



Child Care Council  
of Westchester  
**2019**  
**Annual**  
**REPORT**



**Child Care Council  
of Westchester, Inc.**  
INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**The world now realizes what we at the Council have always known: our economy and our communities cannot function without child care and the trained, dedicated professionals who provide it.**

As the Covid-19 crisis closed schools and many businesses, child care providers were asked, and volunteered, to stay open to care for the children of first responders, medical professionals, nonprofit employees, and all essential workers. These people do not need “babysitters” for their children, but trained, background-checked professionals who prioritize safety, cleanliness, love and learning. The same that every working parent always needs in order to earn a living and/or pursue a career. The same that every child needs in order to reach his or her full potential.

Child care providers have stepped up in ways we could never have imagined, including some who have almost nothing for themselves giving up the food in their own cupboards to bring it to the out-of-work families of the children they care for. But Covid-19 did not change these individuals – it just brought their character to light.

It has also brought to light that **the child care industry, and all that depends on it - are in grave peril.** Westchester parents cannot afford quality child care, and too many of them face impossible choices and sacrifices, like choosing between child care and health insurance. Too few parents know about or qualify for a subsidy, and the reimbursement rates for the child care providers are far too low. For moderate-wage-earning parents, there is almost no help at all.

The child care system is broken, and we all suffer for it. Children from low-wage-earning families often do not enter kindergarten as prepared as their more privileged peers, and may never catch up. The lags that could easily have been avoided with quality early care starting at birth – a much sounder investment than almost all remediation/intervention services needed later on – will hinder their academic, social, emotional and physical achievements and well-being, right up to their earning potential as adults. And when children are in unreliable or unsafe child care situations, their parents miss work or are less productive, and it stalls their own earning potential or career growth. Many moms just opt not to stay in or return to the workforce, and their talent and the benefits of a diverse workforce are lost.

There were many wonderful moments and advocacy victories in 2019, which you will read about in these pages. I am proud of our staff, thankful for our Board, and amazed by the child care providers we serve. But the acute crisis we are living through as we assemble this list of accomplishments could be catastrophic if the way we value and fund child care does not change drastically. **More equitable access to affordable, safe, quality early child care IS the key to a brighter future for all of us** – but it must start today. We need the support – voices, dollars, letter-writing, social media shares – of every single person who cares about children, working moms and our economy. Please join us.

Thank you.



Kathleen Halas  
Child Care Council of Westchester



## DID YOU KNOW?

Studies demonstrate that everything from mental health, cardiovascular health, college graduation rates and career earnings improve when children have access to high quality early care starting at birth. They are also less likely to smoke, use drugs, get arrested, or become pregnant as

teenagers.



It's all in the science. From the moment a child is born, interaction with caregivers and her environment create synapses ("connections") between neurons ("brain cells"), thus creating the structure of the brain. Synapses that are strengthened through repetition become permanent. The synapses that are not "excited" are pruned away. So, a child who has more to look at, more to do, more to interact with, more to figure out, more to listen to... will experience greater brain growth. But kindergarten is too late to start this process! By age 3, 80% of her brain has developed. By age 5, it's about 90%.

If parents work, much of this formative time will be spent with a child care provider. The best investment of our resources is in making sure EVERY child, no matter the economic circumstances of her birth, has her best chance of growing a big, brilliant brain. That doesn't happen if she's planted in front of the TV while her parents are working, or if she is in a child care setting with untrained caregivers.

And how do we recognize quality care? It looks like active play, exploration and exercise, builds problem-solving and language/early literacy skills, and encourages independence. It's in clean, safe environments. And there are trained, professional caregivers who provide access to all those things, including the nurturing care that makes children feel physically and emotionally safe.



# we're all #INTHISTOGETHER

Everything you read about in these pages happens because donors, funders, supporters, volunteers, Board members, staff, elected officials, our nonprofit colleagues,

and community and business leaders help make it so. Thank you.

## Our vision

- Every child's potential maximized from birth
- Working parents able to focus on their jobs and rest easy
- Businesses growing with the help of present and productive employees
- Public dollars invested in child care to increase access and quality



## On a daily basis, we:

- **Educate parents** so they understand the standards of quality child care, and can find and evaluate child care programs and explore financial assistance resources
- **Empower child care providers** to increase quality through workshops and training, staff credential programs, improvement grants and more
- **Work with employers** to reduce stress on employees and offer parent-friendly benefits and resources that enable them to find reliable quality child care
- **Advocate at every level of government** to restore/increase funding for child care and early education so it will become more affordable and accessible

## Industry Leadership

Established in 1968, we have long been recognized as Westchester's premier authority on early care and education. In 2017, we were recognized by 914Inc as an Outstanding Nonprofit.

