



it's all about
QUALITY

Action for Children



2014 ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2013 – JUNE 30, 2014

Dear AFC Friends,

It's hard to believe how significantly the landscape of child care and early learning has evolved since assuming our roles as CEO and Board President less than two years ago. Amid data showing that alarming percentages of children are not prepared for kindergarten, and research demonstrating the positive impact of high-quality pre-K experiences on school readiness, this year we saw early learning become a city, state, and federal priority. More than ever before, high-quality initiatives made headlines. AFC played an important role in planning, provisioning or advocating for these developments. We encouraged advocates—school administrators, teachers, parents, and entire communities—to join us as we urged leaders to make high-quality programs available and accessible to all families. Increased demands for quality, though valuable, created challenges for parents and child care professionals, and AFC Staff supported them every step of the way. This annual report highlights AFC's commitment to quality, and the many ways we collaborate with child care professionals, parents, and the greater community so that children begin kindergarten ready for success.

Sincerely,

Jane Grote Abell
President
Board of Directors

Eric J. Karolak
Chief Executive Officer



THE CASE FOR **QUALITY**

Across the nation, nearly 11 million children under age five are in child care each week. A growing body of research shows that the years from birth thru five are a particularly vulnerable time; negative early experiences create stress that can inhibit children's healthy development and high-quality early experiences and child care programs that incorporate best practices for development in all domains—physical, mental, social-emotional, and cognitive—maximize children's future health and their opportunities for success.

Despite research demonstrating the impact of quality early learning experiences, many children, particularly those from low-income families, miss out on this opportunity. Within a child's early life, the caregiver—parents and child care providers—are responsible for most, if not all, social simulation and consequently language and communication development. Without these experiences, children fall behind

early. There is a 30 Million Word Gap that is evident between four-year-old children from low-income as compared to those children from higher-income families. This gap continues to widen throughout their school years, and even their lifetime.

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In Central Ohio, the early care and education (ECE) sector benefits all other industries by enabling parents to work and attend education programs to upgrade their job skills, and it provides school readiness for three- and four-year-olds and,

at best, skilled teaching and good quality environments for children from infancy thru school age. Yet finding high quality ECE programs for their children and knowing what to look for in quality are among the most stressful experiences in any parent's life. Parents seeking child care and early education programs for their children in Central Ohio are as diverse as the programs that serve them.

They include parents paying the full cost of child care, income-eligible parents receiving a subsidy to help pay for child care, parents who enroll their children in part-time public preschool, and parents who are relying on family, friends and neighbors.

Those who teach young children are essential to high-quality programs and child outcomes, yet in any given child care program or preschool, in Central Ohio and across the nation, we find extremes in the skills and knowledge that caregivers bring to their work with young children in early childhood settings. Regardless of their credentials or knowledge, the average income for those working in the field remains the lowest of almost any profession. Moving this widely diverse field towards new higher standards and accountability is neither simple, nor without cost.

When the U.S. Department of Education awarded Ohio a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, it helped raise the bar for all early childhood programs and providers across the state to have the knowledge and skills

necessary to promote children's early learning and development in high-quality environments. Action for Children continued to focus its work during this reporting year on supporting programs and their staff in a process of continuous quality improvement to assure that programs and providers meet the new standards and that there will be a sufficient supply of quality ECE programs available to meet demand in Central Ohio. This includes AFC's role in Ohio's voluntary rating system for child care, Step Up to Quality (SUTQ). This rating system assists parents as they navigate the choices available and helps providers implement quality standards. AFC provides SUTQ rating information to parents and works with providers to reach and maintain quality standards.

Children and their families deserve high-quality early learning experiences. Those first few years are critical to a child's long-term success in school and in life. Quality matters.



PARENT SERVICES

Improving the quality of interactions between parents and children

AFC's Parent Services provide parents with the resources they need to provide their children with quality early learning experiences, whether in an early care and education setting or at home. Parent Services are comprised of *Information & Resources* (I&R) and *Parent Education*.

Information and Resources

AFC's I&R services are delivered at no charge for parents and families in Central Ohio to assist them in finding quality early care and education programs for their children. As part of these services, AFC maintains a current comprehensive database of more than 1,600 regulated for profit and non-profit early care and education programs in Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, and Union counties. They include child care centers, preschools, Head Start programs, school age programs, and family child care providers. Programs that are Step Up to Quality star-rated and those that are nationally

accredited are identified in the database and maintained current.

AFC provided
I&R services for
6,109
families

VALUE: AFC provided I&R services for 6,109 families in the seven-county region of Central Ohio.

By expanding its community-based I&R services during the year, AFC significantly increased access to resources for low to moderate income families, which resulted in a

56% increase in the number of parents using the agency's I&R services as compared to last year.

