

“ Education is simply
the soul of a society
as it passes from one
generation to another. ”

-G.K. Chesterton



Message from the PRESIDENT



Last summer, while attending the One Goal Summer Conference, a member of my staff shared that one of our T.E.A.C.H. scholars wanted to meet me. Of course, I was delighted. She is a young woman in Miami who had just completed her bachelor's degree through T.E.A.C.H. (overcoming tremendous odds) and she shared that I was one of her heroes. I corrected her quickly explaining that she is the hero, along with others who work daily and tirelessly on behalf of children, while also pursuing an education to become even more competent and effective teachers. I think she was taken aback, but my comments were sincere.

As I was reflecting back on that interaction, I thought about the true rock stars in our field. There are many heroes, and I am so fortunate to witness the following funders of early care and education (ECE) in action:

- The Children's Trust in Miami and the Children's Services Council in Palm Beach County. They have made children their priority through their portfolios of evidence-based programs for young children to include scholarships, program assessments, coaching and mentoring for program improvements.
- The legislature invests in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program to ensure that early childhood educators have the opportunity to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to be effective teachers of our most vulnerable citizens. In addition, the legislature invests in Help Me Grow® Florida to ensure that children have access to a plethora of services and developmental screenings to intervene early when concerns arise.
- The Florida Office of Early Learning staff are truly committed to ensuring access, affordability, and quality of ECE services for the state's children and families. They also partner with others engaged in this work with open arms.
- The Early Learning Coalition of Broward County and The Children's Trust of Miami invest in the Child Care WAGES® FLORIDA Project to provide wage stipends for early childhood educators who earn an average of \$9 per hour to reduce turnover and reward educational attainment.
- Our partner advocacy organizations, educational institutions, and state agencies who lock arms with us to raise the important issues to the attention of key policymakers who have the power to move the needle.
- Governor Scott has continued to demonstrate his support for young children as evidenced by his budget priorities.
- Our board of directors who volunteer their time, dedication and expertise to help us fulfill our mission for which I am truly grateful.
- Our members who prepare children for success in school and in life.

There are so many rock stars -- heroes who rarely receive the attention so well deserved and have made our work possible. Last but not least, I am incredibly blessed to work with a staff of truly caring and professional individuals who share a "fire in the belly" for our mission. Looking back, I am overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude and looking forward, I am filled with hope that we can do an even better job on behalf of our children and those who nurture and care for them daily.

With respect and admiration,

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.
President & CEO

Message from the BOARD CHAIR



The case for strengthening our early care and education (ECE) system has never been stronger. The link between high-quality early childhood experiences and our nation's economic goals has never been clearer. The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute recently issued *Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High Quality Childcare*, a powerful report which found the growing shortage of skilled early childhood educators is forcing a change in strategy. For far too long, our nation has underestimated the importance of the earliest years of life.

The extraordinary development occurring from birth to age 5 forms the bedrock for lifelong health, intellectual ability, emotional wellbeing, and social functioning. The report concludes that, for American business, advancing high-quality child care is a winning proposition.

While we have made progress, we have work to do in our great state. Florida's ranking by the *National Institute for Early Education and Research State of Preschool* report shows Florida meets only three out of the ten benchmarks regarding quality ECE standards, which is substantially lower than our neighboring states of Georgia and Alabama.

Improving the quality of our ECE system is the mission of the Children's Forum. As the administrator and provider of key quality enhancement programs like Help Me Grow® Florida, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, and the Child Care WAGES® FLORIDA Project, the Forum's mission is aligned with the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's belief that investing in high-quality ECE programs promotes a stable economy in the future. We all know, however, that funding is inadequate. Advocacy to legislators and policy makers is ongoing and cannot stop.

I proudly serve as the Children's Forum's representative for the Business Alliance for Pre-K, as well as a national effort entitled "Moving the Needle on Compensation" which addresses strategies to improve compensation and to provide livable wages for the ECE workforce. We will continue to make the case that investments pay a huge return by helping young children receive the social, emotional and educational support they need to get on the path to success.

Thank you for your support in this critical mission.

