

Action for Children

A young girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a blue t-shirt and a white face mask with a colorful pattern, is flexing her arms. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

PARTNERING FOR A  
**STRONGER  
TOMORROW**

ACTION FOR CHILDREN **FY20 IMPACT REPORT**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Letter from the CEO</b>	2
<b>Board</b>	2
<b>Mission, Vision, and Core Values</b>	3
<b>Fact &amp; Figures</b>	4
<b>Numbers Served</b>	5
<b>Pandemic Response</b>	6
<b>Parent &amp; Family Services</b>	7
<b>Parent &amp; Family Spotlight</b>	8
<b>Early Child Care Services</b>	9
<b>Provider Spotlight</b>	10
<b>Funding Partners</b>	11
<b>Donors</b>	12
<b>Remembering Amy Allegree</b>	14
<b>Connect with AFC</b>	15

*Pictured on front cover:  
Jai, daughter of Step Up To Quality Coordinator Brittany Jackson*

## DEAR FRIENDS OF ACTION FOR CHILDREN

There are only 365 days in every year, but some years feel longer. The COVID-19 pandemic made our fiscal year 2020 seem much longer and far more uncertain. In March, as we neared the end of the third quarter and looked ahead to a successful finish, the pandemic caused us to pause, pivot, and appreciate.

For Action for Children, the year began with a singular focus on assisting child care programs in meeting Ohio's Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) requirement, set to go into effect at the end of June (also the end of the fiscal year) 2020. It ended with the added focus of helping providers stay in business and reach the SUTQ finish line, postponed to September 2020.

Our year also began with a strategy for how we could reach more children and families through our powerful parenting programs, and it ended with us finding innovative ways to meet families struggling anew in a strange pandemic world where often work is home, and home is school.

Whether it's meeting new and stronger standards for child care or powering through the pandemic, Action for Children has been a trusted partner in addressing and overcoming challenges faced by families, caregivers, and early childhood educators. Creating innovative "Columbus Cares Kid Kits"; launching an emergency child care scholarship; deploying a first-in-Ohio pandemic child care map; and rallying public and private funds to support hundreds of child care programs with PPE and other supplies and educational materials – these are just some of the ways we pivoted to help. Our staff did all of that while also keeping all but one of our lines of service open and meeting performance goals.

Throughout it all, Action for Children has advocated for our *everyday heroes*; the child care providers of Central Ohio. In concert with our national organization, AFC was the first in Ohio to issue a call for additional stimulus directed to child care in May 2020. We collaborated with our fellow child care resource and referral agencies and state association to advise policymakers on the difficult decisions related to first closing child care to all but essential-worker families and then reopening child care for all who could afford it. Our staff listened to the providers they work with and we gathered data to tell their story in the brief, *Pandemic Child Care: Lessons from Central Ohio*, which helped make the case for added investment which came after the fiscal year ended.

For nearly 50 years, Action for Children has been the steadfast partner to parents and early childhood educators alike throughout Central Ohio. Since 1972, no other year has challenged us or those we serve more. We cannot thank you enough for your continued support.

There *are* only 365 days in a year. For *every child* in Central Ohio, the past 365 days represent only part of the 2,000-day journey from birth to school entry. Pandemic or not, all of our children are growing, learning, and developing each day. It's our responsibility, together with you and other supporters, to make every day a brighter day for all of our young children.

Sincerely,



**Eric J. Karolak, Ph.D. CAE**  
Chief Executive Officer



## OUR BOARD

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*\*This list is inclusive of members who served on our board July 2019 - June 2020.*

## OUR MISSION

To transform the lives of children by supporting, empowering, and advocating for the adults who make the biggest impact on children's lives—their parents, caregivers and teachers.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### Advocacy

We commit to lead the charge for increasing access to quality early childhood experiences, achieving outcomes that provide the strongest foundation for all members of our community. We cannot do this alone, and the best advocates are the adults who care for and educate our children: their parents, other caregivers, and early childhood practitioners. We will use our influence directly, and we will work to activate the power of other networks to fuel efforts to address this urgent need.

### Collaboration

Our children deserve a community that works together. We can foster and sustain partnerships among child care and early learning providers, and within the wider nonprofit ecosystem and our community as a whole. We know that we are stronger when we partner with others to embrace a shared commitment toward enriching the lives of children, caregivers and families.

## OUR VISION

All children, nurtured by strong families and vibrant communities, have opportunities for quality early learning experiences that prepare them for success in school and life.