AFC staff works with Columbus Kids: Ready. Set. Learn., a program designed to increase the early detection of developmental delays



and potential learning obstacles; including speech, hearing and vision problems, among future Columbus City Schools students. The program, a partnership between United Way of Central Ohio, Columbus City Schools Education Foundation, and Columbus City Schools, is aimed at reaching every child of preschool age in the district. All of the children in the target age group receive a Learning Checkup every six months and parents are directed to resources if the results of the Learning Checkup identify a need. United Way is working with child care centers, libraries, faith-based organizations, Nationwide Children's Hospital, and more than 125 community partners, including Action for Children, to ensure that all eligible children receive a Learning Checkup.

VALUE: During the fiscal year, Columbus Kids expanded into its final target areas of service in the Columbus City Schools district. During the last quarter of the fiscal year, 2,123 Columbus Kids Learning Checkups were completed with the support of AFC staff.

2,123
Columbus Kids
Learning Checkups
were completed

Parent Education

AFC's Parent Education programs focus on supporting parents in providing quality early learning experiences for their children by enhancing parenting practices and behaviors. Our Parent Education programs are based on The Art of Positive Parenting curriculum, an evidenced-based model.

These programs/projects included:

- The Art of Positive Parenting (TAPP)
- TAPP: Father Factor
- TAPP: Mothers Matter
- TAPP: Putting the Children First
- TAPP: Parents Who Parent Separately
- Learning Begins Right from the Start® Early Learning Kits

VALUE: During the reporting year, the TAPP program served 2,128 parents.

98% of parents who took TAPP classes or attended TAPP workshops reported that they

are using the skills learned and finding them helpful and 82% reported that their relationship with their children has improved.

TAPP Participants Shared:

“This class really defines how to parent successfully, and what skills to implement in your daily life as a mom or dad. There are parenting choices that clearly are not okay and this course illuminates those choices and why they have a negative effect on the child.”

“I was at first frustrated that I needed to go through this presentation; however there were many good suggestions about how to communicate with my ex-wife.”

“This course was valuable. It made me realize the importance of being a better parent by keeping a respectful partnership and consideration between my ex and me. Most importantly, it helped me put my feet in

my children’s shoes and see and experience what they are going through and be a better listener.”

VALUE: Father Factor served 209 fathers. The program again participated in Franklin County’s Empowerment Day, sponsored by Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency, which is designed to bring together community agencies to address issues facing at-risk families.

VALUE: Mothers Matter implemented 18 workshops for 133 participants in conjunction with the Tapestry program at Ohio Reformatory for Women.

VALUE: 2,111 parents participated in the in-person and web-based Putting the Children First seminars, with 86.2% of the parents reporting that they gained a better understanding of how to help their children go through the divorce process.



PROVIDER SERVICES

Improving the quality of interactions between caregiver (teachers, directors, home providers) and child

A qualified early childhood workforce is essential in providing high-quality early care and education. AFC's provider services supplies knowledge and coaching for early care and education professionals through professional development classes, workshops and seminars, Child Development Associate (CDA) coursework, career advising, and classroom-based technical assistance. During the reporting year, these included:

Early Start Columbus

The agency was awarded a grant at year's end to participate in Early Start Columbus (ESC), a city-wide initiative that provides early childhood education in quality pre-K centers for four-year-olds who will enter Columbus City Schools in the 2015-2016 school year. In the initial phase, the City has dedicated \$3.4 million towards the initiative and 350-400 slots are open for enrollment in nine quality early childhood programs. AFC is the fiscal, monitoring and recruitment agent in a consortium model involving four of the centers.

Ready 4 Success

AFC is a collaborative partner with Learn4Life,

Learning Circle Education Services, and nine early care and education agencies. The purpose of the Ready 4 Success strategy is to help early learning centers support continuous improvement and data driven decision-making in their programs through a shared plan for common outcome measurement, data alignment and reporting. Strategies include classroom-based coaching and teacher professional development to support implementation of strategies that will result in kindergarten readiness.

VALUE: During the year, AFC staff provided 225 hours of technical assistance in preschool and mixed age classrooms to help early childhood teachers improve literacy outcomes.



Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) is Ohio's voluntary quality rating system for child care providers that are licensed by the state. SUTQ helps parents and families identify high quality and assists providers in implementing standards of quality in their programs.

VALUE: AFC staff delivered 1,423 hours of technical assistance in the Central Ohio region to support quality initiatives during FY 2014. This included Step Up to Quality (SUTQ), which, during the period of this report, transitioned from a three-star quality rating and improvement system for child care to a five-star system.

VALUE: During the year, through funding from Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, AFC provided technical assistance to centers in the seven-county Central Ohio region that supported 103 centers in becoming star-rated or increasing their SUTQ star rating. Two of those were Type A family child care home providers.