Bob Buesing, J.D.
Board Chair

PROGRAMS OF THE CHILDREN'S FORUM 2016-2017



Child Care Evaluation Services

Now in its 10th contract year, the Child Care Evaluation Services unit provides the following accreditation management and educational support services for the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Office of Child Care Regulation:

- ★ 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 programs in Florida with questions about becoming a Gold Seal 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

Accomplishments

- ★ An average of 1,942 early childhood programs maintained a Gold Seal designation
- ★ One accrediting association was approved for Gold Seal recognition in the specialization area of School-Age
- ★ One FCCPC newsletter and a Gold Seal brochure were created and distributed

Impact

- ★ Teachers who participated in high-quality training programs were better equipped to prepare children for school than providers with no training or education
- ★ Child care programs that achieved a Gold Seal designation met the quality standards of an approved accrediting association and may provide higher-quality services to children and families than programs without the Gold Seal designation



Refugee Child Care Microenterprise Developmental Project

The Refugee Child Care Microenterprise Developmental Project (RCCDP) assists refugee women in Miami-Dade County with establishing family child care homes (FCCHs). Operated by the Children's Forum, RCCDP is funded by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. In addition to helping refugees launch FCCHs and sustain employment, the project also assists women in becoming economically self-sufficient, helps refugee communities develop employment and capital resources, and enhances the integration of refugees into the mainstream.

RCCDP activities include:

- ★ Establishing working partnerships with refugee resettlement service agencies and county and state governments that are responsible for human services
- ★ Identifying eligible women refugees to participate
- ★ Training, education, technical expertise, and entrepreneurship opportunities to help refugee women start home-based early care and education businesses
- ★ Practical experience and mentorship through a partnership with licensed and established FCCH business owners
- ★ Promoting the development, education, economic independence, and integration with the community through home-based, early care and education business development

Accomplishments

- ★ 67 refugee women have been screened to participate in the Forum's RCCDP grant in Miami-Dade County
- ★ 15 refugee women have either opened or are in the process of opening a FCCH over the past year
- ★ Participants received a full set of early care and education training courses, including 45 hours of Department of Children and Families (DCF) training, first aid & CPR, FCCH Business Basics, and curriculum development

Impact

- ★ Refugee women have worked toward opening a licensed, high-quality Family Child Care Home so they can become successful, independent entrepreneurs
- ★ By expanding home-based early care and education services to refugees, RCCDP enabled other families to enter the workforce with the confidence their children were in the care of individuals who shared their cultural competencies and values

The Children's Forum received \$175,000 through competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant # 90RG0164. The project will be fully financed with Federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.



Help Me Grow® Florida

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) promotes the healthy development for all children by providing access to developmental and behavioral screenings. 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 when they have developmental or behavioral concerns about their children. Families receive information, referral services, and available community resources, and HMGF stays engaged until the family's needs have been met.

Accomplishments

- ★ From 2014-2016, the HMGF State Coordinating Office launched nine affiliates for a total of 11 sites in the state of Florida serving 29 of 67 counties (over 50 percent of Florida's children)
- ★ 1,527 of the 3,356 children served by HMGF were children in a home setting and not attending any type of childcare or school environment
- ★ 2,845 screenings were completed using the ASQ, ASQ SE/SE-2, PSC, or M-CHAT tools. Of these screenings, 1,543 resulted in at least one concern or need for additional monitoring, services, or interventions
- ★ 2,764 referrals were made to community services and programs
- ★ The HMGF State Coordinating Office completed its first year of a two year Learn the Signs Act Early-Systems Grant (LTSAE-SG). This funding allowed three HMGF affiliates to participate in the Books, Balls, and Blocks screening initiative at community events. This initiative will expand to all affiliate sites in fiscal year 2017-18

Impact

- ★ HMGF produces a cost savings of \$2,300 per child when it provides screening instead of a physician office. By identifying only those children who truly need help, HMGF eliminates costly and unnecessary services
- ★ HMGF saves the taxpayers money and helps leverage the greatest value from state spending
- ★ Through cross-sector collaboration, HMGF is able to facilitate communication and streamline services for families
- ★ HMGF screens children that may need early detection/intervention services prior to starting school



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

Accomplishments

- ★ 5,535 scholars participated in T.E.A.C.H., a 46 percent increase from the previous year
- ★ 18,404 credit hours were taken by T.E.A.C.H. scholars; a 65 percent increase from the previous year
- ★ T.E.A.C.H. scholars attended 65 approved training programs, colleges, and universities
- ★ 2,219 licensed child care programs in Florida had at least one employee who participated in T.E.A.C.H.

Impact

- ★ The average GPA for T.E.A.C.H. participants was 3.32, helping to create an educated workforce that knows how to nurture the growing minds of children
- ★ The turnover rate was 4 percent, significantly lower than the national turnover rate of 30-40 percent
- ★ 99 percent of T.E.A.C.H. scholars and sponsors would recommend this type of scholarship program to other early childhood educators
- ★ 94 percent of directors from child care centers saw positive changes in their teachers who participated in T.E.A.C.H.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (T.E.A.C.H.) is helping to establish a well-qualified, fairly-compensated and stable workforce for Florida's children. Funded by the Florida Office of Early Learning and operated by the Children's Forum, T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships for early childhood educators to work towards Bachelor and Associate degrees in early childhood education, a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, a Florida Staff Credential, or a Director Credential.

