



Children's  
FRIEND



2019 - 2020

# Head Start Annual Report

# DEAR FRIENDS

Dear Friends,

This has undoubtedly been an unprecedented year as we all deal with the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic.

In carrying forward our mission to improve the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children, Children's Friend has proactively responded to this crisis by implementing new policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure the health and safety of our staff, children, and their families.

This year, as we welcomed children back into the classroom, we continue to engage families during these uncertain times and enthusiastically enter into the second decade of providing our Head Start program at Children's Friend.

As we transition through COVID-19, our preschool children practice proper social distancing in their classrooms as they learn and grow in a high-quality educational environment, thereby ensuring a smooth transition into kindergarten.

In addition to providing an exceptional Head Start program, we are also proud of our work in providing services for infants, toddlers, pregnant women, as well as parents and families.

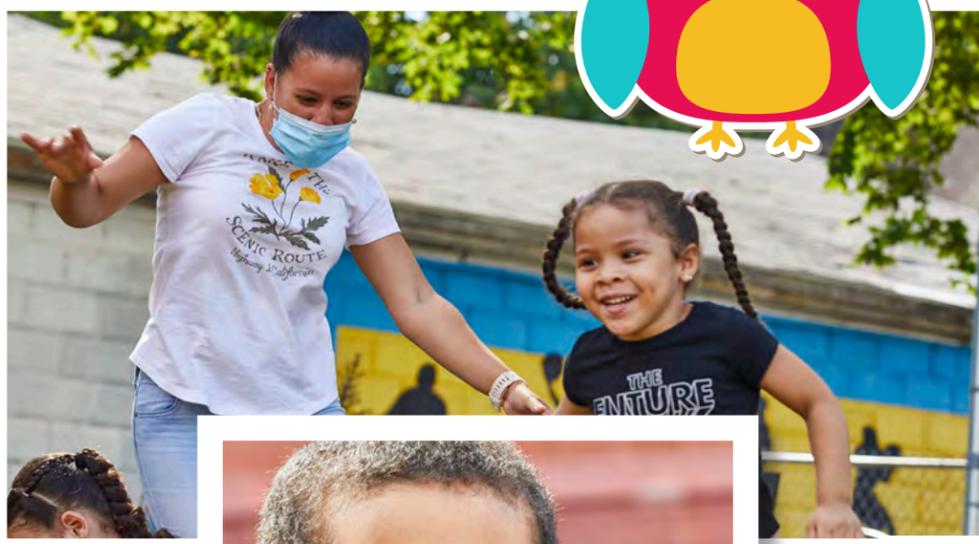
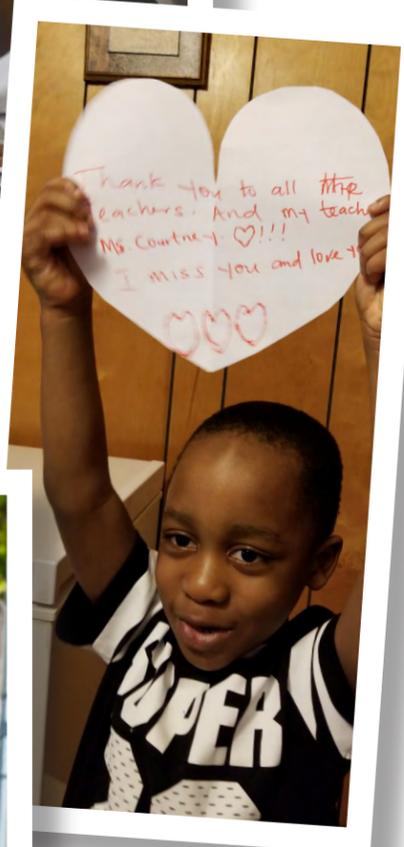
Through our Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs, Children's Friend is committed to our principles of being family-centered, seamless, outcome-driven, advocates of the youngest and most vulnerable children, and stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

We certainly have a fantastic team here at Children's Friend. I am so grateful for the support and involvement of the Children's Friend community. The success of our programs is evident because of your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,

*Dana Mullen*

Dana Mullen  
Chief of Programs  
Children's Friend



# About Children's Friend

## Family-Centered:

Discovering child and family needs and working with families to best meet them. Providing opportunities for families to be meaningfully engaged in the design of services. Being committed to serving families of diverse cultures and lifestyles in a non-biased and non-judgmental way.