VALUE: To support administrators seeking to get their programs rated or increase ratings, AFC's technical assistance specialists delivered

2,253 hours of services specifically focused to administrators.

Child Development Associate (CDA)

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™, administered by the national Council for Professional Recognition, is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education and is a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement in the field.

AFC worked with United Way of Central Ohio to provide scholarships for participants. Enrollment was capped at 32 and was full in just a few days.

Nurturing Nature

During the reporting period, AFC received funding from the Aetna Foundation to continue to

build on its Nurturing Nature: Happy, Healthy Children work in Central Ohio.

Happy, Healthy Children focuses on combatting overweight and obesity in young children cared for in child care centers and family child care homes and aligns with Aetna Foundation's focus on obesity prevention. During the fiscal year, the program targeted programs located in Franklin County that serve culturally and ethnically diverse, low-income children. The project provided early childhood educators with professional development around children's healthy food choices and physical activity, as well as the development of natural play areas and vegetable gardens. Parent education was integrated to include families in the change process.

636
professional
development
trainings delivered

2,312
hours of technical
assistance provided

6,515
attended
professional training
sessions

VALUE: During the period of this report, staff from AFC and the county regional partners provided 2,312 hours of technical assistance and delivered 636 professional development trainings, attended by 6,515 early childhood professionals in the region.



COMMUNITY/ADVOCACY

Improving the policies and investments that support quality early care and learning for all children at the local, state and federal levels

Good programs don't "just happen." It takes know-how and planning, and in early childhood education, making quality early care and learning available to all children takes strong and smart advocacy and community engagement. During 2013-2014, AFC helped win significant changes at all levels of government, but we couldn't have done it without our many supporters and partners.

Progress on Family Child Care Licensing.

An important breakthrough occurred on the perennial challenge of establishing minimum health and safety requirements for all providers opening a child care business in their home. Effective January 1, 2014, if the state is assisting a family with paying for child care, they can only select child care services from a licensed family child care home (or center). Now, our

most at risk children will be assured their care providers meet basic health and safety requirements and are visited regularly by public officials.

Pre-K in Columbus. In February 2014, Mayor Michael B. Coleman announced a new initiative to expand pre-K opportunities for several hundred four-year-olds living in the Columbus Public Schools district. Early Start Columbus, a \$5 million effort, focuses on children from families that miss out on other state- and federal-funded programs and is to be delivered in community-based settings as well as public schools. AFC staff provided subject matter expertise as the program launched, and we fielded calls from day one from parents looking to be enrolled in the nation's newest municipal pre-K initiative.

Preschool Referral Hub and Convener. State-funded preschool expanded in school year 2013-2014, as a result of the budget passed in 2013, and more than 250 new part-day preschool seats were added for three- and four-year-old children through this initiative alone in central Ohio. AFC played a key role as a referral hub and convener, bringing together all public and private Franklin County programs selected to participate in the expansion.

Making Child Care Work for Families and Providers. In 2014, AFC urged the Ohio General Assembly to make changes in the Mid-biennium Review, or the MBR as it's come to be called at the Statehouse. Working with our partners in the Alliance of Early Learning Advocates, we focused on policy changes that would make the publicly-funded child care (PFCC) program more family-friendly and less onerous for participating providers.

In May 2014, former Board Chair Tanny Crane and our CEO, Eric Karolak, testified before the Senate Finance Committee for the inclusion of \$16 million in new funds in the MBR, resources that are already improving access to child care and promoting continuity of that care and education.



We explained that a new “presumptive eligibility” provision would allow income-eligible parents to access child care while paperwork is sorted out by the government. That’s good for the child who can start learning at his new approved program, good for the parent who can start earning in her new job right away, and good for the provider who can be confident that payment for services rendered will be made without having to front so much of the government’s reimbursement. Previously, in some cases, newly-employed parents were turned away by providers who couldn’t afford to enroll them during this period.

Other policy changes that AFC helped win will allow a child to remain in her classroom or program without interruption for up to 13 weeks when there is a disruption in the parent’s employment. In the past, reduced work hours or job loss would have altered the parent’s eligibility immediately and could have caused their child to be moved from one classroom to another or even be unenrolled from an early learning program altogether.

Federal Advocacy Breakthrough. For the last two years, AFC has represented Ohio at the annual convening of child care and early learning advocates from states across the nation. This coalition, led by the National Women’s Law Center, works collaboratively to create advocacy strategy for federal legislation and appropriations.

In September 2013, an important breakthrough occurred when the Senate passed S.1086, a bill to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). The nation’s flagship child care and early learning program, funded at nearly \$5 billion annually and serving more than 1.5 million children on average each month, CCDBG has not been reviewed and updated by Congress since 1996, an entire childhood.

