



Children's
FRIEND

head start

2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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.

OUR PRINCIPLES

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.

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 ourselves against national benchmarks.

STEWARDS

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

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.

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.



Children's Friend is a founding member of the Child Welfare League of America and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and the National Head Start Association Program of Excellence.

The names of children and families we serve have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality.

FROM THE DIRECTORS

Dear Friends,

Throughout 2022-23, Children's Friend worked diligently to support our children, parents, families, and team members.

Like early education service providers across the nation, we continue to face staffing shortages that keep us from full enrollment capacity. We have implemented robust efforts to recruit and retain talent and continue to look for opportunities to think outside the box to achieve our mission.

Our colleagues' commitment, creativity, resiliency, and determination keep us moving forward. We have fully implemented a centralized intake process to ensure that all families who enter our doors are being thoroughly screened for program eligibility. The centralized intake process allows us to provide efficient, high-quality services to our most vulnerable children and families.

We leveraged funding streams, including state investment won through advocacy efforts and strategic slot management, to provide salary increases across the board to our dedicated team of educators. This salary increase has also allowed us to reinvigorate our efforts to recruit and hire talent.

Children in our centers and classrooms are experiencing nurturing and high-quality environments to prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. We continue to build opportunities for parents, families, and community partners to engage in education and enrichment at our centers.

Our Early Head Start program is facilitating home visits and socialization opportunities with our children, parents, and families, at our centers, and in the community to provide a healthy early start to strengthen learning foundations for our children.

Thank you for supporting high-quality early education through Head Start Services at Children's Friend. Together, we can create a better tomorrow for children in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,



Tiana Ochoa,
Vice President of Programs
& Director of Head Start



Jennifer Heywood,
Deputy Director
of Head Start

FROM THE POLICY COUNCIL CHAIR

Dear Friends,

Being part of Children's Friend for the past six years and counting has been a wonderful experience. I have learned a lot of things that are serving me as great tools to raise my children for them to be better people wherever God may lead them. As for me, I am learning to be a better mother and to help my community socially in a better way.

Thanks for hiring such great teachers and staff members, they have shown patience and compassion towards my children Boaz and Abel; I just wanted to let everyone know how much my husband and I appreciate the work the staff members do every day. I know we don't say it enough thank you for the big difference you've made in my boys' lives.

I can advocate for minority communities and empower other parents to be involved in their kids' education, and I encourage everyone to support Children's Friend, it is a wonderful place to be.

Thank you,

Patricia Janvier,
Policy Council Chair
2022-2023

HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL

Patricia Janvier, **Chair**

Yuric Ardon, **Vice Chair**

Sokpha Chea, **Treasurer**

Nicaury Martinez, **Secretary**

Josue Aldana

Nancy Campos

Damaris Estrada

Maira Estrada

Jessica Ferrara

Michele Holderman

Sarah Luna

Ibix Matos

Yackeline Noriega

Aura Ramirez

Zila Wells

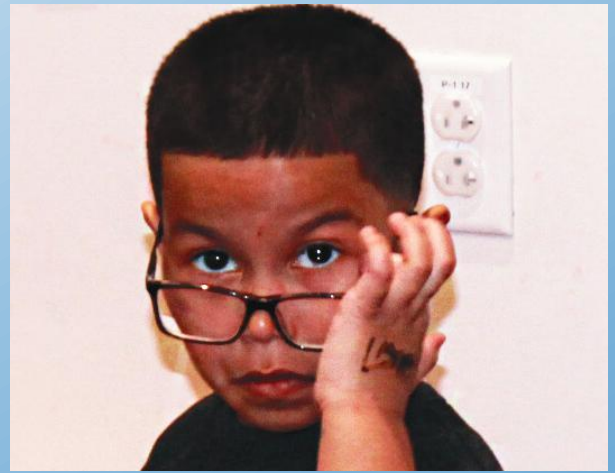
Community Representatives


Erika Aldana

Kenia Aldana

Ana Echevarria de Saquic
Children's Friend Board Member

Rachael Fayemi



As a teacher, you will
Always face an exciting new
challenge. Every child is different
and every class has its own
dynamic. Teachers use their
creativity to reach every child
every day! 



EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATION FOR HEALING

Four-year-old Isaiah* was first enrolled in Head Start at Children's Friend after his dad, Emmanuel*, came into one of our centers looking for child care so he could get back to work. The family had moved to Rhode Island looking for a new beginning, after experiencing domestic violence by Isaiah's mother, who is now incarcerated.

Emmanuel's unemployment benefits were running out, and he was desperate to find a supportive early learning environment, where his son would have the opportunity to thrive.

Isaiah was enrolled immediately, and he was able to begin receiving supportive counseling services to process the domestic violence he witnessed. Daley, a Children's Friend Family Advocate, got to work connecting Emmanuel with resources, including counseling for himself and housing closer to the center to help address transportation challenges. At their twice-monthly meetings, Daley provides parenting education and connects the family with additional resources to help them continue to settle into their new community.

Isaiah has made tremendous progress. Emmanuel is employed full-time and is working toward obtaining full custody of his son. The stability that a Head Start learning environment and support services have provided to Emmanuel and Isaiah is remarkable. The impact can be seen in Isaiah's language development and improved interactions and engagement with his peers in the classroom.

**Names have been changed to protect the family's identity.*





PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Lillian Vargas is a mother of two: a 14-year-old and a 5-year-old. In the fall of 2022, she joined Children's Friend as an AmeriCorps volunteer through a newly developed program, "Parents as Partners." Both of Lillian's children were students in Head Start.

Lillian works with the family engagement team at Children's Friend to help families connect to community resources that can enrich child development. While serving as an AmeriCorps volunteer, Lillian has also had the opportunity to work toward her Child Development Associate (CDA) certification.

Lillian has spearheaded efforts to help families obtain library cards to support literacy. Her passion for the organization is clear, and her contributions to the agency over the past year have helped us reach Head Start families in new ways.



SCHOOL READINESS

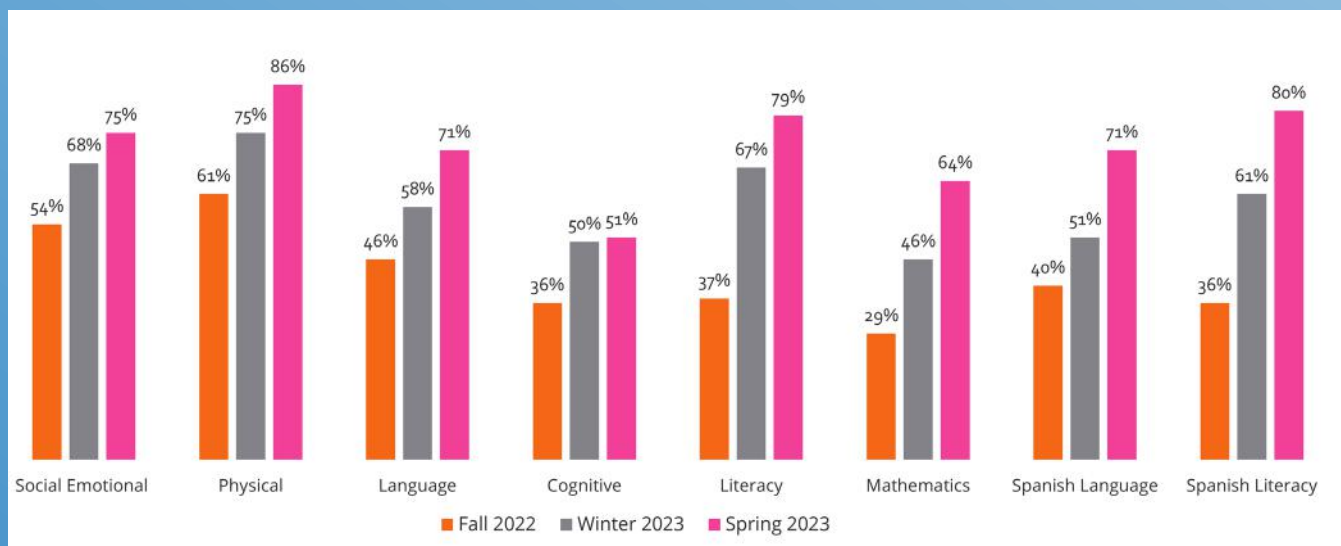
The Children’s Friend Head Start team works in partnership with parents and families to ensure that every child in our Head Start, home- and center-based Early Head Start, and Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships programs, are making progress toward School Readiness. Children’s Friend provides developmentally appropriate services so that children are ready to learn and achieve age-appropriate skills. Our goal is to ensure children have the social-emotional and academic skills needed to enter kindergarten.

