

“ Being guided by your
soul is a skill
taught by *children* to *adults*. ”

—Lisa Villa Prosen

 Children's
FORUM
...because kids can't wait

CHILDREN'S FORUM ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



The Children's Forum is hard at work to improve access to quality early learning programs for families with young children. It is beyond dispute that children with access to quality early education are better prepared to succeed in school and later in life.

I am thankful for our legislators and their support of transforming the state and the early education industry to make early learning more accessible and affordable for Florida's families.

Access also means getting the right care for each child's needs. The Forum is proud to administer Help Me Grow® Florida, which provides a centralized access point to support families through developmental monitoring, follow-up services, parenting information, and available community resources. Help Me Grow® Florida has connected 4,100 families to the services they needed.

The Forum is a key part of the ongoing and necessary transformation from "daycare" workers to "early learning educators." The Forum administers the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida, which increase the education, compensation and retention of the early learning workforce. Recipients of these programs qualify for increased pay and learn new skills to educate young children. We are honored to help thousands of educators as they learn and grow within their profession.

I can offer a personal story to show that access and high-quality early learning programs make all the difference. My wife and I recently adopted a charming 5-year-old. He had all the strikes against him — single mom in poverty, born on Medicaid, no involved father, and time spent homeless. But he is thriving in first grade and has a full future ahead of him. All the credit goes to the high-quality early learning experiences that he received at Early Head Start at age two and an excellent preschool in Tampa at ages three and four. He was Kindergarten-ready and is off to the races.

I know it is absolutely possible for every child in Florida to arrive at kindergarten ready for success. The Forum will be a key player in making that happen for every child. Together, let's work to strengthen Florida's early learning systems to make an impact at both a statewide and national level for many years to come.



Bob Buesing, J.D.
Board Chair

“ Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best they can possibly be. ”

—Rita F. Pierson

PROGRAMS OF THE CHILDREN'S FORUM 2022-2023

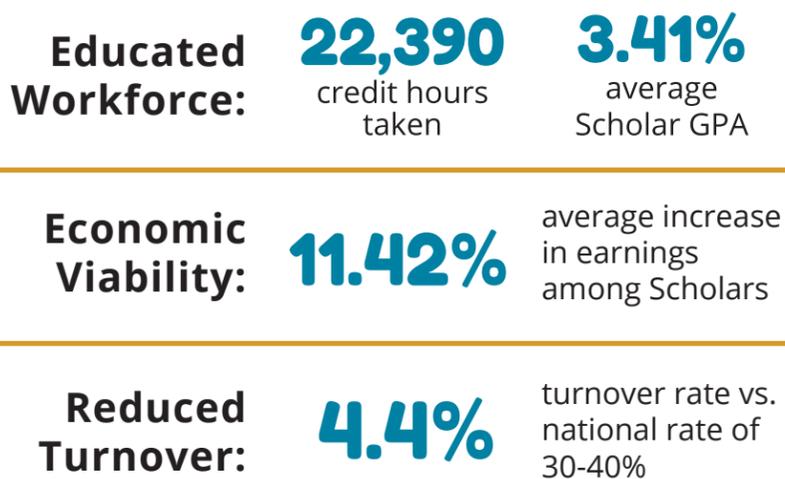
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (T.E.A.C.H.) is an evidence-based strategy that helps to establish a well-qualified, fairly-compensated, and stable workforce for Florida's children.

Funded by the Florida Department of Education - Division of Early Learning, T.E.A.C.H. is operated by the Children's Forum. T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships and additional supports for early learning educators, directors, and owners working toward early learning credentials, college credits, and degrees in early childhood education.

T.E.A.C.H. maintains a three-way partnership in which the early learning educator, the sponsoring program (the scholar's employer), and T.E.A.C.H. share the costs for classes, books, and study time away from work. Scholars earn a raise or bonus after the successful completion of an educational year and agree to work for at least one year with their sponsoring program.

