



*“Do the best you can until
you know better.
Then when you know better,
do better.”*

-Maya Angelou



Message from the PRESIDENT

Reflecting on this past year is fraught with mixed emotions. The impact of COVID-19 on early learning and afterschool programs has been dramatic. They are anxious about their ability to remain in business with reduced capacity and staffing, as well as limited financial resources. Many will not survive, and we are concerned about the impacts for children, families, and the business community.

These are challenging times, and as we strive to meet the current demands, I must also acknowledge the amazing commitment of those who make our work possible. To our Board of Directors, thank you for providing oversight and guidance on behalf of the Forum's mission. To our funders, thank you for supporting our work and believing in us. To our members, thank you for your investment in the future of Florida's young children, and to our Children's Forum staff, thank you for your perseverance and dedication. In spite of numerous challenges, we also celebrated the following achievements in 2019-2020:

- Governor Ron DeSantis acknowledged the importance of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and the Help Me Grow® Florida programs administered by the Forum as reflected in budget appropriations of \$10 million for T.E.A.C.H. and \$1.8 million for Help Me Grow. Considering the impact of COVID-19 on the state's budget, we are grateful for and applaud both his support and the Legislature for recommending funding of these key initiatives.
- While the impact of COVID-19 on the early childhood field has been devastating, our T.E.A.C.H. and Early Learning Career Center teams fully expended their scholarship allocations (\$10 million and \$1 million budgets, respectively) to enable the early learning workforce to pursue their educational goals, leading to improved outcomes for young children. We applaud all who worked diligently under adverse conditions to make this happen.
- We moved our corporate offices into a new building. The new location, which is close to both the Capitol and Florida's Office of Early Learning, will make it easier to collaborate with policy makers and other key stakeholders as we work towards mutual goals.

I am also excited to announce that the Forum is now the administrative home for the Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) and will coordinate the activities for Children's Week 2021! We look forward to both of these endeavors to strengthen our collective resolve to serve and promote policy solutions for our state's children.

As Maya Angelou stated, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." Now more than ever, these words ring true. This pandemic has taught us much. A strong economy depends upon a stable child care and early learning infrastructure and the essential nature of its workforce. Join with us in educating and advocating for quality early learning and afterschool services for children and their families, and help keep Florida working!

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.
President & CEO



Message from the BOARD CHAIR

In a year when COVID-19 upended our world, the Children's Forum pivoted quickly to address the special challenges facing early education. At the federal and state level, the Forum advocated for industry support and more emergency COVID-19 funding for early learning programs. Internally, we learned to do things differently in the programs we administer. For example, the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Program reimbursed scholars who purchased a new computer or laptop so they could continue their studies online without missing a beat. The Help Me Grow program helped parents and children navigate the current crisis by connecting them to the food, health, and housing resources they need. Further, by continuing to provide financial support during the shutdown, the INCENTIVES\$ program helped stabilize an already stressed workforce.

I am particularly proud of the Forum's respected voice and leadership in this challenging time. The Forum was selected by the Child Care Services Association to create a team exploring higher education barriers. Forum innovations include dual language courses to improve access to higher education for students who need those support and rapid credentials for early educators through high school Career and Technical Education programs. In addition, T.E.A.C.H. created a targeted scholarship model to motivate early educators to earn an Infant-Toddler certificate.

The Forum continues to be a key resource for business community efforts at the Florida Chamber Foundation to bring more support to early learning. The Foundation has announced a goal of eliminating poverty in Florida by 2030. Poverty costs all of us, and a critical element of reducing the negative effects of poverty is to ensure affordable high-quality early learning for all Florida families.

With the onset of COVID-19, we saw nearly everyone finally realize the importance of safe and high-quality early care and education. Without it, first responders can't work, economies can't reopen, and we all suffer. Indeed, early educators are and have always been essential.

The Forum is proud to be at the forefront of these efforts to improve early education, especially now.

Bob Buesing, J.D.
Board Chair

PROGRAMS OF THE



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 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 an Associate, Bachelor's, or Master's Degree in early childhood education, a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, a Florida Staff Credential, a Director Credential, or credential renewals.

T.E.A.C.H. maintains a three-way partnership in which the early childhood educator, the sponsoring program (the scholar'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.