We use Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG), a birth-to-kindergarten assessment system that assesses school readiness on a per-student level, which is completed three times during the school year. TSG is used throughout our early education programs to develop our curriculum and track child outcomes.

TSG provides an individualized assessment and feedback on each child, allowing the teachers, parents, and families to understand the child’s developmental progress and identify areas of need. Together, teachers, parents, and families can plan ways to build upon the children’s strengths and support their developmental needs in the classrooms and at home. TSG gives teachers, parents, and families opportunities to check in on progress in fall, winter, and spring, and adjust their classroom and home strategies, if necessary.

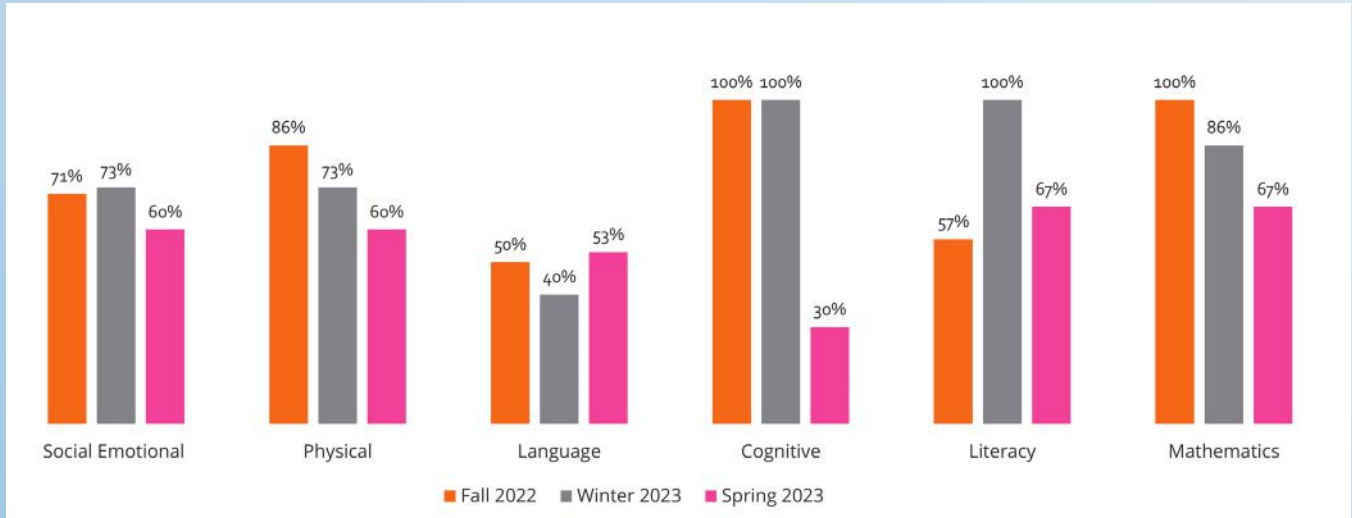
The following graphs show the percentages of children who were “meeting or exceeding expectations” in each of the assessed developmental areas at the start (Fall 2022), middle (Winter 2023), and end (Spring 2024) of the academic year. The assessed developmental areas include social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematics. Language and literacy are also measured for children for whom Spanish is their primary home language.