## Collaboration

We are part of a vast network of sectors and stakeholders who work to improve the future. We're proud to take a leadership role in:

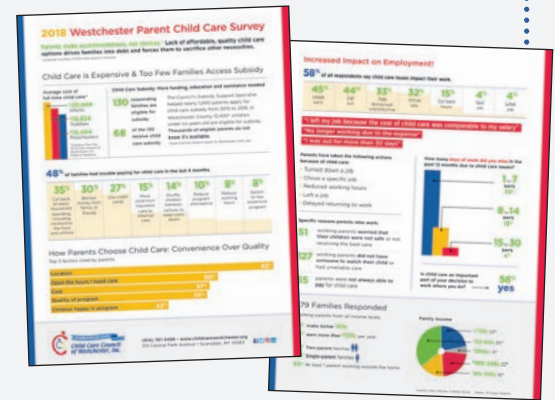
- 0 to 6 Early Childhood Planning Group
- Empire State Campaign for Child Care
- Nonprofit Westchester
- NYS Early Care and Learning Council
- Westchester Association for the Education of Young Children
- Westchester Chapter of the NYAEYC
- Westchester County Families Task Force
- Westchester Women's Agenda
- Winning Beginning New York

## Memberships

- Association of Development Officers
- Business Council of Westchester
- Westchester County Association



- 2,500 mom and dads contacted us to learn how to find and pay for quality child care. We told them about safety standards, critical questions to ask, and other key quality indicators or concerns that otherwise go unrecognized.
- More than 1,100 families received help with the child care subsidy application. This process is complicated, and often becomes a barrier between families and the assistance they need to afford child care.
- 438 Westchester families responded to our annual Parent Survey. This report is critical to demonstrating need when we advocate for child care funding.
- 19 children received a child care scholarship from the Council in 2019. We're working to raise funds to say "yes" to more applicants in the future.



## New! A Regional Approach to Parent Outreach

With funding from the NYS Council on Children and Families, we partnered with our colleagues at the child care resource and referral agencies in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster counties to develop a centralized webpage and phone number. Anyone who visits or calls can be directly connected to the agency that serves their location. [www.HVChildCare.org](http://www.HVChildCare.org)

*Tens of thousands of parents have learned what safe and reliable child care is, and how to find it, thanks to our #GetSmartChildCare campaign, launched in 2015.*



In partnership with the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, it's our job to ensure children in child care settings are safe, eating well, physically active, and getting medication when needed.

- 468 Westchester child care providers were inspected by trained Council specialists.
- 540 nutrition-monitoring visits were conducted, and nearly 2,900 menus reviewed, to ensure compliance with nutritional standards. *We're always educating: our case managers worked with providers to develop healthy recipes, introduce new foods, and encourage children to make healthy choices.*
- During 52 site visits, our Director of Health Care Consultant Services helped child care providers comply with regulations concerning health and infection control, health care plans, administration of medication, care of mildly ill children, and special health care needs like asthma, allergies, diabetes and seizures.