Accomplishments

- ★ T.E.A.C.H. scholars attended 74 approved training programs, colleges and universities
- ★ 27,450 credit hours were taken by T.E.A.C.H. scholars
- ★ 2,412 licensed early child care programs had at least one employee who participated in T.E.A.C.H.

Impact

- ★ 99 percent of sponsors and scholars would recommend T.E.A.C.H. to other early educators

- ★ The average GPA for T.E.A.C.H. scholars was 3.40, helping to create an educated early learning workforce that knows how to nurture the growing minds of children
- ★ The turnover rate for T.E.A.C.H. scholars was 5.2 percent, significantly lower than the national turnover rate of 30-40 percent
- ★ T.E.A.C.H. scholars earned an average increase of 7.64 percent in earnings, which supports the economic viability of the early childhood workforce



Child Care Evaluation Services

Now in its 13th 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 (ECE) 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
- ★ Coordinating the DCF annual Statewide Child Care Training Meeting

Accomplishments

- ★ An average of 1,869 early childhood/family child care home programs maintained a Gold Seal designation
- ★ One newsletter and three brochures for DCF were produced

Impact

- ★ Early childhood educators 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

CHILDREN'S FORUM 2019-2020

Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida

Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida, an affiliate of Child Care WAGES®, rewards early childhood educators with financial incentives based on their education and continuity of employment. By retaining the early childhood workforce, INCENTIVE\$ provides children with more stable relationships and better-educated teachers. INCENTIVE\$ addresses individual professional development efforts and low wages, but does not affect budgets, regular wages, or parent fees within the child care program. 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 enhancing the professional development of early childhood educators to improve the quality of child care programs.

Accomplishments

- ★ 3,065 early childhood educators received at least one financial incentive
- ★ 995 childcare programs participated in INCENTIVE\$, serving more than 62,000 children throughout the state
- ★ The average six-month financial incentive was \$435, which is equivalent to at least \$0.42 more per hour

Impact

- ★ The turnover rate for INCENTIVE\$ participants was 9 percent, compared to the national average turnover rate of 30-40 percent
- ★ 95 percent of participants stated the program is an incentive for them to seek additional education
- ★ 94 percent of participants reported INCENTIVE\$ helped to ease financial stress
- ★ 96 percent of participants stated participating in INCENTIVE\$ encourages them to stay in program

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 Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida funded by TCT and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.

Accomplishments

- ★ The ELCC serves a highly diverse workforce:
 - 80% identify Hispanic as their ethnicity
 - 79% speak a primary language other than English
 - 40% are bilingual
- ★ 68 percent of QIS educators accepted TCT scholarships and/or INCENTIVE\$ financial supports over the last year
- ★ 78 percent of educators who did not hold a Florida Staff Credential upon entry into the QIS have since obtained one

Impact

- ★ QIS educators have higher quality interactions with the children in their classrooms when they hold degrees, accept more scholarships, and receive INCENTIVE\$ financial supports
- ★ Early childhood educators who earn a degree and a credential, learn to speak English fluently, and stay in the QIS for 5 years or more can increase their annual salaries by \$10,171 on average

Help Me Grow® Florida

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) promotes 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 by giving them parenting and developmental information, referral services, and available community resources. HMGF care coordinators continue to follow-up with the family until their needs have been met.

Accomplishments

- ★ 6,471 children and 5,731 families were served by HMGF
- ★ 7,621 developmental and behavioral screenings were completed using the ASQ-3, ASQ SE-2, PSC, or M-CHAT R/F tools. Of these screenings, 44 percent resulted in at least one concern or need for monitoring
- ★ 58 Books, Balls, and Blocks community screening events were held across Florida last year, which resulted in 884 screenings and 205 referrals
- ★ 4,198 referrals were made to community services and programs, and 75 percent of children were successfully connected to at least one of those services

- ★ 3,338 healthcare providers received information on HMGF and the importance of developmental screening and surveillance
- ★ More than 313 health care provider partnerships were maintained and established

Impact

- ★ Through cross-sector collaboration, HMGF is able to identify and facilitate existing and effective services so that families can access resources when they need them
- ★ HMG supports the early identification of developmental delays in young children by offering developmental and behavioral screenings
- ★ HMGF connects children to beneficial resources as early as possible, which sets them on a path for healthy development and lifelong positive outcomes

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 childhood 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.

