

# children's friend

Nurturing Children. Empowering Families.



## 2023-2024 HEAD START ANNUAL REPORT

# From the Directors

Dear Friends,

Throughout the 2023-24 period, Children's Friend has consistently delivered comprehensive support to children, parents, families, and our dedicated team members. We are committed to enhancing the overall well-being of individuals and families by actively addressing their diverse needs through a wide range of impactful programs and services.

Children thrive in nurturing, high-quality environments at our centers and classrooms that equip them for kindergarten and future success. We actively foster opportunities for parents, families, and community partners to engage in enriching educational experiences.

Our Early Head Start program emphasizes home visits and socialization opportunities, bringing together children, parents, and families at our centers and in the community. This approach ensures a strong early start and a solid foundation for our children's learning journey.

In the post-pandemic landscape, we have successfully implemented proactive strategies to attract and retain top talent. Our commitment to cultivating a dynamic and engaging workplace propels us to seek innovative approaches that align with our mission and advance it.

Our colleagues' dedication, creativity, resilience, and determination confidently propel us forward. We actively optimize funding streams, including state investments gained through our advocacy efforts and strategic slot management, enabling us to serve children in our programs.

Thank you for championing high-quality early education through Head Start at Children's Friend. Together, we are paving the way for a brighter future for children in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

**Tiana Ochoa, MSW, LICSW**

Vice President of Programs & Director of Head Start

**Jennifer Haywood, M.Ed.**

Deputy Director of Head Start

# 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.

# Mission

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

# 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 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.

# From the Policy Council Chair

Hello,

My name is Nicaury Martinez; My daughter is in Head Start at the Friendship Center. I am part of the Policy Council and became the chair back in November 2023. I have been part of the Children's Friend family since 2019.

My son Moises was part of the program for two years, and he started Kindergarten in 2022. He learned a lot from Head Start. He knew his numbers from 1-100. He could recognize letters, shapes, and was able to write his full name; but most important for me, was the fact that he was also very comfortable around people, and it was easy for him to socialize with other children.

I am so happy to have my younger daughter in the program this year and for me to still have the chance to learn from the program by being part of the Policy Council. I am trying to be more involved this time around. I feel very comfortable with the staff and the great communication that I have with everyone.

I am taking every chance and opportunity to talk to other families about my experience and the benefits and services that Head Start offers and the support that Children's Friend offers to the whole family.

Nicaury Martinez

## Head Start Policy Council

Nicaury Martinez, **Chair**

Karen Sandoval, **Vice-Chair**

Yuric Ardon, **Treasurer**

Emerita de la Vega, **Secretary**

Damaris Estrada

Sokpha Chea

Jessica Ferrara

Yackeline Noriega

Zila Wells

Neftali Capellan

Johanna Dirinott

Angie Cordoba

Bianca Sanchez

Maria Vernaza

Erica Cante

### **Community Representatives**

Ana Echevarria de Saquic (Board Member)

Patricia Janvier

Lilian Vargas

Sokpha Chea

# Parents as Partners

Bianca Sanchez joined Children’s Friend through a newly developed program, Parents as Partners, with AmeriCorps.

Bianca is a mother of two girls: a 7 years-old and a 5 years-old, both children were students in Head Start at Children’s Friend. She was an active member of Heritage Parent Committee meetings and then, the Policy Council.

Bianca works in the family engagement team at Children’s Friend to help families connect to community resources that can enrich child development. She uses the CLR (Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Program) to promote language and culture to children and families.

While serving as an AmeriCorps volunteer, Bianca has also had the opportunity to work toward her child Development Associate (CDA) certification.

Bianca loves to be part of Children’s Friend through AmeriCorps because she can support and work with children and families, which is her passion.



# 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 have five school readiness goals that we strive for our children to achieve by the time they enter Kindergarten:

## **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL**

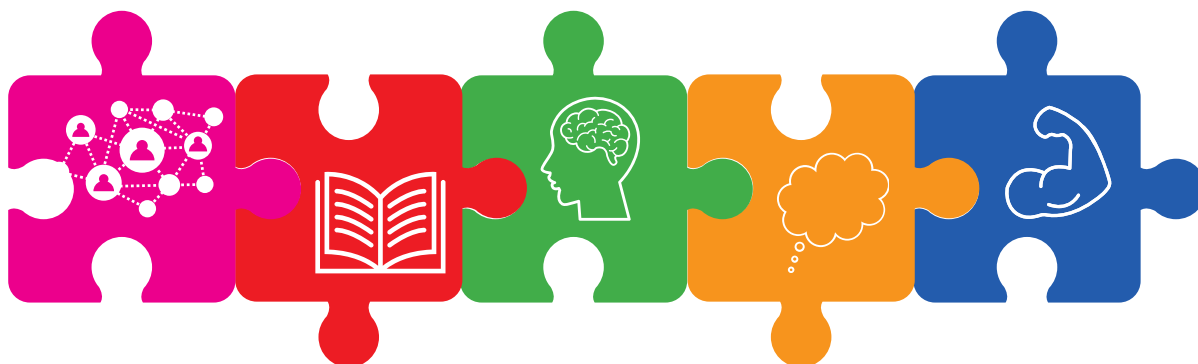
*Children will develop social emotional skills such as the ability to maintain positive relationships and problem solve conflicts*

## **COGNITION**

*Children will develop cognitive skills that allow them to count and recognize a number of objects, understand simple patterns, and understand the concepts of addition and subtraction*

## **PERCEPTUAL, PHYSICAL, & MOTOR DEVELOPMENT**

*Children will develop increased control of their bodies including strength and coordination of their large and small muscles*



## **LANGUAGE & LITERACY**

*Children will develop language and literacy skills that allow them to understand and communicate in increasingly complex ways*

## **APPROACHES TO LEARNING**

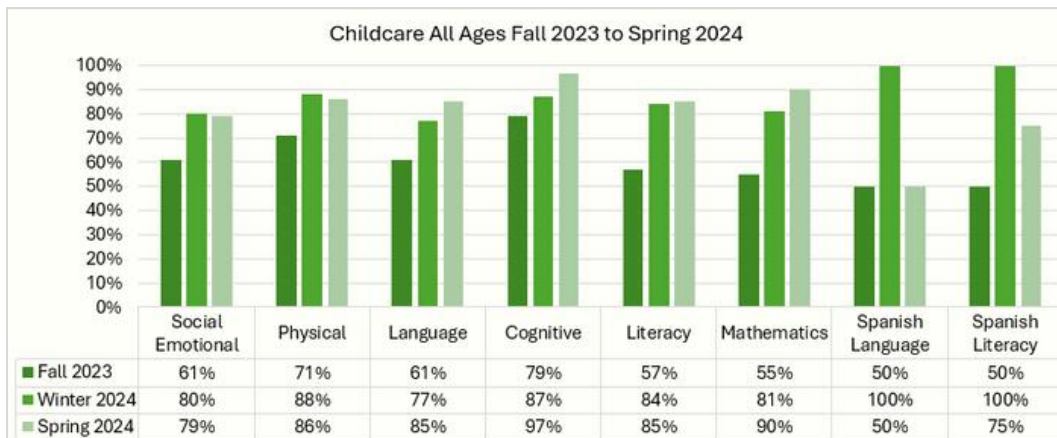
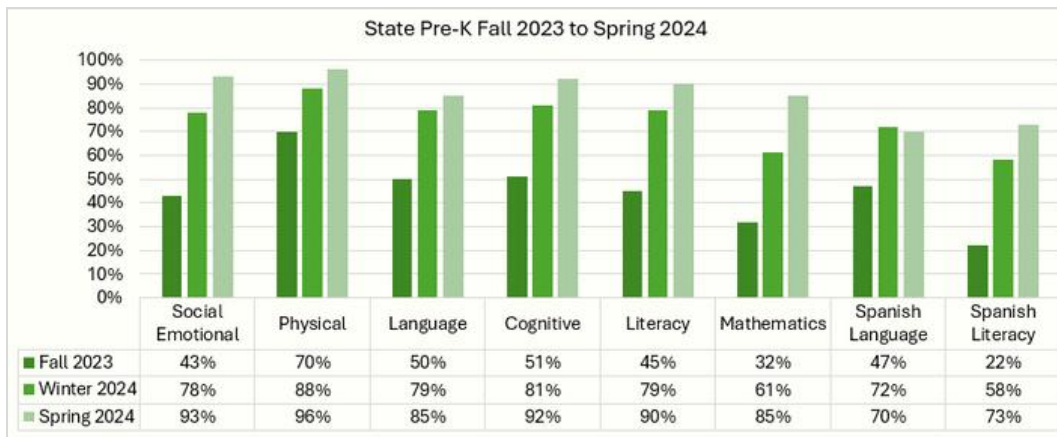
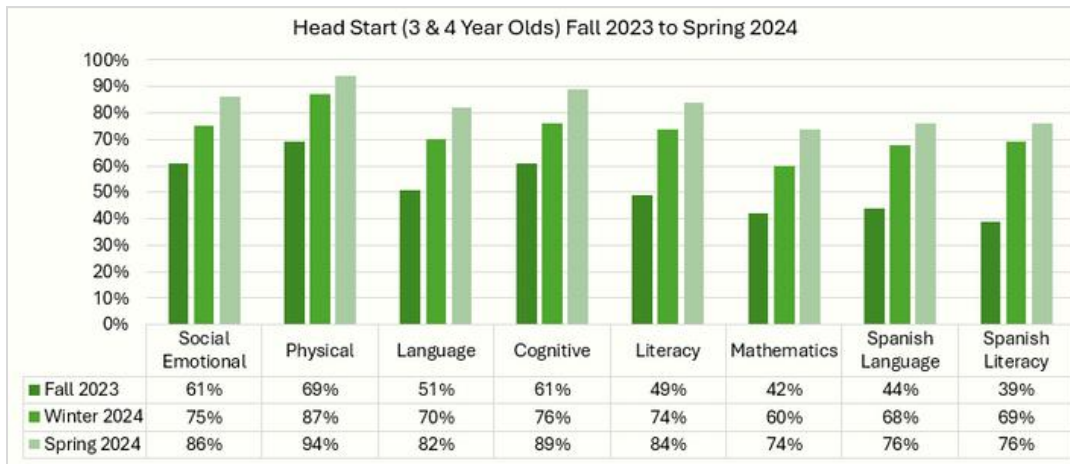
*Children will develop the ability to manage their emotions with increasing independence*