HEAD START: MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

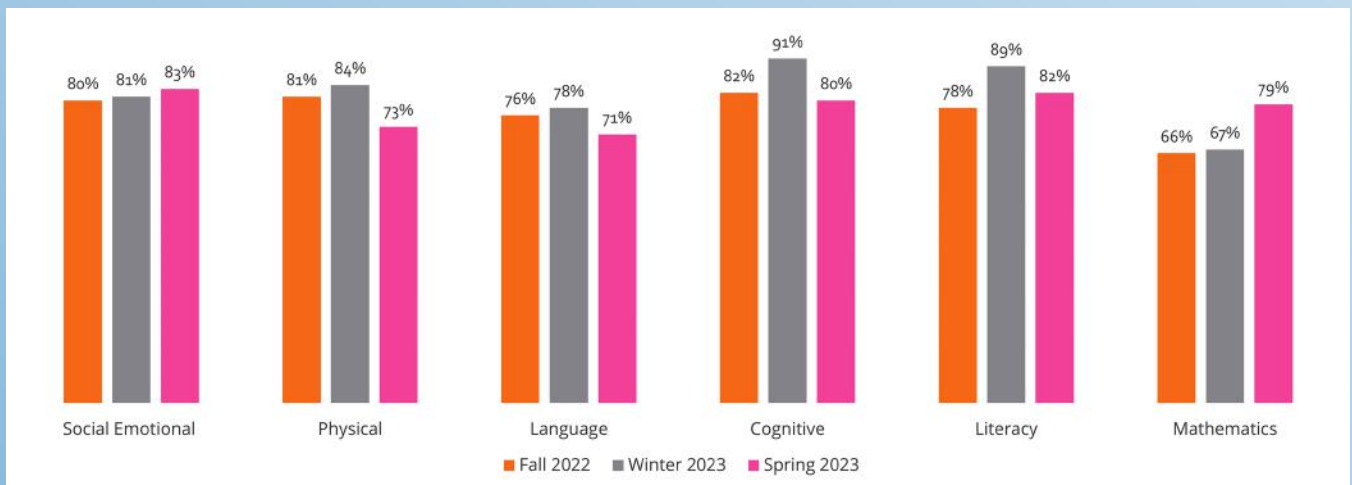


EARLY HEAD START: MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

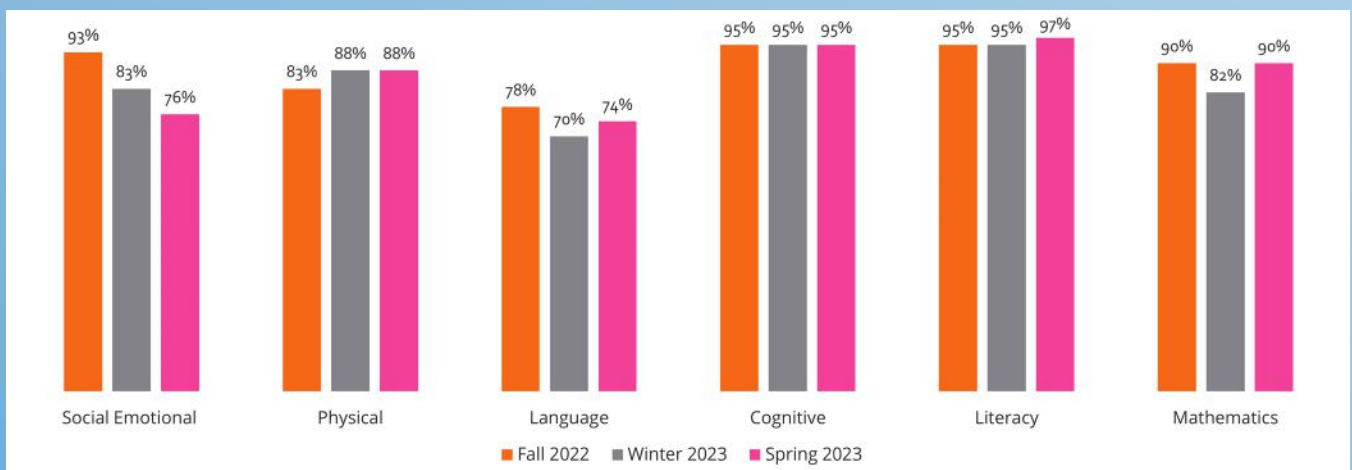
Center Based



Home Based



Child Care Partnerships



PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

We are honored to partner with our parents and families in each of our Head Start programs. Annually, parents and families complete our “Parent Interest Survey,” which informs us of what they would like to do to support their learning or for fun, with other adults, with their children, or with other families. We gave families various opportunities to share, socialize, and learn through in-person, virtual, or blended activities.

