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Investing in early childhood isn't just good policy, it's a commitment to our future. That's why I continue to prioritize the programs and partnerships that support our youngest residents and their families. When our children thrive, so does our entire community!

- County Executive Ryan McMahon -

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2024 Annual Report

Dear Friends & Partners,

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude for the dedication and resilience of our Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) Onondaga community. In 2024, we continued to make significant strides in our mission to ensure that all young children and their families have access to high-quality early learning experiences and comprehensive support services.

This year's annual report presents both quantitative and qualitative data to capture the breadth and depth of our work. The numbers tell a compelling story of increased participation in early learning programs, enhanced professional development for educators, and expanded family engagement initiatives. Beyond the numbers, resonant stories bring to life the profound impact of our collective efforts—highlighting the real-world changes happening in homes, classrooms, and neighborhoods.

None of this progress would be possible without the unwavering support and commitment of our coalition members, community partners, board of directors, family leaders, and staff. Your passion, expertise, and advocacy

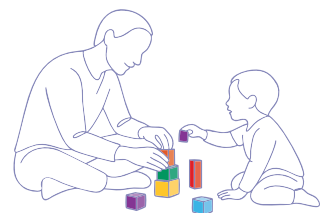
continue to drive this movement forward, ensuring that our youngest learners receive the strong foundation they need to thrive.

Looking ahead, we recognize that the road is not without obstacles. However, we remain hopeful and energized by the opportunities before us. Together, we will continue to innovate, collaborate, and advocate for the policies and investments necessary to build a stronger, more equitable early childhood system.

Thank you for your partnership, your perseverance, and your belief in the promise of every child. We invite you to explore this report, celebrate our shared achievements, and recommit to the work that lies ahead.

With appreciation,

Bethany Creaser
Executive Director



Centering & Engaging Family Voice

The Family Voice Initiative builds partnerships with parents and families in Onondaga County, identifies their strengths, provides leadership opportunities, and increases their voice and engagement in the work of the ECA Onondaga and its partner organizations.

Initiative Activities	
Parents on the Parent Advisory Council	9
Parent Advisory Council Meetings	11
Mothers Engaged Through the 3-Year Thriving, Not Just Surviving Peer-to-Peer Group Pilot (Concluded 9/30/2024)	93
Parents Engaged Through Focus Groups	40



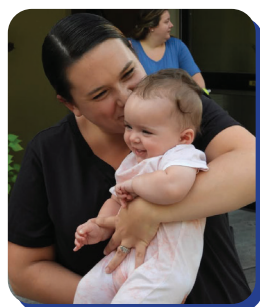
78% of Parent Advisory Council members served on other committees impacting the work of the ECA Onondaga.



91% of Thriving, Not Just Surviving peer-to-peer group participants reported improved social capital.

2024 Successes

- A member of the Parent Advisory Council was quoted in the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Manifesto for Race Equity and Parent Leadership in Early Childhood Systems, Parent Edition.
- Three Parent Advisory Council members served on the Help Me Grow New York (HMGNY) Steering Committee and provided guidance and support in the planned development of a HMGNY Parent Advisory Council.
- Committed to continuing the Thriving, Not Just Surviving peer-to-peer group based on pilot success and community demand.



Ensuring Children Develop On Track

Help Me Grow Onondaga empowers parents and caregivers with knowledge about child development, connects them to the services and supports their child(ren) need(s) to thrive, and strives to increase developmental screening.

Initiative Activities	
Total Intakes	1,937
Intakes Through Pediatric Practices	244
Children Served	1,937
Referrals to Services & Supports	2,679
ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2 Questionnaires Completed	3,636
Questionnaires Completed Through Pediatrics	314
Books, Balls & Blocks Parent Education Events	11
Community Outreach Events Attended	230
Individuals Reached Through Outreach Events	5,238



82% of families who completed a screen and received support **learned something new** about child development, parenting, and/or community resources.



80% of families who completed a screen and received support **did something new** to support their child's development.



96% of survey respondents indicated that Help Me Grow Onondaga met their needs.

2024 Successes

- Made 1,418 deliveries of basic need items (diapers, formula, etc.) via the Ride United: Last Mile Delivery Program, a partnership between the United Way of Central New York and DoorDash.
- Selected to participate in a Help Me Grow-led national learning community, Cultivating System Leadership Skills and Competencies, in partnership with the Onondaga County Health Department.
- Surveyed CNY Diaper Bank partner agencies to determine strengths, pressure points, and areas for system improvement and then brought them together for a meeting to discuss the results as well Help Me Grow Onondaga's role as an emergency site and how to utilize the 211 CNY call line.