## Seamless:

Coordinating and integrating our services to ensure that families receive the support they need, regardless of point of entry to the agency. When our families face challenges outside our expertise, we partner with other high-quality organizations.

## Outcome-Driven:

Thoughtfully measuring the impact and effectiveness of our services. Engaging in ongoing learning and innovation to ensure we are offering effective services to children and families. Consistently identifying what we can improve, doing what we can do best, and measuring our self against national benchmarks.

## Advocates:

Taking a leadership role in educating policymakers and the public on the needs of the youngest and most vulnerable children, even when it means taking risks for the benefit of children.

## Stewards:

Taking responsibility for growing and sustaining our human and financial capital. Demonstrating respect and cultural sensitivity for our community, staff, and Board.

## Our Mission

Children's Friend is the innovative leader in improving the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children.

## Our Strategic Priority

Too many of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rhode Island are experiencing devastating outcomes, including death, as a result of abuse and neglect. As stewards of the resources entrusted to us, Children's Friend is realigning itself to proactively respond to this crisis.

Children's Friend is a member of the Child Welfare League of America and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation.



**Children's Friend, a non-profit organization founded in 1834, is Rhode Island's oldest child-serving organization, and a leading provider of child welfare, family support, mental health, and child development services.**

# MEET NAOMI



Naomi Stanley

Dear Friends,

I want to start by thanking all the staff for always being supportive. As a former childcare worker of 15 years, it was my first time on the other side, being the parent. My son, Walter, started Head Start when he was three years old. It was his first time away from me and home. He always woke up happy because he loved going to school. Walter had plenty of friends and would come home from school with stories.

After a few months of attending, I noticed some behavioral issues that we're developing. I brought my concerns to the teacher, and she was very supportive and even spoke to the behavior specialist. They worked with him in school and helped me to redirect his actions.

I am very grateful to be a member of the Policy Council. During this time, I have attended conferences and training sessions to better myself and grow as a parent. As a Policy Council member, I have also been involved with hiring staff and participating in interviews. I volunteered my time in the classroom and enjoyed reading and playing with all the children. My son and I could be a part of the ribbon-cutting for the grand opening of a new Children's Friend site. I met so many people who have helped me grow these past two years.

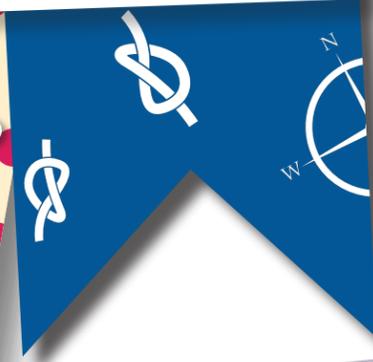
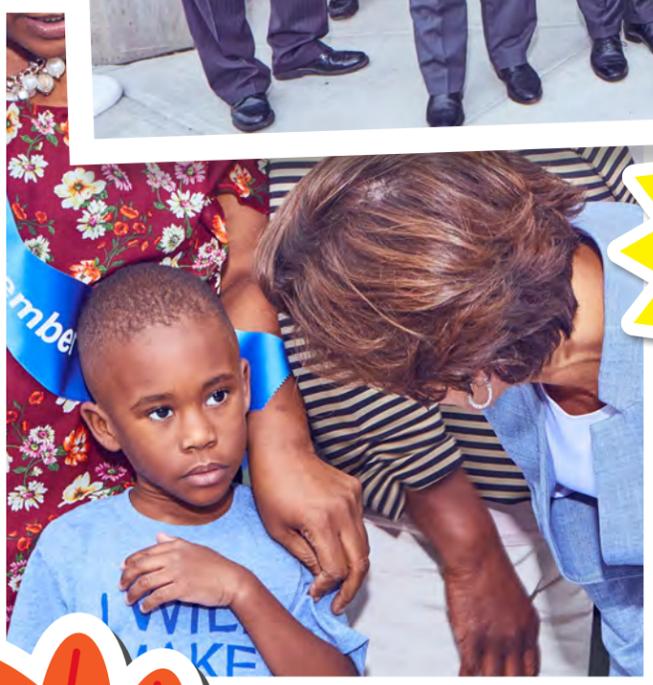
My experience with this organization has been great. I had a drastic change in my income, and I was facing eviction. I spoke with my family worker and received emergency assistance funding to help me keep a roof over our heads. I will be forever grateful to Children's Friend for providing me with the tools and resources to help me build a better path for my kids. I have had so many different experiences with Children's Friend. I feel blessed to be a part of this great organization.

