



# 2023 Annual Report

## Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first full year as Executive Director of the Early Childhood Alliance Onondaga (ECA), I realize that what sometimes felt like a whirlwind was in fact a transformational process and precursor for the future. It was a time of listening and learning. A time of managing tremendous growth while integrating new and exciting strategies to accomplish our goals. And through it all, I witnessed a coalition standing strong in its commitment to a future where all children in Onondaga County are healthy, thriving, and ready to succeed in school and life.

I am immensely proud of all we have achieved in one short year, from incorporating as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to hosting 200+ early childhood stakeholders, partners, and child care providers at the inaugural Enhancing Early Childhood Development Summit.

I am equally proud of our coalition members, community

partners, board of directors, family leaders, and staff, whose tireless dedication to building a brighter future for our youngest residents is truly inspiring.

In the following pages, you will read about the work the ECA and our partners collectively advanced in 2023 and the many ways our initiatives are making an impact. You'll see data that quantifies the reach of our work and stories that qualitatively bring that work to life. And you'll see that while we've made great strides toward a more equitable early childhood system, there is still much work to be done. I look forward to continuing that work and to the promise and possibility of the future.

With Gratitude,



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 and its partner organizations.

Initiative Activities	
Parents on the Parent Advisory Council	9
Parent Advisory Council Meetings	11
Mothers Engaged Through the Thriving Not Just Surviving Peer to Peer Group	52
Parents Engaged Through Focus Groups	27
Parents Trained/In Leadership Roles	14
Parent Ambassadors Trained	5



**33%** of Parent Advisory Council members served on other committees impacting the work of the ECA.



**100%** of Thriving Not Just Surviving peer to peer group participants showed an increase in self-efficacy.

### Spotlight On Success

- Created successful career pathways for parents, leading to two members of the Parent Advisory Council being hired as part-time Help Me Grow Family Resource Specialists.
- Trained three parents to co-facilitate the Thriving Not Just Surviving peer to peer group.
- Celebrated the third anniversary of the Parent Advisory Council.
- Hosted two parent-led family outreach and engagement events.



## 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 to thrive, and strives to increase developmental screening.

Initiative Activities	
Total Intakes	1,197
Intakes From Pediatrics	206
Children Served	1,539
Referrals to Services & Supports	2,250
ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2 Questionnaires Completed	2,878
Questionnaires Completed Through Pediatrics	124
Books, Balls & Blocks Parent Education Events	3
Community Outreach Events Attended	42
Individuals Reached Through Outreach Events	2,607



**92%** of families who completed a screen and received support **learned something new** about child development, parenting, and/or community resources.



**46%** of families who completed a screen and received support **did something new** to support their child's development.



**88%** of survey respondents indicated that Help Me Grow met their needs, while **95%** would reach out for additional support in the future.

### 2023 Successes

- Made 668 deliveries of basic need items (diapers, formula, etc.) via the Ride United: Last Mile Delivery Program, a partnership between the United Way of CNY and DoorDash.
- Trained four partner organizations to implement Ages and Stages developmental questionnaires and assisted in the set up and integration of screening protocols within their programs.
- Created a new Data and Operations Manager position with funding support from the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York to ensure data integrity and assist in data storytelling.





## 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*	216
Community Outreach Events Attended	83
Individuals Reached Through Outreach Events	1,562
Materials Distributed	4,686
Media Campaign Impressions (Duplicated)	15 Million

\*Streamlining of the tote bag request process and trusted messenger training led to a decrease in tote bag distributions in Q1 & Q2.



**95%** 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.

### 2023 Successes

- Launched a “The Koala Who Could” StoryWalk® in partnership with Onondaga County Public Libraries and the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park.
- Hosted the third annual Feel the Beat Family Fest featuring live musical performances by children’s musician Andrew Karnavas (aka AndyRoo).
- Launched a new promotional campaign, “Invest in Your Child’s Success: Talk, Read, Sing Every Day!” in partnership with M&T Bank. The campaign included outdoor and transit advertising (billboards and bus tails) as well as social media videos.



## Strengthening Child Care & Early Learning Infrastructure

*The ECA 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*	207
CCQI Providers Receiving Coaching	43
Coaching Hours Provided to CCQI Providers	1,721
Stipends Distributed to CCQI Providers	\$194,500
Home Based Provider Steering Cmte. Meetings	11
Child Care & Early Learning Workgroup Meetings	8



Participating CCQI sites completed **136** developmental questionnaires, resulting in **58** referrals for community services and supports.



Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale results for participating CCQI sites increased **14%**.



Leading for Change participants reported a **33%** increase in knowledge and a **20%** increase in entrepreneurial mindset.

### 2023 Successes

- Assisted in the planning and execution of an Onondaga County DSS-ES marketing campaign aimed at raising awareness of expanded eligibility for the child care assistance program. Child care applications increased 13% (2,170 applications) and open cases increased by 24% (2,405 cases).
- Coordinated legislative visits in partnership with Child Care Solutions, bringing 20 child care and early learning advocates to Albany to provide community education and raise the profile of Central New York.
- Launched a second CCQI cohort to support 22 Group Family Day Care (GFDC) and Family Child Care (FCC) sites in Onondaga County and deepened partnerships with QUALITYstarsNY, ParentChild+, and HMG Onondaga.