# TRAINING & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOR PROVIDERS

- Nearly 5,000 child care professionals attended our **trainings and conferences** in 2019, a 26% increase from the year before!
  - We proudly awarded the first three **Caring Spaces Endorsements**, which recognize programs that provide high quality infant/toddler care.
  - 95 child care centers/programs worked with us intensively **1-on-1 to improve curriculum**, activities, materials, and classroom design, which contributes to better brain growth for kids in care.
  - 30+ child care professionals graduated from our **intensive 120-hour preparatory classes**, which prepares them to earn the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential from the Council for Professional Development: the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education and a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement.
  - With the Child Care Council as the lead agency coordinating the initiative for the Mid-Hudson region, New York State tripled its investment in Infant Toddler Technical Assistance Centers across the state. As a result, **five new infant/toddler specialists were hired** at resource and referral agencies throughout the region, and provide training, technical assistance and capacity-building services for child care providers.
  - Our Quality in Action program, funded by the Frog Rock Foundation and administered in partnership with FSW, wrapped up a second strong year. A dozen group family programs run by women who are Spanish-speakers worked with **bilingual specialists to raise program quality** and meet the needs of the children and families. The program quality scores of the programs effectively doubled.
- Babies Step Forward (BSF), offered through a sub-contract with Westcop, supported 10 group family providers caring for 64 children including several in foster care. To strengthen communication with Spanish speaking families, a part-time Bilingual Specialist was hired. BSF expanded its **support to victims of domestic violence**, working with Providence House, My Sisters' Place and Hope's Door.
  - The Early Literacy/Family Book Bag Program, in its 10th year with funding from the Sexauer Foundation, brought **books and literacy training/coaching** to 13 classrooms and a family provider. Every child care setting increased its program quality, the majority reaching a "very good" level as measured by Environment Rating Scales.
  - Five programs received our **Cathryn A. Riley Innovation for Quality Prize** funding:
    - ① **Briarcliff Nursery School** for the "BNS Share, Learn and Grown Library," a space within the center for teachers and parents to find books and resources to **support children's social-emotional development**. They will also create "take home" bags for parents to encourage non-tech family time.
    - ② **The Country Childrens Center** to establish an "Afterschool Makers Club" in a school-based afterschool program to encourage student-driven learning that **promotes open-ended experimentation, collaboration, and problem-solving**.
    - ③ **The Early Childhood Center at the Memorial Methodist United Church** to **build self-esteem** in children who struggle in a group setting using the Pyramid Model and Mindfulness techniques in the "Incorporating Strategies to increase Social-Emotional and Adaptive Skills in Preschool Children Exhibiting Executive Functioning Deficit" project.



④ **Mindful Tots Nursery** to **expose children living in an urban setting to nature** through creation of an outdoor mud kitchen and vegetable garden. In the “Learning Through Nature” project, the children will not only experience a greater connection to nature, they will also learn about good nutrition and environmental sustainability.

⑤ **Weekday Nursery School** in a collaboration with Iona College to **create fine motor centers** in their preschool classrooms. In this “Fine Motor Center Collaboration” project, the children will strengthen fine motor and visual motor skills needed for kindergarten and graduate students in occupational therapy will gain hands-on experience in an early childhood setting.



◁ *Also funded through the Cathryn A. Riley Leadership Fund, we were proud to provide Theresa McCaffrey, Owner/ Director of Little Leaf Nursery in Hastings, a scholarship to participate in Volunteer New York’s Leadership Westchester program.*

*Child Care Council member Clara Leonardo and her team at Happy Klubhouse Child Care in Buchanan were the first in Westchester to earn our Caring Spaces endorsement.* ▷



▷ *CDA course graduates*

## WHERE BUSINESS & CHILD CARE MEET

Just as we must provide affordable housing and reliable public transportation, we must ensure the widespread availability and affordability of safe, quality child care.

Without it, working parents, particularly mothers, are unable to build their careers, and the economy and the community suffer as a result. To that end, in 2019, we expanded our partnership with the Business Council of Westchester and individual Westchester employers.

- Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul joined us for Where Business and Child Care Meet, a forum hosted by the Business Council of Westchester’s Education Foundation, to introduce employers to the issues employees face related to child care, and how they can help. We’re grateful to BCW President and CEO Dr. Marsha Gordon, Executive Vice President and COO John Ravitz, and Education Foundation Chair Maria Bronzi for their leadership.



“To help working parents find a safe, reliable place for their children, at no cost to them or us – is an amazing resource to any nonprofit agency. I wish we’d done this years ago.”



*James Kaufman, President & CEO, Abbott House*

We worked closely with Abbott House’s Director of Human Resources, John McGrath, to offer our free child care referral services to the organization’s nearly 700 employees. We also connected John with our colleagues in New York City, so AH employees based there can access services as well.

Morgan Stanley team members, including our own Board Member Joyce Cadesca, spent hours at the Council sorting 2,000 books collected by their co-workers and through our book drive. Then, through our Book Bag Program funded by the Sexauer Foundation, the books were distributed to struggling families and the child care providers who serve them. ▷



Shake Shack continued its amazing support in 2019. Not only do we receive 5% of the sales from the delicious Pie Oh My Concrete dessert at the Hartsdale location, but Will Poppe, Shake Shack’s Area Director for New York and Jersey, announced that when the new store opens at The Westchester, its charitable endeavors will also support the Child Care Council. Shake Shack Hartsdale also collaborated with us on our annual toy drive and offers a monthly donation day for the Council.