Head Start changes lives. Always greeted with a smile, the kids get to grow and learn in a beautiful environment with lots of love and support from everyone. I look forward to my daughter experiencing the same fun and adventure that her brother so very much enjoyed.

Sincerely,

Naomi Stanley

Naomi Stanley  
Chair of the Policy Council  
Children's Friend



# MEET ANA

Dear Friends,

Where do I begin? As a first-time mom, letting go can be very difficult. However, Children's Friend has made the process so much easier. All of my initial concerns were resolved within the first week, and the transition to my son Pedro's first experience within an educational setting was much easier than I expected. I knew early on that my son was in good hands. He fell in love with his teachers quite quickly due to their loving and approachable natures.

Communication is vital, and his teachers have always maintained open communication and have guided me along the way. Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, things have been quite different. However, one thing that has not changed is communication with his teachers and the care we have been shown.

A member of Children's Friend staff even went out of her way to make sure my son had fresh fruits, vegetables, and dairy since it was difficult for us to leave home to buy groceries at that time. I am glad to count Children's Friend staff as just that, friends.

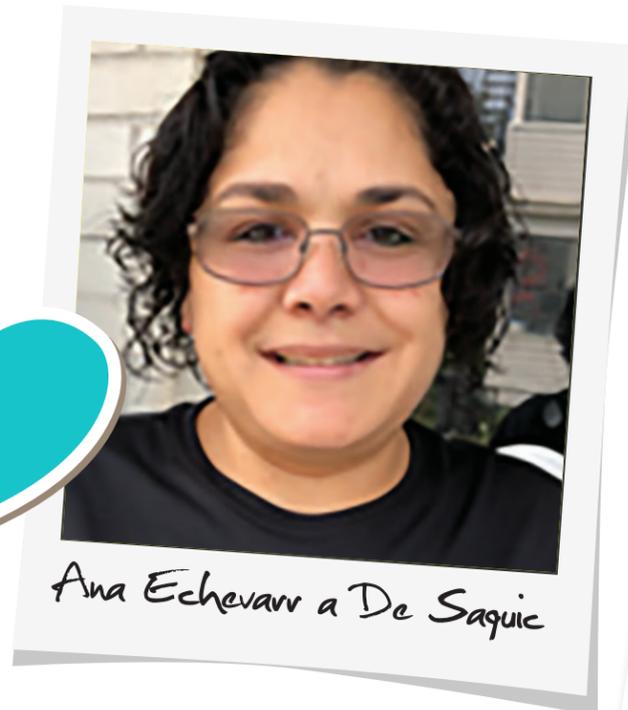
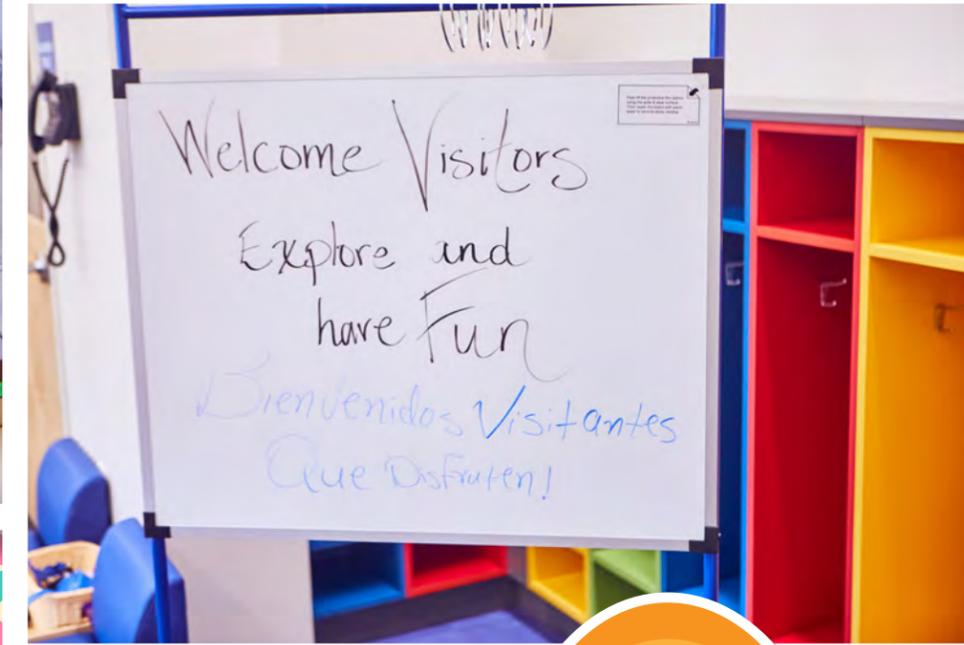
Pedro has learned so much socially and otherwise. At four years old, he is writing his first name and so much more. Pedro enjoys spending time with his peers and using his creativity when telling stories. He is most definitely off to a great start.