### Adaptability

The needs of the community will change. We must be responsive to these changes, drawing on our considerable collective expertise. To be successful today, and in the future, we must be continuous learners and encourage creativity and new ways of problem-solving.

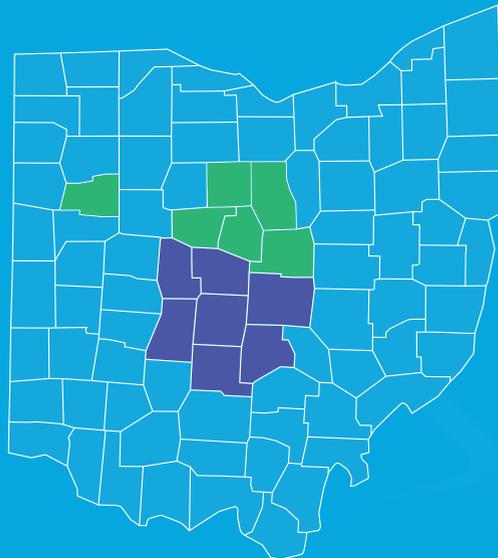
### Respect and Compassion

We believe that achieving results is essential and the way in which we go about doing so is equally important. We take a strengths-based approach in our interactions, meeting others where they are and understanding together how to move forward. Ours will be a conscious effort to be inclusive of and to support the rich diversity of our community.

## WHERE WE WORK

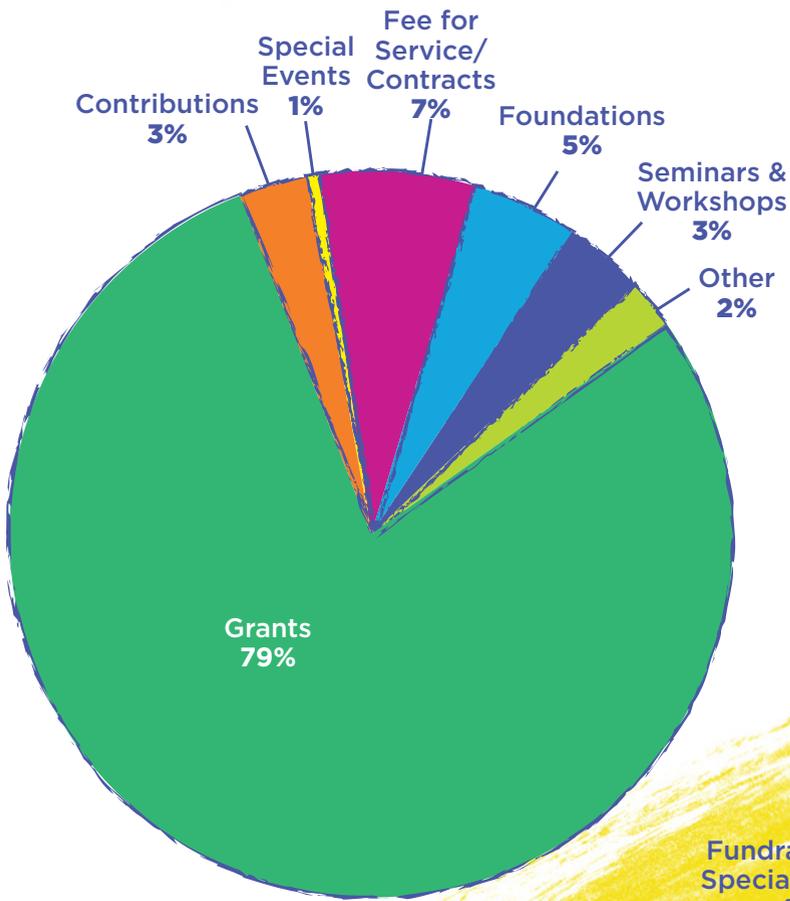
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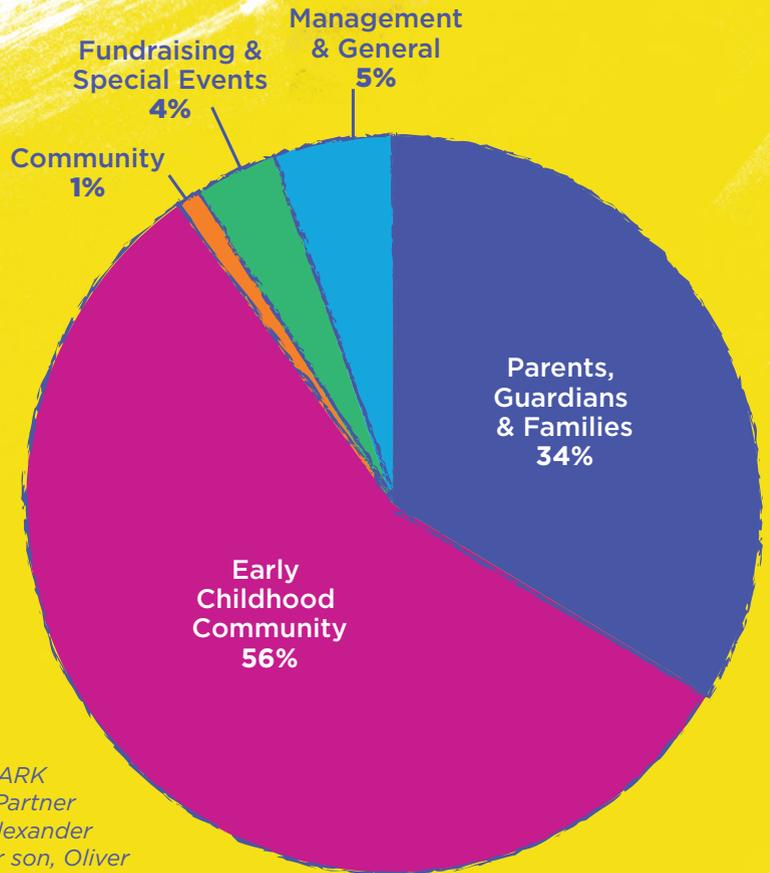