Supporting Early Literacy

Talk, Read, Sing Onondaga is a public awareness and action campaign that helps parents and caregivers recognize their power to boost their children’s early brain and vocabulary development through simple, everyday actions.

Initiative Activities	
Tote Bags Distributed*	1,427
Partners Trained as Trusted Messengers	43
Community Outreach Events Attended	133
Individuals Reached Through Outreach Events	5,418
Materials Distributed	21,309
Media Campaign Impressions (Duplicated)	7 Million

*Starting in Q4 and moving forward, Help Me Grow Onondaga bags were added to this count. These bags contain Talking is Teaching materials, and the same early literacy messages are provided upon delivery.



98% of families who received a tote bag acknowledged the importance of reading to their child(ren) and made a commitment to do so every day.

2024 Successes

- Reinstated partnerships with pediatric practices, delivering 550 tote bags to Syracuse Community Health Center for distribution at well-child visits.
- Welcomed children’s musician Andrew Karnavas (aka AndyRoo) back to Syracuse for the fourth annual Feel the Beat Family Fest in partnership with Destiny USA’s Tyke’s Tuesday event series.
- Joined the national Talking is Teaching Peer Learning Collaborative, a space where community campaigns gather, share successes and challenges, and elevate innovative ideas and resources.



Strengthening Child Care & Early Learning Infrastructure

The ECA Onondaga advances strategies that strengthen Onondaga County’s early learning ecosystem by improving the quality, accessibility, and affordability of child care and early learning environments for all children.

Initiative Activities	
Children Participating in CCQI*	148
CCQI Providers Receiving Coaching	46
Coaching Hours Received by CCQI Providers	4,036
Stipends Distributed to CCQI Providers	\$259,450
Home Based Provider Steering Cmte. Meetings	11
Child Care & Early Learning Workgroup Meetings	4



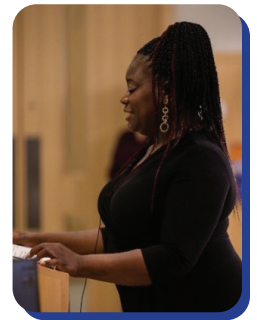
Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale results for participating CCQI sites increased **23%**.



Leading for Change participants reported a **33%** increase in knowledge and a **17%** increase in entrepreneurial mindset.

2024 Successes

- Sent 5 Leading for Change graduates to attend and/or present at the Early Education Leaders Institute’s 11th annual Leadership Forum on Early Education Research, Policy, and Practice.
- Coordinated 7 legislative visits in partnership with Child Care Solutions, bringing 30 child care and early learning advocates to Albany to provide community education and raise the profile of Central New York.



*The Child Care Quality Improvement (CCQI) initiative is a partnership between Child Care Solutions and the ECA and is funded by Onondaga County. CCQI is an actionable plan for improving the quality of child care within the county’s existing infrastructure of care, resulting in optimal child development and school readiness.



Strengthening Families

Catholic Charities' ParentChild+ Program focuses on bridging the opportunity gap and strengthening families and communities to ensure all children have equal possibilities from the start and are prepared for school and life success.

Initiative Activities	
Children Served	60
Home Based Child Care (HBCC) Providers Served	8
Children/Families Impacted Through HBCC	63
Outreach Events	15
Sessions Held	1,661
Books & Toys Distributed	1,000



98% of participating families exhibited strengthened and improved parent-child interactions.



100% of participating children showed overall improvement in one or more behavior areas.



81% of 2024 graduates entered a high-quality pre-k or kindergarten program.

2024 Successes

- Early Learning Specialists celebrated 21 family graduations from the core portion of the program.
- 5 registered providers graduated from the HBCC portion of the program.
- 100% of survey respondents were satisfied with the developmental and cultural relevance of program materials.



Supporting Reproductive Well-Being

The Reproductive Well-Being Initiative is committed to reproductive justice, woman-centered care, dispelling myths, and changing social norms to empower young women with positive self-images and independent choice.

Initiative Activities	
Young Women Reached Through On-The-Ground Engagements	250
Leadership Opportunities for Young Women as a Result of Their Work with Layla	35
Training Attendees	55
Film Productions	2
Podcast Episodes	6
Number of Social Media Followers	2,646



Leveraged **\$40,000** in support of health equity and reproductive justice projects.



60 young women trained in professional work skills and social impact (ambassador training).