Pedro's time at Children's Friend has inspired a book entitled "Pedro Penguin's Off to the Beach," which we hope to have published shortly. Pedro is growing up and will be off to kindergarten in 2021. Children's Friend will forever be in our hearts.

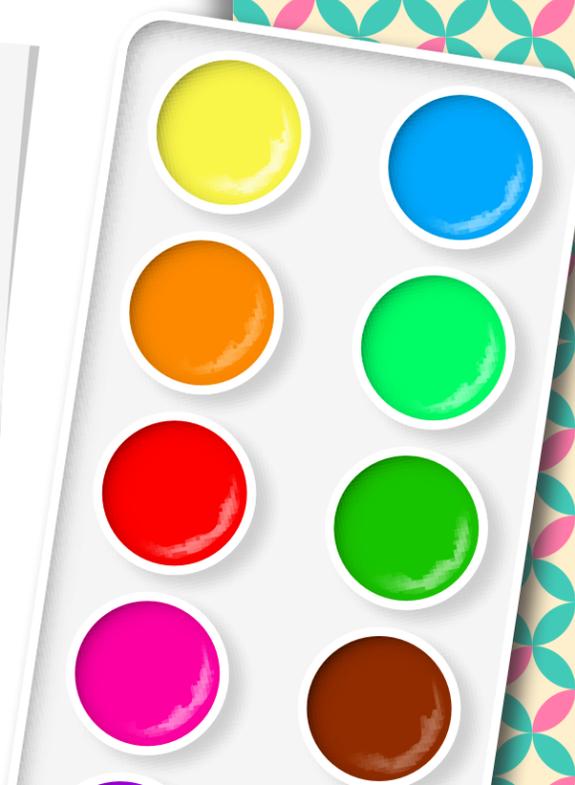
Sincerely,

*Ana Echevarría De Saquic*

Ana Echevarría De Saquic  
Vice Chair of the Policy Council  
Children's Friend



*Ana Echevarría De Saquic*



# PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



At Children's Friend, family participation and engagement is essential: parents/families and children alike benefit from integrated efforts and a comprehensive approach. Family participation is encouraged throughout the program: it's integral to all services' design and is the Family Engagement Team's primary goal.

Children's Friend hosted back to school kick-off events in July and August, welcoming all families to the new school year. Families were provided with information about their center, calendars of monthly Parent Committees and Policy Council meetings, and ideas on strengthening engagement with the center, classroom, and program. The screening process for children began, and parents could meet their Family Advocate and complete the enrollment process.

All parents of currently enrolled children are invited to be part of their center's Parent Committee and, therefore, be part of the Policy Council. Both groups meet monthly. All Head Start families completed an "Interest Survey." Results of the survey were used in the development of agendas and workshops for Parent Committees. These workshops provided information on work readiness programs, financial literacy programs, and community resources. Library cards were distributed to children at centers, and representatives from the library explained the services and programs they offer. In January, the Family Engagement Team also presented an informational session to Parent Committees about the 2020 Census and the importance of being counted.

Policy Council meetings and hiring interviews, usually held in-person, have been held via Zoom since the pandemic began. During these meetings, members receive programmatic updates and reports and participate in developing program goals and

initiatives. Members are notified of changes or updates regarding COVID-19, and discussions are held on how these changes affect their children and the program. Over the year, Policy Council members received training on multiple topics, including CPR/First Aid, Effective Communication, Ethics, Child Development, Confidentiality, Professionalism, Child Abuse and Neglect, and Toxic Stress. The Policy Council has been incredibly engaged despite the challenges of not being able to meet in person.