# FACTS & FIGURES

Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020)



REVENUE  
**TOTAL**  
**\$4,840,386**



EXPENSES  
**TOTAL**  
**\$4,736,414**



AFC SPARK  
Parent Partner  
Abby Alexander  
with her son, Oliver

# NUMBERS SERVED

## BY PROGRAM AND OUTCOMES

### Early Child Care Initiatives

#### Child and Adult Care Food Program

**565,211**  
meals and snacks served

#### Professional development, instruction and assistance

**6,674**  
participants served

#### Child Development Associate Credential Program

**72**  
professionals completed course



### Parenting and Family Services

#### SPARK

**646**  
in-home visits

#### Parent Coaching Sessions

**2,424**  
parents/guardians served

#### The Art of Positive Parenting Workshops

**3,257**  
parents/guardians served

#### Parents Assisted in Finding Quality Care

**2,139**  
families (via phone and online)

#### Central Intake and Referral

**6,968**  
Parents and Caregivers connected to Help Me Grow services

## Step Up To Quality

*These numbers reflect July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020*

**96%**

of providers received their star-rating through our services

**597**

programs served

**1,327**

site visits

**56**

attendees to SUTQ events

[www.actionforchildren.org/SUTQ](http://www.actionforchildren.org/SUTQ)

# PANDEMIC RESPONSE

COVID-19 presented all of us with a year that was unlike any other. Here are just a few of the many ways Action for Children responded to the crisis and advocated for providers and families.



## 59 Child Care Affordability Scholarships

disbursed to families struggling to pay for pandemic child care



## 1st-in-state #FundChildCare alert

sent to AFC community that drove the call to action and started groundbreaking conversations with policymakers and advocates



## 3,000 Columbus Cares Kid Kits

distributed in partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital, The Ohio State University, Future Ready Columbus, and United Way of Central Ohio to under-resourced families disproportionately affected by the pandemic



## 9000+ uses of AFC's first-in-state Interactive Child Care Map,

connecting families to child care during the pandemic



## 2 comprehensive, data-driven reports published,

leading the way with information about the state of child care in Central Ohio



## 24 Central Ohio Critical Child Care meetings convened,

providing invaluable information, resources, and support to providers throughout the pandemic



## 12,000+ PPE supplies donated to providers,

including masks, hand soap, thermometers, hand sanitizer and disposable gloves



## 243 Child Care Grants awarded

between May and July, benefitting **142** Child Care Centers and **101** Family Child Care owners



## 7 presentations at roundtables and legislative briefings

with State and Federal leaders, advocating for child care providers and families

# PARENT & FAMILY SERVICES

**Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids:** At Action for Children, we believe parents are a child's first and best teachers. Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) is a family-focused intervention program that collaborates with parents to help them prepare their 3 and 4 year old children for school by building reading, language and social skills to create a seamless transition into school. While 33% of children entering the program were below average in their skills readiness, post screening showed that 85% of children were average or above average at the end of the SPARK program year.