## OH, WHAT A NIGHT(S)!

We hosted two amazing celebrations in 2019.



At Dream Big, our annual fundraising celebration in October, we honored Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, Ninth Judicial Administrative Judge Kathie E. Davidson, PepsiCo, and Shake Shack. We were thrilled to raise \$110,000, with \$15,000 going directly to child care scholarships for families in need.





# EFFECTIVE advocacy

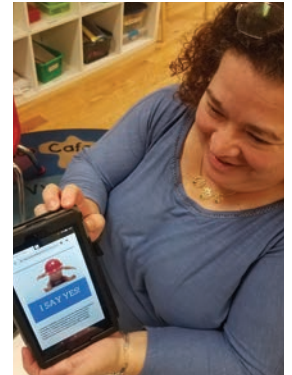
In the fall of 2019, the Council's Advocacy on the Go team launched its **I Say Yes** campaign, visiting child care centers countywide to ask parents to add their voices to our call for increased government, business and philanthropic investment in quality early learning. Over a thousand parents quickly SAID YES!

2019 saw welcome increases in government support at every level – county, state and federal. An historic increase in the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, which is the primary source of child care subsidy funding, delivered nearly \$96 million of additional child care funding to New York. County Executive George Latimer's budget included \$1.6 million more for child care than was projected to be spent in 2018 and the Board of Legislators added another \$418,000. The bottom line? Parents receiving the child care subsidy paid less (a 2% cut), providers with DSS subsidy contracts saw a reimbursement rate increase of 6%, and 100 additional slots were funded.

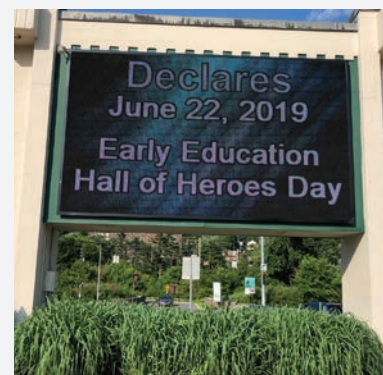
**RIGHT: CCCW 2019 Advocacy Committee**  
**FAR RIGHT: A parent says YES!**



***Kathy Halas, along with Child Care Council Board members, nonprofit leaders and child care providers and center owners, frequently ask elected officials to inject more public investment into our child care system, so high quality is more universally available and affordable. As New York's minimum wage increases, more and more hard-working parents are losing eligibility for child care financial assistance, but they are a long way from being able to pay for care without such help.***



In June, we inducted the inaugural class - 18 early care and after school educators, directors, owners, administrators and advocates - into the Early Education Hall of Heroes. More than 200 community members joined us at Mercy College for the event.



***Thank you to County Executive George Latimer for declaring June 22, 2019 Early Education Hall of Heroes Day in honor of our event!***

# CONTRIBUTORS

We are  
immensely  
grateful for your  
vital support!

July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

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Assured Partners  
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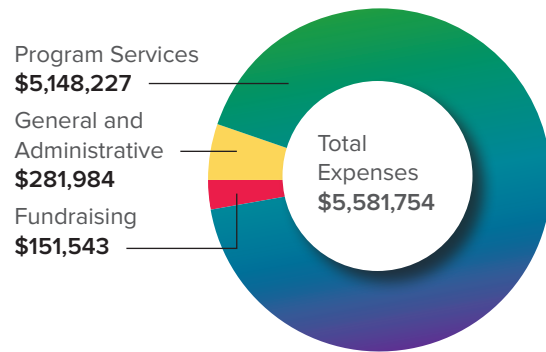
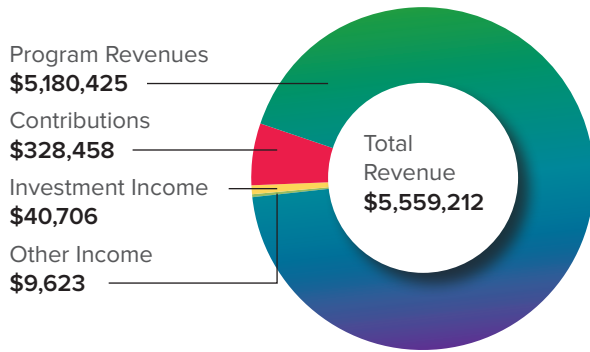
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## Grants

Grants received from our generous business, individual and nonprofit partners allow us to offer important and innovative programs that improve early care and learning for children in Westchester.