Impact and Outcomes:

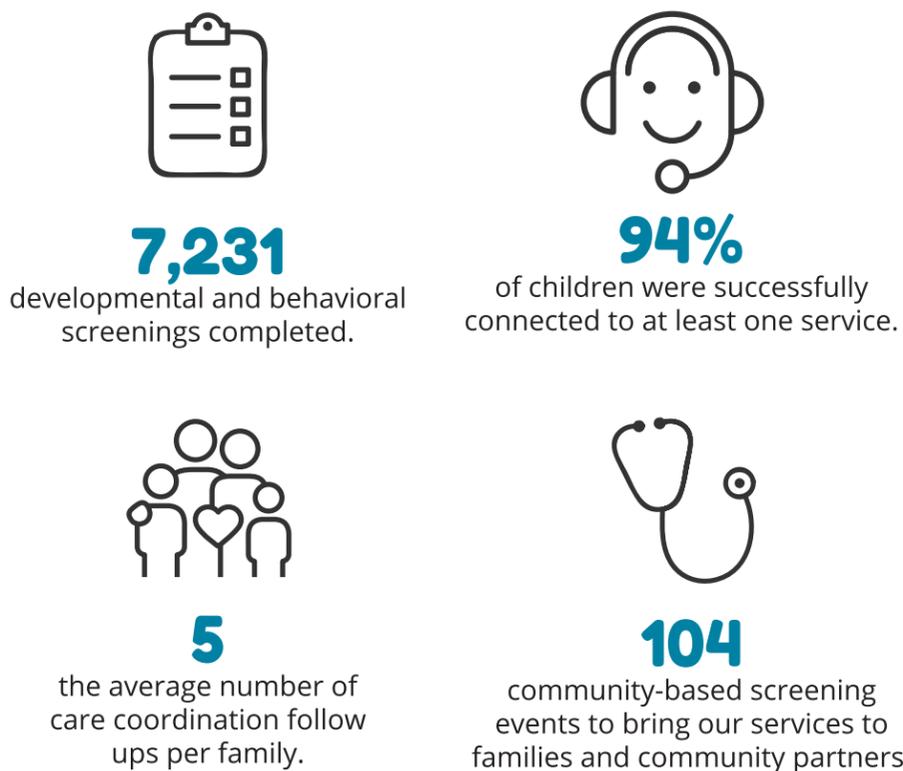


Help Me Grow® Florida

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) promotes the healthy development of all children by providing access to free developmental and behavioral screenings and connecting families to the resources they need to succeed. By building cross-sector collaboration among community agencies, child healthcare professionals, and early childhood educators, HMGF addresses the critical importance of early detection and intervention.

HMGF provides a centralized access point that supports families through developmental monitoring, parenting information, and available community resources. Since HMGF care coordinators continue to follow-up with families, HMGF can ensure that the needs of the family have been met.

Impact and Outcomes:

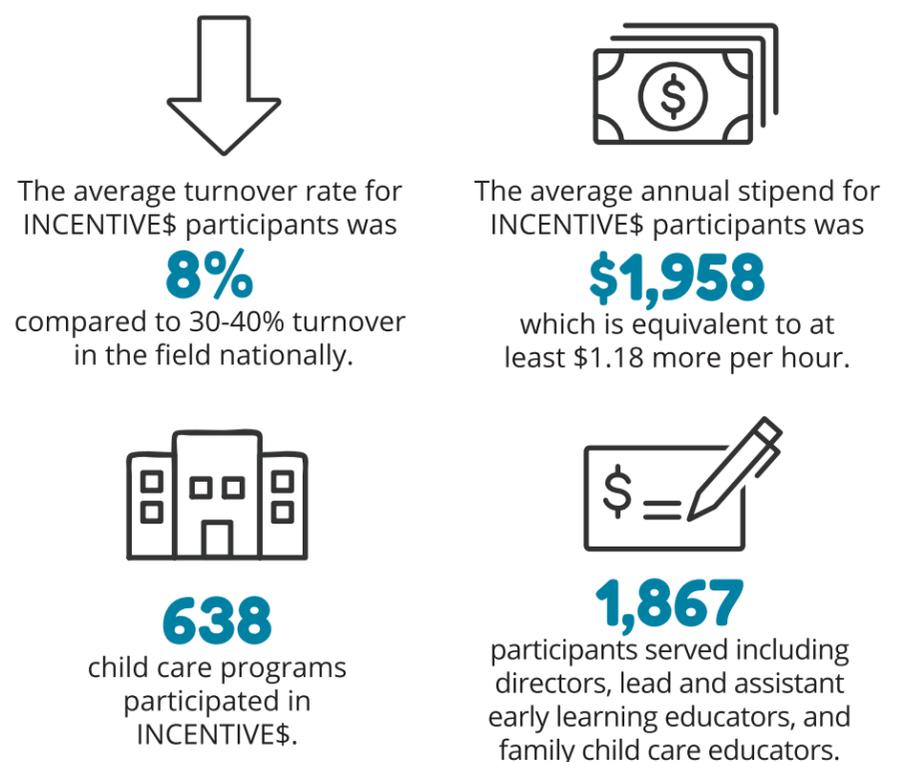


Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida

Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida, an affiliate of Child Care WAGE\$®, rewards early learning educators with annual stipends as they further their education and maintain continuous employment. By retaining the early learning workforce, INCENTIVE\$ motivates participants to pursue higher education and provides children with more stable relationships in their classrooms.