T.E.A.C.H. maintains a three-way partnership in which the practitioner, the sponsoring program (the participant's employer), and T.E.A.C.H. share the costs for classes, books, and 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 at their sponsoring program.



Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC)

Operated by the Children's Forum and funded by The Children's Trust, the Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC) supports center- and home-based early care and education (ECE) programs and early childhood educators through professional development and classroom-based coaching, educational scholarships, and a training registry. Quality Improvement Specialists work with programs and early childhood educators to jointly establish professional development plans and quality improvement plans designed to enhance ECE skills and improve the quality of the early learning environment.

Accomplishments

- ★ A total of 3,331 early childhood educators at 413 different program sites received professional development services through the QCCC
- ★ 80 percent of participants have obtained a Florida Staff Credential and 40 percent of program sites have a director with an Advanced Director Credential
- ★ 83 percent made progress toward professional goals (accepted educational scholarship)
- ★ 84 percent of teaching staff who did not have a Florida Staff Credential or equivalent at QC entry now have obtained one
- ★ 32 percent of ECE sites whose directors did not have an Advanced Credential at QC entry now have obtained one

Impact

- ★ Hourly wages were impacted by several factors that early childhood educators can directly influence to improve their earning potential and marketability including having strong English language skills, acquiring a degree, and remaining with their employer long-term
- ★ For every five years they remain with their current employer, early childhood educators can expect to make \$1.00 more per hour
- ★ Early childhood educators who obtain college degrees can expect to make an average of \$2.46 more per hour
- ★ Early childhood educators can expect to make about \$1.57 more per hour if English is their primary language
- ★ Developing strong English language skills can help early childhood educators get the most value out of their degrees (a difference of almost \$2.50 more per hour)

Professional Development Registry - Miami and Palm Beach

The Professional Development Registry provides one central location to record and validate the qualifications of early childhood educators such as employment history, credentials earned, and college courses/training activities completed. In addition, Registry data are used to understand the needs of the ECE field and make policy-informed decisions for the workforce.

Technical Assistance Professional Development and Classroom-Based Coaching

Quality Improvement Specialists provide supports to ECE programs and early childhood educators through monthly on-site coaching and classroom observations.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Early childhood educators are able to receive financial aid and scholarships from The Children's Trust and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program to help pay for training and educational expenses.



Program Assessment Center

The goal of the Program Assessment Center is to increase the quality of early care and education classrooms through the use of valid and reliable program assessment instruments. Trained assessors observe the interactions that take place in classrooms as well as the available materials and activities supporting those interactions. Assessments are available to early learning classrooms throughout Florida and are conducted using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and/or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

In addition to providing assessments, the Program Assessment Center maintains a Professional Development Registry that provides a workforce database of early childhood educators' education levels and qualifications, training activities, employment history, compensation, and benefits.

Administered by the Children's Forum, the Program Assessment Center currently provides services in Palm Beach County through funding from the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.

Accomplishments

- ★ The Program Assessment Center team completed 337 assessments. Of these, 91 were ERS, 131 were Pre-K CLASS, 102 were Toddler CLASS, and 13 were Infant CLASS
- ★ 5,155 early childhood educators were active participants in the Palm Beach Registry

Impact

- ★ Program directors and teachers received clear guidance on strategies for program improvement
- ★ Average scores across programs increased, indicating that program quality is being raised
- ★ Children and families had the opportunity to participate in high-quality programs that help to ensure positive outcomes in school and in life



Child Care WAGES® FLORIDA Project

Accomplishments

- ★ 1,240 early childhood educators received at least one salary supplement check through Child Care WAGES®
- ★ 343 child care programs participated, serving more than 25,000 children throughout the state
- ★ The average six-month salary supplement payment was \$594 which is equivalent to at least \$0.57 per hour added to regular wages

Impact

- ★ The turnover rate of Child Care WAGES® participants was 11 percent, compared to the national average turnover rate of 30-40 percent
- ★ The average rate of pay for a Child Care WAGES® recipient per hour was \$11.09 compared to Florida's state minimum wage of \$8.10 per hour
- ★ 62 percent of participants sought additional education which leads to high-quality care for children
- ★ 99 percent of Child Care WAGES® participants are satisfied with the program

The Child Care WAGES® FLORIDA Project rewards early childhood educators with salary supplements based on their education and continuity of employment. By increasing the retention of the early care and education (ECE) workforce, Child Care WAGES® provides children with more stable relationships and better-educated teachers. Child Care WAGES® addresses individual professional development efforts and low wages, but does not affect budgets, regular wages, or parent fees within the child care program.