Kindergarten Readiness:

We provided families with information about kindergarten registration and applying for charter schools. We supported them with the documents needed for this process to be smooth. We ended the year with a hybrid Kindergarten Conference. We were honored to have the Executive Director of Rhode Island Kids Count Paige Clausius-Parks as the Keynote Speaker.

We also had the chance to highlight some parents from the program, who shared their experiences and stories about how much their children learned and how ready they were for kindergarten.

We offered different workshops on: “Increased in Child Mental Health Concerns Post Pandemic” by Stephanie Shepard Umaschi, “Careers in Early Childhood Education” by Maryann Finamore, and “What to expect in Kindergarten.”

Workshops:

Every month, we offered different workshops based on the Parent Interest Survey. Opportunities included learning about lead prevention, nutrition (SNAP), special education (IEPs), vocational programs (Rhode Island College and Skills for Rhode Island’s Future), and community resources (Blackstone Valley Community Assistance Program and Comprehensive Community Action Program).

Promoting Literacy:

Every child enrolled in our early learning programs (Head Start, Child Care, and Pre-K) has secured a library card.

Supporting Leadership:

We encouraged parents to apply for the AmeriCorps program, and two parents became members and encouraged other families to be more involved and engaged. They also use the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) program to motivate families to read and be involved with their children at home.



Parent Committee Meetings:

The Family Engagement team supports each site with their Parent Committee meetings, which take place once a month. These meetings are a place for families to get information and updates on activities, events, and plans at their child's center.

Family Engagement helps create agendas and does outreach to families to remind them about the meetings. The team also provides translation for clients and reports on new Family Engagement opportunities and initiatives. Meetings are still conducted virtually, which provides more flexibility for families to participate, leading to an increase in families participating on these monthly meetings.

Policy Council Meetings:

Once a month, the Policy Council meets to hear more details, including reports on finance, attendance, academics, and new grants that will affect children in the program. Family Engagement identifies and invites parents from the Parent Committees to be part of the Policy Council.

The team also provides translation at policy council meetings so that all families can participate, understand, and take an active role in the Program. Policy Council members can also take advantage of the training provided by the agency including CPR/First Aid; communication; Ethics; Professionalism; Confidentiality; Child Development; child abuse and neglect; Conflict of Interest.

Policy Council members contribute to final interviews for candidates who are seeking positions at Children's Friend. They are also encouraged to participate in the agency's Annual Meeting, alongside its Board of Directors and Executive Team.



NUMBERS

Number of children served:

Head Start	609
Early Head Start	235
Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships	82
Total	926

Head Start

# of slots	825
% of children with an ongoing source of accessible health care	96
% of children who had access to comprehensive dental care	83
# of children with disabilities who received services and coordination with other service providers	30
# of homeless families served	15
# of families who were helped in obtaining stable housing	2

Early Head Start

# of slots	176
% of children with an ongoing source of accessible health care	72
% of children who had access to comprehensive dental care	34
# of children with disabilities who received services and coordination with other service providers	14
# of homeless families served	5
# of families who were helped in obtaining stable housing	0

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships

# of slots	100
% of children with an ongoing source of accessible health care	60
% of children who had access to comprehensive dental care	99
# of children with disabilities who received services and coordination with other service providers	4
# of homeless families served	3
# of families who were helped in obtaining stable housing	0



FINANCIALS

Income	
RI Department of Human Services	\$887,532.53
RI Department of Education	\$608,144.00
US Department of Health & Human Services	\$17,502,598.56
In-kind (match)	\$2,240,994.81
Total	\$21,239,269.90
Expenses	
Salaries and Fringe	\$13,743,630.73
Purchased Services	\$1,639,159.16
Occupancy	\$3,684,100.15
Client Benefits	\$719,303.85
Other	\$1,453,076.01
Total	\$21,239,269.90
ACF Budget	
Personnel	\$9,291,812.00
Fringe Benefits	\$3,938,860.00
Supplies	\$317,768.00
Contractual	\$1,127,570.00
Other	\$2,466,292.54
Total Approved Budget	\$17,142,302.54





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