Families were encouraged to participate in Flu Clinics held by Children's Friend: translation and support was provided for families, and information and education about the importance of the flu vaccine was shared, too.

Children's Friend has remained in close contact with parents and families during the Covid-19 pandemic. Via Zoom and telephone calls multiple times each week and socially distanced in-person meetings outdoors as weather permits. The Children's Friend team responded to their individual needs with emotional support, information, and resources like food and meals, as their individual needs dictated.

Additionally, our efforts to incentivize family engagement continued with great success. With the help of donations from local businesses, families were welcomed to two "Incentive Stores." Families were able to accrue points through their participation in meetings, training, events, and center celebrations, which were then redeemed for the donated items.



# SCHOOL READINESS

## NOTES

School readiness is viewed as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later in life, and the extent that children are ready for school, families are ready to support children's learning, and schools are ready for children.

Each year, we seek to improve School Readiness outcomes for the children in our Head Start, Early Head Start (center- and home-based), and Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships programs.

We use the Teachings Strategies GOLD (GOLD)® to develop curricula and track child outcomes. GOLD® is a birth to kindergarten assessment system that assesses school readiness on a per-student level. It is completed three times throughout the school year and provides individualized assessment and feedback to teachers and parents to help identify children's strengths and challenges, and to track student progress. It is also used to assess program efficacy and improvement on a classroom-, center-, and agency-level.

The following graphs show the percentages of children in all Children's Friend sites who were meeting/exceeding expectations in the developmental areas of social-emotional, physical, language, Spanish language, cognitive, literacy, Spanish literacy, and mathematics. Please note that spring data is unavailable due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

## GOALS

### HS Meeting/Exceeding Expectations



### EHS CCP Meeting/Exceeding Expectations



### EHS HB Meeting/Exceeding Expectations



# FAMILY ADVOCACY DURING A PANDEMIC

"Families miss us, and we miss them." This is how one Family Advocate at Children's Friend sums up her feelings while trying to adjust to the "new normal" way of doing her job during a global pandemic.

As a Family Advocate, Cruz is frustrated at not being able to meet with clients in their homes as she did before the outbreak of COVID-19. Along with other Family Advocates, Cruz faces a challenging task. How does she continue supporting families and delivering services without physical contact? Cruz affirms, "We need to be able to connect with our families."

Socialization and connecting with families is so crucial for the relationship. Therefore, Family Advocates like Cruz began planning for creative ways to bring families together while still practicing social distancing by arranging meetings on family porches, back yards, and nearby parks. Families were quick to embrace the idea of virtual socialization, which allowed them to remain in the comfort of their own homes.

This new way of connecting offered a more relaxed learning opportunity, making it easier for families to engage in fun-filled educational activities.

In facilitating Virtual Socialization Groups, Family Advocates sent children and parents virtual invitations to participate in a weekly, fun learning activity. The first virtual group activity involved Family Advocates delivering baking materials so families could bake cupcakes, decorate them, and enjoy the cupcakes as a family. Perceived as a fun and delicious activity for children, Family Advocates helped parents understand how this fun activity is connected with learning.

Virtual group discussions also focused on the anxiety associated with going back to school and provided parents and children the opportunity to begin to manage their fears and apprehension. Other group discussions included the importance of wearing a mask and washing hands, a lesson that had an activity demonstrating for children how using soap protects from germs.

Other creative activities for children utilized by Family Advocates include creating animal masks, sensory play with water, interactive reading, and virtual yoga. In addition to virtual socialization, our passionate team of Family Advocates embarked on door deliveries to ensure families had hard-to-find items such as cleaning supplies, masks, diapers, and toilet paper.

Community emergency funding and donations from local restaurants provided gift cards, meals, and groceries delivered to families to satisfy their most basic needs. Families were helped with obtaining free email accounts to be virtually connected with their community. The bilingual staff helped parents understand instructions and guidance from the Department of Health so families could receive important information on how to stay safe.

Our team of Family Advocates also created fun activity bags that contained supplies such as coloring books, crayons, playdough, bubbles, and sidewalk chalk.