The bill passed the Senate during the period of this annual report (and later in the fall of 2014 was signed into law as the CCDBG Act of 2014). New provisions strengthen health and safety in child care and emphasize quality early learning rather than basic custodial care.

Many AFC partners and supporters answered our call to action and joined with thousands of others around the country in the effort to pass S.1086. Thank you!





State of Early Learning

On January 29, 2014, Action for Children held its first annual State of Early Learning event at its Jefferson Avenue location.

Pictured left to right are Christie Angel, Deputy Chief of Staff—External Affairs and Services, City of Columbus; Ann Farrell Hughes, Former Board President and current Seven Generations Circle of Women member, Action for Children; Eric Karolak, CEO, Action for Children; and Jane Grote Abell, Board President, Action for Children.

Seven Generations Circle of Women Luncheon

The Seven Generations Circle of Women hosted Helen Blank, Director of Child Care and Early Learning at the National Women's Law Center, for a luncheon and early learning discussion at Lindey's on April 29, 2014.

Pictured left to right are Sue Doody, Seven Generations Circle of Women member, Action for Children, and Owner, Lindey's; Helen Blank; and Eric Karolak.



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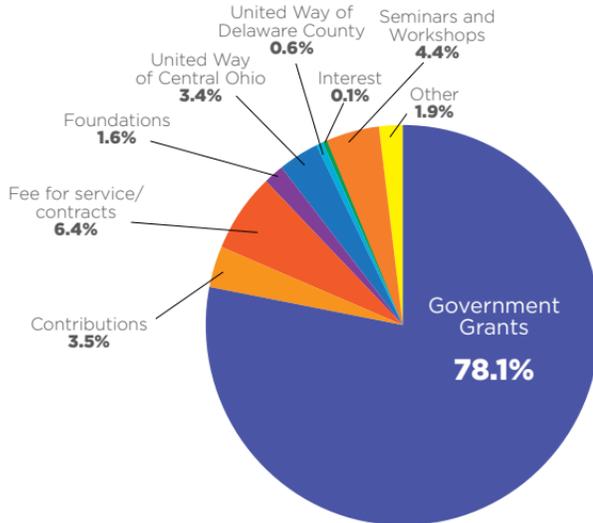
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*Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If your organization's name has been omitted or listed incorrectly, we sincerely apologize and ask that you contact Action for Children at 614-224-0222 ext. 159, so that we may correct our records.

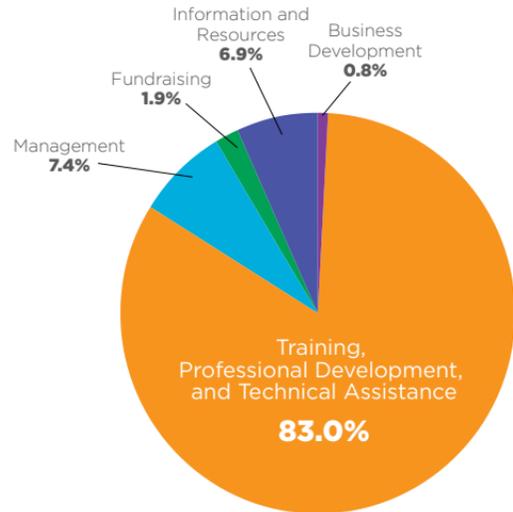
PROGRAM FUNDING

The June 30, 2014 financial statements were audited by SS&G, Certified Public Accountants, who expressed an unqualified opinion on them. The audited financial statements are available on request by calling Action for Children, 614-224-0222, ext. 169.

Program Revenue
\$3,571,582



Program Expenses
\$3,652,287



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Fax: 614-224-5437

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SATELLITE OFFICES:

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OUR VISION

Action for Children will be the community leader in transforming the future of child care into quality learning experiences for every child in central Ohio.

OUR MISSION

- To help families endow their children with quality early learning experiences;
- To foster the growth of early learning environments and assure their availability to all children in central Ohio; and
- To develop and advocate for early childhood education initiatives.

Founded in 1972, Action for Children (AFC) is the child care resource and referral (CCR&R) for the seven-county region of central Ohio, providing resource and referral services and parent education programs for families and professional development for the early childhood workforce. AFC serves Franklin, Delaware, Madison, Fairfield, Licking, Pickaway and Union counties by way of its main office in Franklin County and satellite offices in Delaware and Madison counties.

The region is home to 1,867,371 individuals - 151,433 are children under age six and 101,595 of those children (67.1%) are potentially in need of child care while their parents work.

101,595
children are in need of
child care while their
parents work

AFC is part of the Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association (OCCRRA), the statewide network of CCR&R agencies that covers all 88 Ohio counties. Through membership in the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (now known as Child Care Aware), AFC is also part of a network of more than 600 CCR&R agencies throughout the U.S.



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