\*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	76
Home Based Child Care (HBCC) Providers Served	11
Children/Families Impacted Through HBCC	79
Outreach Events	28
Sessions Held	2,234
Books & Toys Distributed	1,298



**100%** of participating families exhibited strengthened and improved parent-child interactions.



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



**100%** of 2023 graduates entered a high-quality pre-k or kindergarten program.

### 2023 Successes

- Early Learning Specialists celebrated 20 family graduations from the core portion of the program.
- 5/6 registered providers graduated from the HBCC portion of the program.
- 99% of survey respondents were satisfied with the developmental and cultural relevance of program materials.

**ParentChild+**  
Equal Possibilities From The Start

## 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	27
Training Attendees	35
Film Productions	3
Podcasts	5
Active Coalition Members - Unduplicated	25
Number of Social Media Followers	1,987



Leveraged **\$44,750** in support of health equity and reproductive justice projects.



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

### 2023 Successes

- Layla ambassadors served as panelists and vendors at the New York State Ending the Epidemic Summit and World AIDS Day event and presented a poster at the Inter-CFAR Women and HIV Symposium in California.
- Led a project examining the implementation of Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for cisgender women in primary care settings.

*Layla*

## Parent Ambassador Program Addresses Workforce Concerns

As the ECA continues listening to our community and working to identify ways to strengthen the early childhood system, we consistently hear concerns about the ongoing workforce crisis. In response to those concerns, we launched the Parent Partner Ambassador Program, which trains parents/caregivers of 0-5-year-olds to assist partner organizations with tasks such as distributing diapers, assisting at community events, and organizing supplies/materials.

Ambassador candidates - parents/caregivers looking to get more involved in their community, build positive relationships, and/or share resource information with other families - complete a two-hour training to prepare them for placements with partner organizations. Trained Ambassadors are notified when opportunities arise and invited to "apply." Fyne Ajulu, a member of the ECA's Parent Advisory Council, completed the Parent Partner Ambassador Training with four other moms. When she learned of an opportunity to assist with PEACE, Inc.'s Free Tax Prep Program, she immediately reached out for more information. Fyne now volunteers as an Admin/Intake Processor, assisting clients with booking appointments, answering questions about tax filing, and helping with documentation. "It's been a great opportunity," Fyne said. "I've really enjoyed helping families during tax season."

## Enhancing Early Childhood Development Summit

In September, the ECA and HMG Onondaga welcomed early childhood stakeholders, community partners, and child care professionals from across Onondaga County to Syracuse for the Enhancing Early Childhood Development Summit. The free two-day event offered attendees an opportunity to learn, collaborate, and share best practices related to early childhood development and kicked-off with a keynote address on Early Relational Health by Dr. David Willis, Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Attendees explored the lifelong impacts of early childhood experiences through the Brain Architecture Game, learned about the many factors affecting children's social-emotional well-being, discussed best practices for engaging parents/caregivers, and heard about the many community resources available to families in Onondaga County. Attendees on the second day, intended for child care professionals, also learned about the Ages and Stages developmental questionnaires and how they could implement developmental screening in their programs. Child care professionals also received training credits for their attendance and left with a complimentary bag of resources (books, toys, etc.) for their programs. Many thanks to everyone who attended and/or helped make the event a success!



## Empowering & Uplifting Home-Based Child Care Providers

In 2021, the ECA was selected to participate in Home Grown's Building Comprehensive Networks Initiative, a multi-year learning collaborative centered around strengthening and empowering our local home-based child care providers. As part of this work, the ECA established a Home-Based Provider Steering Committee (HBPSC) that serves as a space for providers to share information and resources, connect and network, collectively identify gaps and opportunities, and work toward recommendations for the ecosystem with a goal to improve quality, access, and affordability for families. The work of the HBPSC leads and informs the child care and early learning work of the ECA.

In 2023, the HBPSC partnered with the University of Massachusetts Boston Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation to offer the Leading for Change leadership development program to a cohort of 11 family child care providers in Onondaga County. The 14-week course cultivates leadership mindsets among participating providers, who develop a Change Project, or concrete action plan, to improve program quality and promote equity.

In early May, the HBPSC took the lead in honoring their fellow early learning educators on National Provider Appreciation Day by hand delivering celebratory lawn signs to all 257 licensed and registered family and group family day care homes in Onondaga County. Our early childhood educators truly are superheroes!



## Help Me Grow Onondaga Achieves Full Implementation Status

Four cooperative and interdependent Core Components characterize the HMG System Model: (1) a Centralized Access Point; (2) Family and Community Outreach; (3) Child Health Care Provider Outreach; and (4) Data Collection and Analysis. The HMG National Center assesses the Affiliate Network annually to determine how far along each HMG system is in Model implementation, using a scale of exploration, installation, implementation, and finally, sustainability.

To be classified as being in full implementation, systems must be actively conducting all sixteen "Key Activities" of the HMG Model in their community or state. HMG Onondaga received the results of our 2022 assessment in June, and we're proud to report that we have achieved full implementation status. Implementing the HMG Model requires large-scale, cross-sector system change, which takes significant time and effort. We're incredibly proud of how far HMG Onondaga has come in its first few years and all that it's doing to support the healthy development of children in Onondaga County.



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## Thank You to Our 2023 Funders

The ECA is grateful to the many funders who make our initiatives and systems work possible. County Executive Ryan McMahon and the Onondaga County Legislature prioritized early childhood investments as part of their antipoverty strategy, and our philanthropic and private sector partners continue to match county support to strengthen the array of services available to children and families.



\*With the fiscal support of Docs for Tots