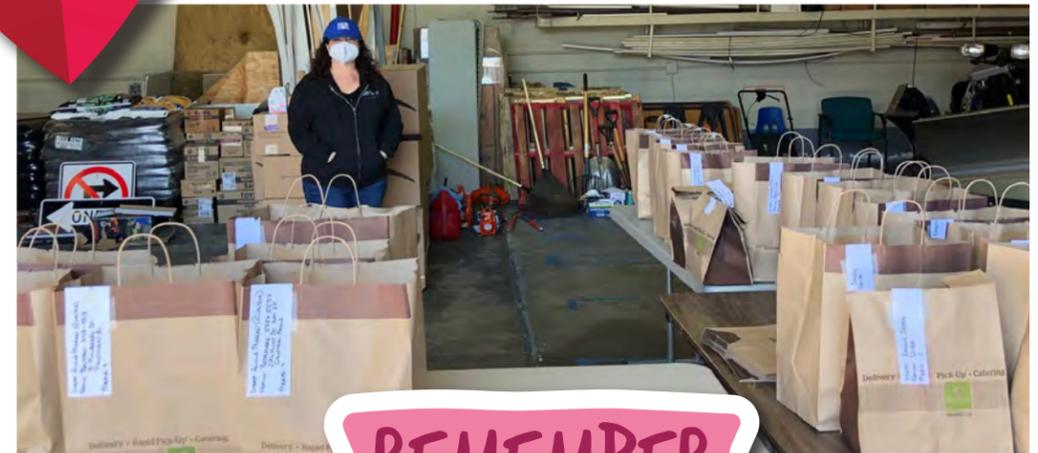
Mina, a Bilingual Family Development Supervisor at Children's Friend, reflects on the current crisis and declares, "During times of great need is when partnerships are made."

Family Advocates are mindful that the physical human connection they once shared with a family is not possible during a pandemic. Nevertheless, they can't help but miss that kind hug, a high five, or that smiling face when they bring a toy or a fun game to a family's home.

They understand that during these extraordinary times, this is the safest way they can help to improve the lives of Rhode Island's youngest and most vulnerable children.

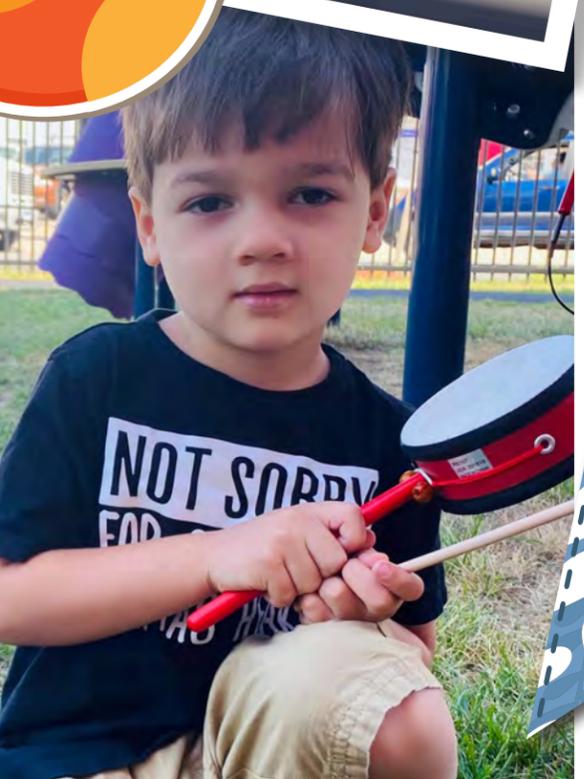


MEAL PLAN



REMEMBER

IMPORTANT



## CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC: KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN THE CLASSROOM

The last pandemic occurred over a century ago in 1918 when a deadly outbreak of influenza infected one-third of the world's population of about 500 million people. Estimated deaths in the United States from this pandemic were approximately 675,000, with 50 million worldwide.

Without a doubt, we are all experiencing unprecedented times with the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus pandemic. The Rhode Island Department of Health has issued guidelines to follow to avoid exposure to this virus and how we can take steps to care for ourselves and others in our homes and the community. Here at Children's Friend, we have heeded mandates and advisories and have instituted various precautions to ensure children's safety enrolled in our programs. Including Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships.

In keeping with our core principles and our mission in improving the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children, Children's Friend re-opened their doors, adhering to recommended safety guidelines. First and foremost, masks are mandatory upon entering any Children's Friend site, and sanitizing begins before anyone enters a building.