Grantor	Purpose
Frog Rock Foundation	Quality Improvement for Spanish-Speaking Family Providers
IBM	Board Development
The M&T Charitable Foundation	General Support
Sexauer Foundation	Early Literacy
Edith Glick Shoolman Foundation	General Support
Philip and Lynn Straus Foundation, Inc.	General Support
Zupon Family Foundation	Child Care Scholarships
Anonymous (1)	General Support

## Government Contracts

- New York State Department of Health
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services
- Westchester County Department of Social Services
- Westchester County Office for Women
- Westchester County Office of Workforce Investment
- U.S. Administration for Children and Families - Head Start (through grantee WestCOP)

While program updates are for the 2019 calendar year, financials apply to the fiscal year: July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019.

For the Child Care Council's complete 2018-2019 audited financial statement, visit [childcarewestchester.org/pdf/2018-2019\\_Financial\\_Audit.pdf](http://childcarewestchester.org/pdf/2018-2019_Financial_Audit.pdf)



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**Jeff Samuelson**  
*Retired Senior Business Executive*

**Laura Stout-Sosinsky, PhD**  
*Research Scientist, Public Health Management Corporation*

**Steven Wismuller**  
*VP for Government and Public Sector, MasterCard*

## Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc Staff

### Management Team

**Kathleen Halas**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Idie Benjamin**  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

**Michael Goldman**  
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DIRECTOR

**Elissa Guzzardi**  
HEALTH CARE CONSULTANT SERVICES DIRECTOR

**Lindsay Iacovello**  
PROVIDER SERVICES DIRECTOR

**Dana Lawless**  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

**Nicole Masucci**  
FAMILY AND EMPLOYER SERVICES DIRECTOR

**Juanita Pope**  
OFFICE AND COMMUNITY EVENTS MANAGER

**Alexandra Santana**  
PROVIDER SERVICES ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

### Finance Staff

**Christine Iacovello**  
BOOKKEEPER

### Administrative Staff

**Jovanna Romero**  
RECEPTIONIST

**Gabriella Montano**  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

### Professional Development Staff

**Michele Cianci**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY SPECIALIST

**Laura Cleare**  
QUALITY SPECIALIST/FAMILY PROVIDER NETWORK COORDINATOR

**Dana Doyle**  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

**Jami Flynn**  
INFANT/TODDLER REGIONAL COORDINATOR

**Teresa Garcia**  
BI-LINGUAL EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY SPECIALIST

**Yvette Homar**  
BABIES STEP FORWARD TEACHER'S ASSISTANT

**Juliana Leshi**  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

**Sarah Merrifield**  
INFANT/TODDLER SPECIALIST

**Cynthia Miller**  
BABY STEPS FORWARD SPECIALIST

**Carmelita Ozoa-Bota**  
INFANT/TODDLER SPECIALIST

**Susan Panarella**  
INFANT TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST

### Resource & Referral Staff

**Cathy Fernandez**  
RESOURCE AND REFERRAL DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR

**Debbie Gonsalves**  
RESOURCE & REFERRAL COORDINATOR

**Arlene Leuzzi**  
RESOURCE AND REFERRAL ASSISTANT/CHILD CARE COUNSELOR

**Andrea Rosendo**  
RESOURCE & REFERRAL COUNSELOR

**Melanie Santana**  
CHILD CARE SUBSIDY SPECIALIST

### Provider Services Staff

**Latoya Carney-Ramsey**  
PROVIDER SERVICES SUPERVISOR

### REGISTRATION

**Evelyn Henriques**  
**Michele Sardullo**  
**Phillip Wise**  
REGISTRARS

**Elsa Sanchez**  
**Monica Soto**  
BILINGUAL REGISTRARS

### LEGALLY EXEMPT

**Nairobi Rosario**  
**Jason Thomas**  
LEGALLY EXEMPT ENROLLERS

### Child & Adult Food Program

**Jessica Cardenas**  
CACFP BILINGUAL CASE MANAGER

**Jury Martinez**  
CACFP BILINGUAL CASE MANAGER

**Janet Romano-Fernandez**  
CACFP BILINGUAL CASE MANAGER



[childcarewestchester.org](http://childcarewestchester.org)

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