INCENTIVE\$ is licensed by Child Care Services Association of Chapel Hill, NC and administered by the Children's Forum under a contract with local early learning coalitions, children's services councils, and private contributors. Through these partnerships, INCENTIVE\$ is an early learning quality initiative that helps enhance the professional development of early learning educators and improve the quality of child care programs.

Impact and Outcomes:



Children's Forum Membership Program

The Children's Forum provides affordable and valuable membership opportunities for early learning educators, directors, FCCH and out of school time educators, as well as other professionals in the field. Members become part of a community of who are committed to supporting investments in early learning initiatives.

In addition to a variety of benefits, a Children's Forum membership:

- ★ Provides opportunities to build your skills and expand your knowledge to make a difference in the early learning field
- ★ Satisfies membership requirements for credential renewals such as a National CDA, FCCPC, or other Florida Staff Credentials
- ★ Assists program directors with fulfilling their Professional Contribution Requirement (PCR) through participation in a statewide workforce study

Impact and Outcomes:



PROGRAMS OF THE CHILDREN'S FORUM

2022-2023

Children's Week Florida™

Children's Week Florida™ is the largest event held in the state that celebrates and honors its commitment to children, youth, and advocates. As the Organizing Partner for Children's Week Florida™, the Forum has taken the lead with helping to bring thousands of attendees, including legislators, public officials, nonprofit organizations, business leaders, child and youth advocates, teachers, and students to the State Capitol each year during the legislative session. Together with our generous partners, we speak out as "One Voice" in support of children and families to deliver the message that every child should be healthy, ready to learn, and able to achieve their full potential.

Impact and Outcomes:



400 guests attended the Advocacy Dinner and Awards Ceremony. Dr. Mimi Graham received the Chiles Advocate Award while Sruthi Sentil was the recipient of the Youth Advocate Award.



Approximately **1,500** young children, students, and teachers attended Children's Day at the Capitol and Storybook Village events.



More than **16,000** pieces of hand artwork were collected for the Celebration of the Hands display inside the Capitol Rotunda.

Early Learning Career Center

Operated by the Children's Forum and funded by The Children's Trust (TCT), the Early Learning Career Center (ELCC) offers professional development services to all early learning programs and educators in Miami-Dade County. The ELCC, which is part of the Miami-Dade Early Learning Quality Improvement System (QIS), provides career advising and TCT Educator Scholarships in support of a diverse workforce. The ELCC also connects early childhood educators in Miami-Dade to other professional development supports such as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and salary supports funded by TCT.

Impact and Outcomes:

73%

of educators recently received TCT scholarships and/or salary supports.

83%

of educators obtained a credential since entering the QIS.

40%

of educators report being bilingual.

\$8,050

average salary increase of educators who earn degrees and credentials and speak English fluently.



"Early childhood investment is a smart investment. The earlier the investment, the greater the return."

-Nobel laureate economist James Heckman

Professional Development Registries

The Children's Forum maintains two professional development registries: the Miami-Dade Professional Development Registry and the Palm Beach County Training Registry. These registries provide a central database to record the workforce qualifications of early learning educators, such as employment history, compensation, benefits, credentials earned, and college courses/training activities completed.

Funding for the Miami-Dade Professional Development Registry and Palm Beach County Training Registry is provided by The Children's Trust and the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.

Impact and Outcomes:

Program Participants:

2,130

in Palm Beach County

2,575

in Miami-Dade County

ECE Program Improvement:

Registries can be used to make policy-informed decisions to improve the quality of early learning programs.

Assessment and Coaching Services Unit

The Children's Forum holds a contract with the Florida Division of Early Learning for providing Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation and coaching services within each county in Florida. The Forum offers CLASS® services to early learning coalitions, Head Start agencies, and other entities to help them meet state and federal program assessment requirements and improve early childhood classroom practices. The Forum has provided CLASS® services in every region and over half of the counties in Florida.

Impact and Outcomes:

70

certified CLASS® assessors and coaches were available to provide services.

1,397

early learning programs received assessments.

17

agencies received CLASS® services.

3,386

assessments were conducted.