**Accessing Quality Child Care:** Our Information and Referral team helps families in Central Ohio locate the best child care and early education programs for their children by increasing their knowledge of quality indicators, financial assistance, and other resources. AFC maintains a database of more than 1,500 regulated child care and early education programs in Central Ohio, including nonprofit and for-profit child care centers, family child care homes, preschool programs, Head Start programs, and school age programs. Families may also use our online search tool to access the database.

**Central Intake and Referral:** Action for Children serves as the single point of entry for Help Me Grow Home Visiting and Early Intervention services in Central Ohio. Our Central Intake and Referral (CIR) team connects pregnant women, caregivers with new babies, and families with young children with developmental delays or disabilities with services that will provide tools and information to nurture the healthy growth of their child through their earliest years.

**The Art of Positive Parenting:** Children don't come with a user manual and many parents in Central Ohio feel underprepared to give their children what they need. Seeking coaching and advice, parents have been coming to AFC for nearly 20 years to learn new knowledge and skills that help them create a healthy, mutually respectful family life for children. The Art of Positive Parenting (TAPP) provides three- and six-week interactive education classes designed to help parents/guardians listen to children's problems, effectively engage children's cooperation, encourage responsibility, and manage stress.

**Positive Parenting Program:** Raising children isn't always easy and many parents feel they've run out of ways to engage their children. The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) gives parents fresh new ideas and a chance to meet other parents. We provide simple, practical strategies parents can adapt to suit their family's values, beliefs and needs.

**Putting the Children First:** Navigating divorce, dissolution and legal separation can be stressful for parents and children. The Putting the Children First program (PTCF) understands that each situation is unique and helps parents in Franklin County (and parents in outlying counties via the online course) by giving them new knowledge and skills that can help them co-parent successfully and help children feel secure during the separation process.

**Mothers Matter:** Mothers play a special role in their children's lives. But, some mothers in Central Ohio have extra circumstances that make it challenging to give their children the best. Our Mothers Matter program serves mothers who meet one or more of the following criteria: teen mothers, single/divorced/separated mothers, noncustodial mothers, living in poverty, minority population, involved with the courts, child welfare, or penal system. These classes are also open to any mother interested in parenting skills enrichment. In this program, mothers gain skills and knowledge that lead to healthy relationships with their children and co-parents and teach them new ways of communicating that can strengthen those bonds.

**Fatherhood Programs:** Action for Children recognizes the unique qualities, strengths and talents of fathers that make them critical to their child's healthy growth and development. Our Fatherhood programming offers hands-on parenting and co-parenting skills, and provides job-readiness classes and workforce development services to help fathers find and keep stable jobs.

Through our Father Factor program, we serve fathers who meet any of the following criteria: are unengaged or under engaged with their children, are living in poverty, are unemployed or underemployed, have child custody/visitation or support issues and/or involved with the courts, are incarcerated fathers, or are fathers who desire to enhance their parenting skills.

Through The Journey program, non-custodial fathers with open child support cases receive help to navigate the child support system, as well as holistic support that enables them to continue forming meaningful relationships with their children. The Journey is a collaborative program with Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency, Jewish Family Services, and Goodwill Columbus.





## PARENT & FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

For most parents, the closest thing we have to a manual for raising kids is the one our parents left us. We learn from what our parents did or didn't do – things we want to emulate, things we want to avoid, things we strive to do better. For many communities of color, the environment and societal pressures they face create unique challenges and stressors when it comes to raising children. Through no fault of their own, many find themselves parenting with a manual that is driven by love and a desire to see their children succeed, but complicated by external factors and generational trauma.

When Sarina enrolled in the Mothers Matter program in November, it wasn't because she wanted to. As a mom of thirteen years to her daughter Sarinity, and her baby son Royal, she was already a veteran. She didn't know what else she could learn from a parenting class that she wasn't already doing on the job.