Lindsey, a Head Start Health and Nursing Manager at Children's Friend, confirms that every effort is being made to ensure that proper safety measures are taken to protect children from being infected by COVID-19. No one, including parents or vendors, is allowed to enter a building except essential employees.

Each day, upon arrival at a Children's Friend site, staff and children are greeted at a healthy screen station where a temperature check is taken. Lindsey states, "If a child has a temperature over 100.4, it is a fever, and they are sent home." She adds, "Our nurses then ask children a series of questions about how they are feeling."

Specifically, children are asked if they are experiencing chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If any of these COVID-19 symptoms exist, a child is isolated and sent home as soon as possible. Also, Children's Friend has contracted a company's services to complete a "deep cleaning" of any infected area to ensure the safe return of children and staff following an illness. Guidelines provided by the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services are observed when a child or staff member requires a COVID test to return to school/work.

At break time, children's desk surfaces are cleaned again. Each child has their own art supplies, and lunch is packaged as a single serving for safety reasons. Throughout the day, the children wash their hands often, and social distancing is maintained within classrooms and office areas. Desks and chairs are cleaned thoroughly, as well as play space surfaces and toys. Staff and children's bathrooms are disinfected before entering. With assistance from the custodian, high traffic areas are cleaned and sanitized. Playground structures such as swings, slides, see-saws, tubes, and climbers are also disinfected to prepare for the next group.

In light of the Coronavirus pandemic, Children's Friend has established a COVID-19 Task Force so that employees are aware of any new protocols to ensure children are entering a clean and safe environment. Children's Friend will persevere with one objective in mind: many great things can be accomplished by working together. Through it, all our youngest and most vulnerable children and their families will be provided with the tools necessary to have the best possible chance for success in life.

# LET'S DO THE NUMBERS

Children's Friend provided essential services to many of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children through our Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships programs.

Cumulatively, 1,491 children received services from our Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships programs.

## Early Head Start

- 99.9% funded enrollment achieved for 281 pregnant women, infants, and toddlers.
- 100% of children had an on-going source of accessible health care
- 78% of children had access to comprehensive dental care
- 40 children with disabilities received services and coordination with other service providers
- 8 homeless families were served and two families were helped in obtaining housing to ensure a more stable environment for children and enhancing their capacity to learn
- 12 pregnant mothers received prenatal education and support

## Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships

- 99.9% funded enrollment achieved for 140 children.
- 100% of children had an on-going source of accessible health care
- 94% of children had access to comprehensive dental care
- 25 children with disabilities received services and coordination with other service providers
- 5 homeless families were served and three families were helped in obtaining housing to ensure a more stable environment for children and enhancing their capacity to learn

## Head Start

- 99.9% funded enrollment achieved for 1,107 children.
- 100% of children had an on-going source of accessible health care
- 95% of children had access to comprehensive dental care
- 99 children with disabilities received services and coordination with other service providers
- 21 homeless families were served and 17 families were helped in obtaining housing to ensure a more stable environment for children and enhancing their capacity to learn



Income: August 1, 2019 - July 31, 2020	
RI Dept. of Human Services	\$1,121,532.28
RI Dept. of Education	\$545,233.00
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services	\$13,746,727.34
In-kind	\$2,545,676.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17,959,169.18</b>

Expenses: August 1, 2019 - July 31, 2020	
Salaries & Fringes	\$11,720,953.03
Purchased Services	\$1,409,059.79
Occupancy	\$1,149,267.74
Client Benefits	\$617,953.24
Other	\$3,061,935.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17,959,169.18</b>

Administration of Children and Family Budget: May 1, 2020 - April 30, 2021	
Personnel	\$8,322,632.00
Fringe Benefits	\$3,536,838.00
Travel	\$5,584.00
Equipment	\$19,582.00
Supplies	\$288,574.00
Contractual	\$1,128,049.00
Facilities/Construction	\$222,278.00
Other	\$2,481,313.00
<b>Total Approved Budget</b>	<b>\$16,004,850.00</b>





# Children's FRIEND

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 1287  
Providence, RI

153 Summer Street  
Providence, RI 02903

401.276.4300  
401.331.3285 (FAX)  
401.729.5899 (TDD)

## GOALS