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.

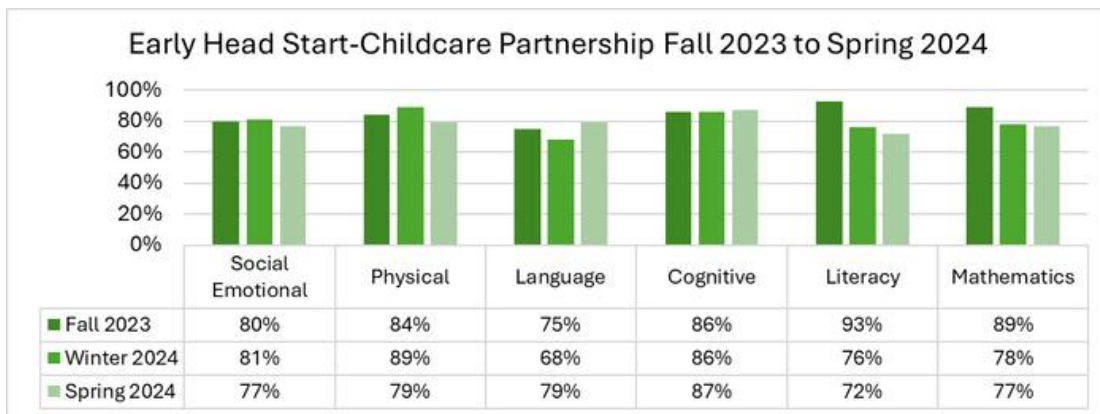
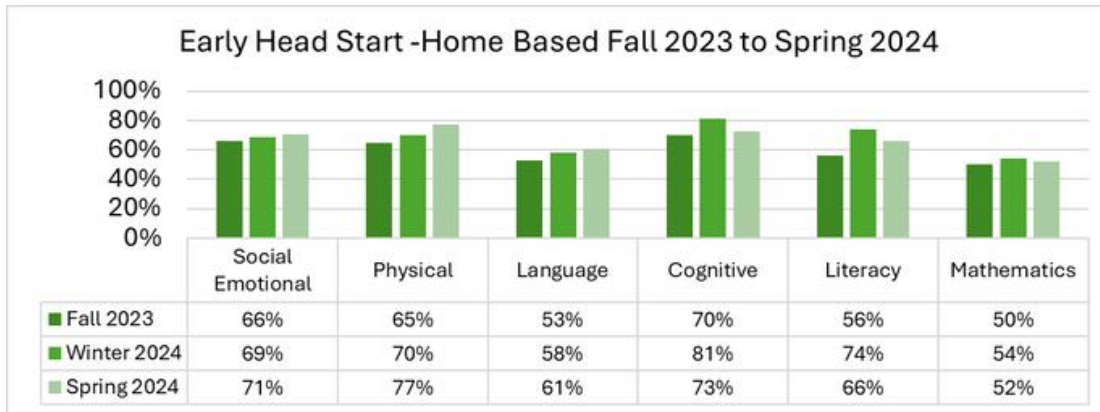
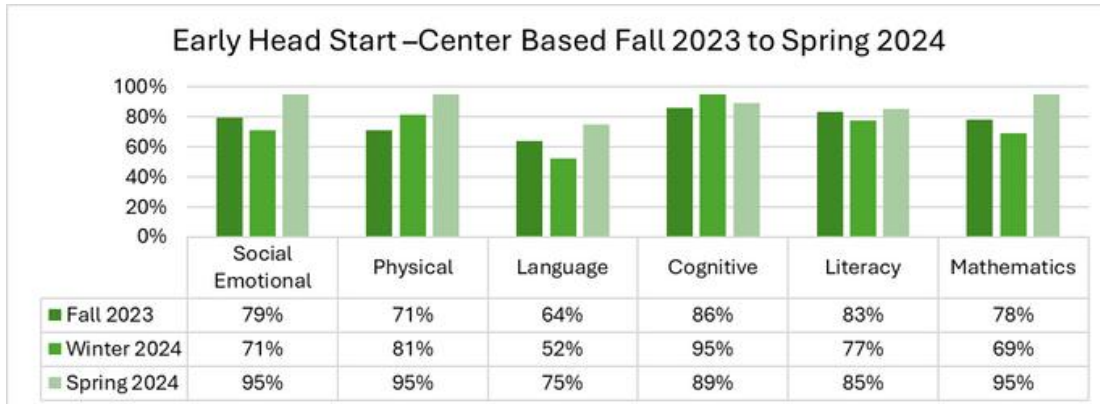
# School Readiness Data