Child Care Evaluation Services

The Child Care Evaluation Services Department provides the following accreditation management and educational support services for the Florida Department of Education - Division of Early Learning and Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), Office of Licensing:

- ★ Evaluating applications from prospective Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) training institutions to determine their eligibility to offer the FCCPC, and monitoring the status of all FCCPC training programs in the state
- ★ Evaluating applications from prospective and renewing accrediting associations to determine their eligibility for designation as Gold Seal Quality Care Accrediting Associations
- ★ Assisting owners/operators of early care and education (ECE) programs in Florida with questions about becoming a Gold Seal Quality Care designated program, assisting current Gold Seal programs with inquiries about their status, and maintaining the state database of early care and education programs that have attained Gold Seal status
- ★ Designing and producing public awareness documents for dissemination
- ★ Coordinating the DCF annual Statewide Child Care Training Meeting

Impact and Outcomes:



4

newsletters and brochures (four of each) for DCF were produced.



1,840

early childhood and family child care home programs maintained Gold Seal designation.

NEWSWORTHY NOTES



CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

WELCOME, FOUNDING MEMBERS!



Forum Launches New Corporate Membership Program

The Children's Forum is excited to announce our inaugural Forum Forward Corporate Membership program that provides an exclusive opportunity for organizations to collaborate among a cadre of business executives, policy experts, stakeholders, and leaders in the early care and education community! Through promotional services, educational opportunities, and networking events, Forum Forward is ideal for organizations that wish to strengthen their early learning impact at both statewide and national levels. We are thrilled to partner with MarcoPolo Learning, Torsh, Gardner Media, and Teaching Strategies as our Forum Forward Founding Members.

To learn more about Forum Forward and our Founding Members, visit flchild.com/forum-forward.

INCENTIVE\$ Program Now Available in Marion County

The Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida program is now available in Marion County! In partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, the INCENTIVE\$ program rewards early learning educators for doing what they love — nurturing young minds in child care programs!

INCENTIVE\$ provides to early learning educators with annual stipends between \$450 and \$5,000 as they further their education and maintain continuous employment. The greater their education level, the higher their annual stipend.

Early learning educators may be eligible for INCENTIVE\$ if their center or home is a School Readiness or VPK contracted site. Apply for INCENTIVE\$ today by visiting incentives-fl.com



Forum Partners with the Florida After School to Advocate for High-Quality Out-of-School Time Opportunities

Established in 2005, Florida After School, Inc. serves as the voice for out-of-school time (OST) programs and policies in Florida. Florida After School advocates for and equips OST stakeholders with resources to build the profession and support high-quality programs for all children and youth. They accomplish this by:

- ★ promoting quality standards and best practices
- ★ collaborating with public and private partners to share high-quality and innovative resources
- ★ advocating for policies and sustainable funding to expand the availability and accessibility
- ★ engaging thought leaders and direct service providers to ensure their efforts are representative and effective for those serving children, youth, and families every day

As the fiscal sponsor for Florida After School, the Children's Forum is a proud partner in their efforts to prepare our future leaders for success today. Visit flafterschool.com to learn more about their initiatives.



CHILDREN'S FORUM STAFF

Erin Smeltzer, M.S., *President and CEO*

Lisa Adams***
 Gabriela Agosto
 Nikita Allen**
 Kim Anderson
 Dedra Ash
 Aly Avila
 Viviana Avila***
 Christina Bassett
 Lianne Betancourt, M.S.
 Denise Bishop, Ed.D.*
 Felicia Bonner**
 Flor Brito**
 Terri Brusca
 Laura Cain, M.Ed. **
 Jill Calhoun*
 Lisa Carson
 Rhiannon Castillo
 Ashley Casey*
 Melissa Castro*
 Jessica Cherry
 Cynthia Christie
 Melissa Clements, Ph.D.**
 Trace Cooper
 Sonia Corbo D'Amico, M.S.***
 Dasiely Cruz, M.S.**
 José Cruz-Torres
 Matt Damron
 Elisabeth Dozier
 Laure Fiotte
 Tami Fletcher
 Kelly Fountain***

Emily Fulkerson***
 Randee Gabriel
 Wioleta Gaddy, M.S.
 Yolanda Gaston
 Taylor Googe
 Martha Grant*
 Paula Grant**
 Xandria Griffin
 Colleen Groot
 Olivia Guisti
 Sydney Hackney
 Catherine Hall, J.D.
 Lolita Hawkins
 Taylor Henley
 Ashley Houk
 Brian Hughes
 Jinan Higginbotham**
 Jenna Jacobsen-Brown***
 Liz Jimenez
 Tanya Keech
 Bill Kirchhoff, M.B.A.***
 Roman Komirniy
 Angeline Kreucher*
 Kali Lachance
 Courtney Lee*
 Jessica Long***
 Nydia Martinez
 Amy Maters
 Kim McDonald*
 Dawnielle McNabb
 Kathleen Moffett***

