrants.

The DULCE Interdisciplinary Team consists of a clinic administrator, legal partner, mental health lead, medical provider champion, early childhood systems lead, and Family Specialist. By creating a team of pediatric, legal, and early childhood providers, DULCE integrates traditionally siloed systems to reduce sources of stress for infants and families.

## HOW WE DO IT



DULCE bolsters family strengths through 6-month partnerships with families that include supporting parenting skills and parent-infant relationships, and proactively detecting needs and addressing social determinants of health.

Families develop a relationship with a Family Specialist, the linchpin of the DULCE model, who helps them navigate supports and creates the conditions for healthy development.

By prioritizing parent-identified needs, connecting parents to supports, and building trusting relationships—parents get the support they need to raise healthy children and advocate for their well-being.

## WHY WE DO IT



DULCE, an initiative of the Center for Social Policy (CSSP), is informed by CSSP's commitment to equity and journey toward becoming an anti-racist organization. CSSP works toward a just society in which all families and children thrive, and DULCE moves this agenda through systems changes that address the social determinants of health.

CSSP also works to recognize the social effects of race and believes that omitting a racial analysis from any work allows racist systems, laws, and policies to continue operating with the status quo. Just as equity is a core value of CSSP, DULCE strives to center equity in its work.

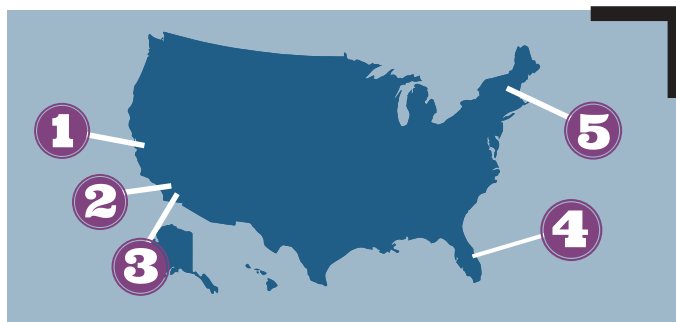
“We want to wrap you in as much as we can for the first 6 months of your baby's life so that you are as healthy as you possibly can be.”

DULCE Early Childhood Lead

## THE DULCE APPROACH

DULCE embodies a belief that all children and families should have the support they need for healthy development. The DULCE approach includes:

- An **existing community-based, early childhood organization** which coordinates care and brings together early childhood, legal, and health care experts to connect families to complimentary resources and support.
- **Well-trained, supervised Family Specialists.** A critical part of the primary care team, Family Specialists are trained in relational approaches to family-centered care and provide direct support, fostering a trusting relationship with families and building parents' confidence.
- **A team that honors families' needs and priorities.** Parents know their families best. The DULCE Interdisciplinary Team reviews cases weekly, problem-solves together, and ensures families are connected to services by working with parents on what their families need most.
- **A Legal Partner** integrated as a member of the DULCE Interdisciplinary Team. This helps children and families get the comprehensive services for which they qualify and improve the functioning of systems for the broader community.
- **Clinics located in communities that can benefit most.** All families in the clinic are invited to participate in DULCE. This universal approach minimizes stigma and recognizes that all families need support during this first phase of their child's life.



DULCE is in 13 sites across 5 communities, with partners across the health, legal, and early childhood sectors and plans to continue national expansion.

1. Alameda, California
2. Los Angeles, California
3. Orange County, California
4. Palm Beach, Florida
5. Vermont

## THE IMPACT OF DULCE

DULCE reaches hard to reach families. 98% of families choose to enroll in DULCE (Sege, R., Watson, D., and J., Chittick, 2019 APHA Abstract).

DULCE successfully implements Bright Futures health related social needs screening requirements (Floyd, B., et al. 2019 AAP National Conference and Exhibition).

DULCE catalyzes systems change. For example, integration of the Legal Partner into the primary care team led to MediCal reforms that improved timely access for infants in two California counties ([cssp.org/2019/01/dulce-medi-cal/](http://cssp.org/2019/01/dulce-medi-cal/)).

## WE KNOW DULCE WORKS

A randomized control trial published in *Pediatrics* found that DULCE resulted in:



Accelerated access to supports. DULCE families secured supports for which they were eligible at roughly twice the pace of control families.



Better completion rates for well-child visits and immunizations.



Reduced use of emergency room care by DULCE families.

## CONTACT US

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