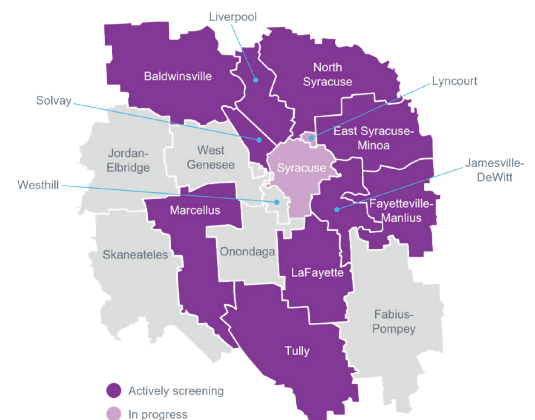
Spotlight on Success

In October, four Layla ambassadors led a filmmaking workshop with award-winning filmmaker Lynne Sachs. Participants explored how sound and image can be used to bear witness poetically and politically and produced a collaborative film viewable at bit.ly/livingtotell. The same ambassadors appeared in Sachs' 2024 film, "This Side of Salina," in which "Four Black women from Syracuse reflect on sexuality, youthful regret, emotional vulnerability...and working in reproductive health services."



Expanding Developmental Screening Through UPK Partnerships

To increase developmental screening rates and promote healthy children and families, Help Me Grow Onondaga is partnering with school districts across the county to implement developmental screening protocols within Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs. In the absence of a standardized kindergarten entrance exam, the data gathered from the parent-completed questionnaires will give districts a clear picture of where their students stand before entering kindergarten. Responses will also point to recommended changes or improvements within programs to best support children's kindergarten readiness. At the close of 2024, Help Me Grow Onondaga had solidified protocols with 12 of the 18 districts in the county. This progress reflects Help Me Grow Onondaga's commitment to building collaborative networks that benefit families and prepare children for long term success.



Pediatrics Supporting Parents Initiative Closes Out Third Year

Launched in 2017, Pediatrics Supporting Parents (PSP) is a national collaborative working to address key structural barriers affecting young children’s health while also making the case for system-wide transformation of the well-child visit.

In 2022, the ECA Onondaga, in partnership with Upstate Pediatric and Adolescent Center (UPAC), was one of five communities from across the nation selected to participate in PSP’s Phase Two Learning Community. This multi-year shared-learning initiative called on participants to act as “proof point communities,” working to achieve concrete changes in pediatric primary care that support children’s social-emotional development and early relational health.



The first and second years of our participation consisted primarily of convening and listening. We conducted focus groups with parents in the clinical space, collected survey data, convened workgroups with our community partners, and brought in content matter experts to host a three-day summit on early relational health.

In 2024, we increased capacity by hiring a Director of Family Wellbeing to lead the initiative and build out implementation strategies with the team based on evaluation findings. Other projects and accomplishments to date include:

- Launching a Family Advisory Council (FAC) at UPAC. The council meets monthly to co-design agenda items and discuss various topics of interest to bring about positive changes in the pediatric patient experience.
- Traveling alongside our Parent Leaders to meet with other Proof Point Communities in Long Beach, CA for the 2024 ZERO TO THREE LEARN Conference.
- Enhancing the advocacy elective for first-year pediatric residents created by Help Me Grow Onondaga in partnership with the Upstate Pediatric Residency Program by adding a self-care component aimed at supporting the overall health and wellness of practitioners, especially post-pandemic.

Enhancing Family Voice Through the RAPID Survey Project









The ECA Onondaga was one of five organizations selected to participate in the Stanford Center on Early Childhood’s 2024 RAPID Community Voices Cohort. The partnership is part of the RAPID Survey Project, a program of ongoing national and place-based surveys designed to gather timely, actionable data on the needs, behaviors, and wellbeing of young children and their caregivers and families.

Over the next two years, we’ll partner closely with the Stanford RAPID team to co-design and administer surveys, interpret the resulting data, and take action on our findings. There’s always more to learn from families, and this project will help us continue to ground our systems-building efforts in their priorities and experiences.



What We Learned: Highlights From Survey No. 1

(Responses Gathered November-December 2024)

-  **480** respondents caring for children under age 6.
-  **71%** live in the City of Syracuse.
-  **80%** live below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
-  **48%** used child care last month.
-  **62%** of children have had a developmental screening or check-in, and **36%** of respondents have concerns about their child(ren)’s development or behavior.
-  **84%** reported minor to extreme problems with household finances.
-  **71%** reported hardship paying for basic needs.
-  **78%** reported symptoms of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and/or stress, and **57%** would benefit from additional parenting resources/supports.

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Thank You to Our 2024 Funders

The ECA Onondaga deeply appreciates the generous support of the many funders who make our initiatives and systems work possible. We're especially grateful to County Executive Ryan McMahon and the Onondaga County Legislature for their continued commitment to early childhood as a key part of their antipoverty strategy. We're also proud to partner with philanthropic and private sector leaders who match this investment, helping expand and enhance the services available to children and families across the county.



*With the fiscal support of Docs for Tots