Brenda Miller
 Stephanie Miller
 Liliana Murphy
 Marilyn Nations
 Nayree Navarro**
 Rayvonn O'Connor
 Evelinda Perez
 Qiana Peters, M.P.A.***
 Erika Pope
 Elizabeth Randall, M.Ed.*
 David Register
 Laura Richardson, M.F.A.*
 Lisa Roberts**
 Paul Robinson**
 Brenda Romuald*
 April Scarborough
 Leidy Sevilla*
 Jennifer Sadberry
 Alexis Smith
 Lindsey Smith
 Lori Stegmeyer***
 Evelyn Thomas
 Dana Trabulsy
 Tia Walton-Walker, Ed.D.
 Ellen Waters
 Doretta Williams
 Erika Williams***
 Heather Wilson***
 Lauren Wofford
 Tamela Young***

Years of Service
 ✦ 5-9 Years
 ✦✦ 10-14 Years
 ✦✦✦ 15 Years or More

Children's Forum Board of Directors

Forum board members are volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to provide oversight and guidance on behalf of the Forum's mission. We are proud of their dedication to our work and grateful for their generous service.

Robert H. Buesing, J.D.

Board Chair
Retired Executive
Tampa, FL

Kyle Baltuch

Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation
Tallahassee, FL

Christopher J. Card, Ph.D.

Retired Executive
Tampa, FL

Claudia Davant

Adams St. Advocates
Tallahassee, FL

Allison Davis

Board Treasurer
WTAS, LLC
West Palm Beach, FL

Rebecca Falcon Kapusta

Health Connect America
Odessa, FL

Gege Kreischer

Consultant
Tampa, FL

Eddie Gonzalez Loumiet

Ruvos
Tallahassee, FL

Diana Ragbeer Murray

Retired Executive
North Bay Village, FL

Larry Pintacuda

Board Secretary
Retired Executive
Tallahassee, FL

Shawna Pointville

Consultant
EXCEL Kids Academy, Miami, FL

Christian Winterbottom, Ph.D.

University of North Florida
Jacksonville, FL



Financial Report

2022-2023	Expenditures
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program	\$10,147,462
Help Me Grow® Florida	\$1,803,209
Early Learning Career Center/Professional Development Registries	\$1,621,989
Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida	\$3,643,966
Assessment and Coaching Services Unit	\$1,469,764
Child Care Evaluation Services	\$222,797
Early Education and Care Workforce Study	\$53,350
Other	\$521,542
TOTAL	\$19,484,079

Clients & Funders

- 2-1-1 Big Bend, Inc.
- 2-1-1 Brevard, Inc.
- 2-1-1 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast
- 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc.
- Arkansas Early Childhood Association
- Bainum Family Foundation
- CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early."
- Children's Home Society of Suncoast Region
- Children's Home Society of the Tallahassee/ Gainesville Region
- Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County
- Early Childhood Council of Hillsborough County, Inc.
- ELC of Alachua County
- ELC of Brevard County
- ELC of Broward County
- ELC of Duval
- ELC of Escambia County
- ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties
- ELC of Florida's Gateway
- ELC of Florida's Heartland
- ELC of Hillsborough County
- ELC of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties (IRMO)
- ELC of Lake County
- ELC of Marion County
- ELC of Miami Dade and Monroe
- ELC of Northwest Florida
- ELC of Orange County
- ELC of Osceola County
- ELC of Polk County
- ELC of Sarasota County
- ELC of Seminole
- ELC of Southwest Florida
- ELC of the Emerald Coast
- ELC of the Nature Coast
- EOC of Indian River County
- Episcopal Children's Services
- Florida Afterschool Network
- Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Family Child Care Home Association
- Florida Department of Education - Division of Early Learning
- Florida Head Start Association
- Heart of Florida United Way
- Redlands Christian Migrant Association - RCMA
- The Association of Early Learning Coalitions
- The Children's Trust
- The Giving Closet Project
- United Way of Florida
- United Way of Lee County

“The time is always right to do what is right.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



1650 Summit Lake Drive, Suite 210
Tallahassee, FL 32317

888-FL-CHILD (888-352-4453)

flchild.com    