Accomplishments

- ★ Approximately 2,400 early childhood educators in Palm Beach county and approximately 4,000 early childhood educators in Miami-Dade county were active participants in the registry

Impact

- ★ Workforce trends from the registries can be used to make policy-informed decisions to improve early care and education (ECE) programs

Assessment and Coaching Services Unit

The Children's Forum holds a contract with the Florida Office of Early Learning for providing Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation and coaching services within each county in Florida. As one of a select few OEL contracted vendors for providing these services, the Forum offers early learning coalitions and other agencies with CLASS support services on an as-needed basis to assist them in meeting state-mandated program assessment requirements.

Accomplishments

- ★ Provided CLASS assessment services to 18 early learning coalitions and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) since services began.
- ★ Conducted assessments in every region and in 23 counties across the state
- ★ Have a cadre of 56 certified CLASS assessors and coaches throughout Florida available to provide services on behalf of the Children's Forum

Impact

- ★ 1,321 CLASS assessments conducted to date
- ★ 518 early learning programs throughout Florida have received assessments conducted by the Children's Forum
- ★ CLASS observations and coaching help to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions, which are important to young children's learning and development

Forum Moves to New Tallahassee Location

Employees from the Forum's Tallahassee headquarters have moved into a new office location. Our centrally-located building provides opportunities to add additional space as we continue to grow and as our funding dictates. We remain committed to serving our program recipients, clients, funders, board of directors, and members.

Our new office address is:
1211 Governors Square Boulevard, Suite 200
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Forum Hosts Webinars in Wake of COVID-19

The Forum hosted three COVID-19 webinars in the summer of 2020. These webinars were intended for child care program directors and early educators and focused on how to protect children, families, and employees. Topics included legal obligations for program directors to consider, strategies to ensure safe daily operations, and perspectives from early educators on best practices and challenges they may have faced during COVID-19. The webinars were recorded and can be viewed at www.flchild.com/forum-webinar-series.

T.E.A.C.H. to Reimburse Active Scholars for the Cost of a New Computer or Laptop

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (T.E.A.C.H.) can now cover the purchase of a new computer or laptop (up to \$500) for active scholars taking online coursework. Operated by the Children's Forum, T.E.A.C.H. is helping to improve the compensation, education, and retention of the early learning workforce. Scholars can find out if they are eligible for a new computer by contacting their T.E.A.C.H. counselor at 877-FL-TEACH (877-358-3224).

Forum to Serve as the Administrative Hub for the Florida Afterschool Network

We are pleased to welcome the Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) and Director Brian Hickey to the Children's Forum. The Forum will serve as the administrative home for FAN, and Brian will continue to lead efforts to improve and expand high-quality afterschool opportunities that are accessible, affordable, accountable, and inclusive. To learn more, visit flafterschool.com.

Forum to Lead 2021 Children's Week Florida™ Efforts

The Children's Forum is pleased to be the organizing partner for Children's Week Florida™ as we move forward to strengthen our collective resolve on behalf of Florida's children and youth. This year has given us an opportunity to pause, reflect on past successes, and reset our goals for Children's Week Florida™ 2021. Please mark your calendars for April 5-9, and plan to join with us as we make children the priority for Florida's future.



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* Five-Nine Years of Service
** Ten-Fourteen Years of Service
*** Fifteen Years of Service 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 fortunate and proud of their commitment and dedication to our work and grateful for their generous service.

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Funders & Clients

- Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
- Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County
- CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early.
- ELC of Broward County
- ELC of Escambia County
- 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 Counties
- ELC of the Nature Coast
- ELC of Northwest Florida
- ELC of Osceola County
- ELC of Pinellas County
- ELC of Polk County
- ELC of Sarasota County
- ELC of Seminole County
- ELC of Southwest Florida
- Florida Afterschool Network
- Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAEYC)
- Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Family Child Care Home Association
- Florida Head Start Association
- Florida's Office of Early Learning
- The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County



Financial Report

2019-2020	Revenue	Expenditures
T.E.A.C.H. (Office of Early Learning & Private)	\$10,477,947	\$10,488,868
Help Me Grow	\$1,754,976	\$1,754,997
Professional Development/Quality Initiatives	\$1,100,763	\$1,124,458
Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVES\$ Florida	\$1,509,299	\$1,503,919
Program Assessment Center	\$98,700	\$115,921
Child Care Evaluation Services	\$179,177	\$147,725
Other	\$321,114	\$304,194
TOTAL	\$15,441,976	\$15,440,082



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