Administered through the Children's Forum, Child Care WAGES® is funded by local Early Learning Coalitions and The Children's Trust. Child Care WAGES® is currently available in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties.

News-worthy Notes

Tune in to Children's Forum Podcasts

The Children's Forum has started *Forum Talks*, the first Podcast of its kind in Florida to discuss state-specific early care and education (ECE) initiatives. Our first Podcast featured a discussion with Dr. Phyllis Kalifeh, President and CEO of the Forum, on the state of ECE in Florida. The second Podcast included a panel presentation that was recorded at the 2017 One Goal Summer Conference. The presentation highlighted personal stories from early childhood educators and shared the impact the Forum's T.E.A.C.H. and WAGES programs have had in helping the panelists achieve their professional development goals. Both Podcasts can be found on the Forum's YouTube Channel and website.

Forum Receives Grant to Recruit and Promote Diversity in Early Care and Education Workforce

The Children's Forum has been awarded an AmeriCorps Planning Grant to develop an early care and education (ECE) workforce improvement and diversification initiative to be implemented throughout Florida. The plan will include the recruitment of a diverse group of AmeriCorps volunteers who are demographically similar based on gender and race/ethnicity to the children enrolled at participating child care programs. An implementation plan will be developed for AmeriCorps volunteers to serve as ECE teaching assistants and receive relationship-based coaching to ensure implementation of high-quality instructional practices. Additionally, the implementation plan would be designed to utilize the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and personalized career guidance to assist AmeriCorps Volunteers in furthering their formal education through college coursework and academic degree/credential paths.



Forum to Represent Florida on Compensation of the Early Care and Education Workforce

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center has awarded grants to lead organizations from eight states to address compensation concerns facing the early care and education (ECE) community. The Children's Forum was chosen as the lead organization to represent Florida. With grant funding from the Alliance for Early Success, each state's lead organization will assemble teams of ECE stakeholders who will create and implement a strategic action plan to move the needle on compensation over the coming year.



Forum Vice Chair Receives Most Valuable Father Award

The Fatherhood Task Force announced Dr. Wil Blechman, the Forum's Vice Chair, as a recipient of South Florida's Most Valuable Father Award. Dr. Blechman was instrumental in developing "Young Children: Priority One," a program that focuses on the prenatal period to age five. Additionally, Dr. Blechman, recognizing the importance of supporting optimal brain development especially during the prenatal period and through early childhood, has become a speaker helping to educate parents and caregivers on their roles in making this happen.



Thank you, Dr. Blechman, for guiding our vision and for your tireless advocacy on the research of brain development in young children.

Forum Establishes Program to Help Child Care Programs Impacted by Disaster

The Forum has established Children's Forum CARES, a program that is dedicated to helping child care programs in Leon, Wakulla, Gadsden, and Jefferson Counties impacted by disaster. By providing small cash grants to meet their most pressing needs, Forum CARES helps programs remain open and functional, allowing families to return to work and children to remain in consistent care. Program necessities may include toys and classroom materials, diapers, formula and food, cleaning supplies, and repair services.



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 fortunate and proud of their commitment and dedication to our work and grateful for their generous service.

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.

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Funders & Clients

- Association for Maternal and Child Health Programs
- Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County
- The Children's Trust
- ELC of Broward County
- ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties
- ELC of Pinellas County
- ELC of Okaloosa-Walton
- ELC of Seminole County
- ELC of Southwest Florida
- Florida Afterschool Network
- Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
- Florida Family Child Care Home Association
- Florida Head Start Association
- Florida Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Florida Office of Early Learning
- National Workforce Registry Alliance
- United Way of Miami-Dade County
- U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families-Office of Refugee Resettlement



Financial Report

2016-2017	Revenue	Expenditures
T.E.A.C.H. (Office of Early Learning & Private)	\$7,295,053	\$7,245,197
Help Me Grow	\$2,105,545	\$2,105,545
Professional Development/ Quality Initiatives	\$1,743,583	\$1,756,448
WAGES	\$632,089	\$632,627
Program Assessment Center	\$559,841	\$558,259
Child Care Evaluation Services	\$185,831	\$185,831
Other	\$160,381	\$199,563
TOTAL	\$12,682,323	\$12,683,470



Children's Forum Staff

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* Five-Nine Years of Service

** Ten-Fourteen Years of Service

*** Fifteen Years of Service or More



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