As Child Care Faces a National Breaking Point, Leaders from D.C. and 40+ States Gather to Scale Solutions

TOOTRiS WINGS Summit 2026 will bring together 250+ Child Care leaders to share solutions, spark innovation and turn limited resources into greater impact



SAN DIEGO, CA, UNITED STATES, September 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- America's Child Care system is under mounting pressure as states and communities face tighter resources, rising costs and growing demand. Families need reliable care to remain in the workforce. Providers are struggling with the economics of delivering care. Employers need workers who can show up. And public agencies are under increasing pressure to make every dollar and partnership count.

Against that backdrop, more than 250 Child Care and early childhood leaders from over 40 states and Washington, D.C. will gather in San Diego September 14–16 for the 2026 WINGS Summit, hosted by TOOTRiS, the nation's largest Child Care platform. Attendance is expected to more than triple from last year's inaugural Summit.

Their focus: How can we turn limited resources into greater impact for children, families, providers and the workforce?

"The Child Care leaders coming to WINGS aren't waiting for someone else to solve this," said Alessandra Lezama, CEO of TOOTRiS. "They are on the front lines of a system under enormous pressure, finding new ways to stretch resources, connect partners, use technology and deliver better outcomes. WINGS brings that ingenuity together so we can learn from what's working and accelerate progress across the country."

Recent research underscores the challenge. Child Care Aware of America found that, in most states with available data, Child Care subsidy rates fall below both market prices and the actual

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> *Alessandra Lezama, TOOTRiS CEO*

cost of providing care. Meanwhile, 65% of children age five and under have all available parents in the workforce, according to the First Five Years Fund, reinforcing the connection between Child Care and the nation's workforce.

Throughout the three-day Summit, leaders from Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies, state Child Care systems, early childhood organizations and community partnerships will explore practical solutions around funding, employer partnerships, technology, AI, data, provider engagement and cross-sector collaboration.

They will also hear from experts whose careers have required solving extraordinarily complex problems under pressure, including Tom Rivellini, a former NASA/JPL engineer who helped pioneer the landing system that put Spirit and Opportunity on Mars; Captain Jim "Guido" DiMatteo, a veteran TOPGUN instructor and fighter pilot; and Brian Westpoint, an AI strategist and innovation leader.

A featured CEO conversation will bring together three of the nation's leading Child Care voices: Michelle Kang, CEO of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); Susan Gale Perry, CEO of Child Care Aware of America; and Alessandra Lezama, CEO of TOOTRiS. Together, they will examine innovation, technology and what comes next for Child Care systems nationwide.

Six Ideas. One Stage. More Than $10,000 at Stake:

The WINGS Innovation Awards will give six finalists the opportunity to pitch grassroots solutions addressing real challenges facing families, providers and communities. Summit attendees will vote to determine the winners, with more than $10,000 in funding and support available to help advance their work.
"Some of the most powerful innovation in Child Care is already happening inside communities," Lezama said. "WINGS gives those leaders a platform to share what they have learned and accelerate ideas that can make a difference far beyond their own backyards."

Chris Cate, President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, will welcome attendees to the region.

"A strong economy depends on working families having access to Child Care," said Cate. "San Diego is proud to welcome leaders from across the country who are working to strengthen the systems families and employers depend on. Bringing these leaders together creates an opportunity to share what works, build stronger partnerships and advance solutions that benefit communities nationwide."

The 2026 WINGS Summit will take place September 14–16 at the Coronado Island Marriott Resort in San Diego, California. For the full agenda and event information, visit the TOOTRiS WINGS Summit 2026 website.

About TOOTRiS
TOOTRiS is the nation’s largest Child Care platform that partners with employers, providers, government agencies, and Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) organizations to strengthen local Child Care ecosystems, amplify the impact of community-based initiatives, and make care more accessible, equitable, and sustainable — empowering parents, supporting providers, and fueling economic growth. Learn more at tootris.com

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