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 2023), middle (Winter 2024), 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.





# School Readiness Data cont.



**Data Trends:**

- At least 70% of children were meeting or exceeding the WHE in all domains (excluding Spanish domains) for Head Start (3- & 4-year-olds), State Pre-K, EHS- Center Based, and EHS-Childcare Partnership at the Spring 2024 checkpoint
- Head Start (3- & 4-year-olds), State Pre-K, Childcare, EHS-Center based, and EHS- Home based increased in all domains since the Fall 2023 checkpoint

# Parent and Family Engagement

We are honored to partner with our parents and families in 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

At the beginning of the year, we provide families with information about kindergarten registration and Charter Schools. We support them with the documents and how to navigate the system.

In May, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the kindergarten conference, which is sponsored by the Rhode Island Head Start Association and it was open to every parent in the program. The keynote speaker was Rilwan Feyisitan – President and CEO of East Bay Community Action Program.

We offered two workshops to support kindergarten readiness:

- “What parents can do to support learning at home” by Angelica Yeomans from Meeting Street
- “How to Navigate this Digital Age” by Lori Duffy

## 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). We also hosted a presentation by the local library and Lead Action Program.

## Supporting Literacy

We encouraged parents to apply for the AmeriCorps program, and three 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. They are there to support the staff and promote family engagement to the families. They promote the CLR program, by lending books, puppets and toys to families to encourage reading and connection between parents and children at home.



# Parent and Family Engagement

## **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.

At these meetings, Family Engagement also offers community resources and information about community events.

Most of these meetings are in person, but still a few sites offer them via Zoom.

## **Policy Council**

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. Policy Council members take an active role by having a voice and they are part of the decision-making process of the agency.

These meetings are either Hybrid or in person. For those Policy Council members that are not able to participate, the agenda and the documents given are sent electronically.

# Let's Do the Numbers!

Number of Children Served	
Head Start	771
Early Head Start	292
Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,139</b>

Head Start	
# of slots	648
% of children with an ongoing source of accessible health care	100%
% of children who had access to comprehensive dental care	86%
# of children with disabilities who received services and coordination with other service providers	71 IEPs
# of homeless families served	20
# of families who were helped in obtaining stable housing	6

Early Head Start	
# of slots	176
% of children with an ongoing source of accessible health care	100%
% of children who had access to comprehensive dental care	41%
# of children with disabilities who received services and coordination with other service providers	20 IFSPs
# of homeless families served	7
# of families who were helped in obtaining stable housing	0
# of pregnant mothers served	8

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships	
# of slots	100
% of children with an ongoing source of accessible health care	57%
% of children who had access to comprehensive dental care	39%
# of children with disabilities who received services and coordination with other service providers	15 IFSPs
# 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,239,269.90</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,239,269.90</b>
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
<b>Total Approved Budget</b>	<b>\$17,142,302.54</b>