Before the first class was over, Sarina realized the insights she would learn would be game-changing for her relationships with both of her children, and the other adults in her life. Over the course of eight weeks, program facilitator Arla Lyles guided Sarina and the rest of the group through tools to encourage active listening and communication, positive co-parenting, healthy discipline techniques, and intentional self-care for moms. Sarina described the experience as eye-opening as she unlearned years of parenting habits rooted in generational trauma and charted a restorative new course to her children's independence and healthy emotional processing. ***"This class was an amazing start to healing,"*** she shared. ***"When you take steps towards healing, you can then begin raising healthy children who won't need healing in their adult lives. That process results in generational riches that no amount of money can buy."***

As a single mom, the Mothers Matter classes also gave Sarina the opportunity to build friendships with other parents, which made her feel like she wasn't alone. ***"Meeting other mothers was another blessing,"*** Sarina shared. ***"It feels like you parent by yourself as a single mother, but I found that many of us had very similar stories. It was crazy to see that I'm not by myself."***

Since taking the class, Sarina is still using the principles from the lessons in her everyday life. ***"My daughter has a trillion stories to tell,"*** she laughs. Thanks to the Art of Listening session, Sarina is now more conscious about taking the time to listen, and leave space for her daughter to think for herself and share her feelings. She's already working on laying the groundwork and instilling healthy habits with her son, who is now a year and a half.

What started as out as a lawyer's recommendation turned into what Sarina describes as a gift that ultimately changed her relationship with her children for the better, and provided her with universal tools that have also enhanced her adult relationships. Her story is one of many that illustrates how with commitment, guidance, and advocacy for change, parents are empowered to be their best selves for their children, and create restorative new parenting manuals for the next generation.

To learn more about our work with parents, visit [www.actionforchildren.org/parents](http://www.actionforchildren.org/parents)

# EARLY CHILD CARE SERVICES

## **Child and Adult Care Food Program:**

On average, more than two-third of families have all parents working, and children are in child care for more than 35 hours per week. Yet, not all families can assure their children have access to nutritious snacks and meals. Much like the school lunch program, the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) helps Family Child Care providers in Central Ohio receive annual nutrition training and reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks. For home-based providers, this amounted to over 560,000 snacks this year alone.

**Child Development Associate:** Since our inception, AFC has prioritized supporting the early childhood workforce. One aspect of our training and professional development services is preparing Central Ohio early learning educators to earn a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™. The CDA is the national para-professional credential in early childhood education, and is an important means of strengthening and professionalizing the early childhood workforce. In acquiring a CDA credential, participants invest significant time and effort to become more skilled in their interactions with children, and thus enhance the overall quality of their program. AFC was one of the first training organizations in Ohio to be recognized as a Gold Standard provider of CDA preparation.

**Family Child Care Services:** Family Child Care providers are licensed to provide child care in their homes. These providers are often challenged to connect with a professional network as they care and educate groups of up to six children at one time within their homes. Our services help Family Child Care providers in Franklin County and surrounding counties become licensed, maintain mandatory training requirements, connect with other providers, improve the quality of their programming and meet state quality-rating requirements.

**Step Up To Quality:** The availability and quality of child care varies widely in Central Ohio. The Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) rating system creates a continuous quality improvement path for providers. SUTQ star-rated programs have demonstrated a commitment to meet stronger standards for staff, environments and curricula, which have been validated to improve children's Kindergarten readiness. Our Technical Assistance Coaches help child care programs obtain, maintain, and/or increase their star-ratings through free on-site coaching, continuing education and professional development training, and by hosting events to encourage community support.

*The Byrd Nest Childcare*



*COVID-19 classroom adjustments at Kiddie Academy*



*Sensory play with Carrie Williamson, Director of Kids Academy*

# PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT

Action for Children is a trusted resource in our community, supporting and guiding child care providers in their work. No time was this ever more crucial than this past year. In March, the COVID-19 pandemic turned the world upside down, and as front-line workers, child care providers were among the first to feel the impact.

The statewide shutdown to slow the spread of COVID-19 ground normal operations to a halt. Child care operations were temporarily restricted to providers with Temporary Pandemic Child Care licenses, with services reserved for essential workers. The vast majority of child care providers across Central Ohio were forced to temporarily close their doors, and the remaining providers were left with big questions when it came to operations. How would they be able to keep offering quality care while facing a shortage of supplies and the steep learning curve of ever-changing guidelines? How would they be able to keep their staff and families safe?

Despite the looming fears, these providers once again stepped up to the challenge to serve – and when they did, Action for Children was right there alongside them. In April, Action for Children created the Central Ohio Critical Child Care Network (COCCCN) for providers operating under Temporary Pandemic Child Care licenses. Through the group, providers had access to vital supplies, reliable resources, and clear answers to their questions. **“Action for Children was there from the beginning.”** Eunika, a mother and family child care provider of eighteen years told us.

**“From laptops, thermometers, soaps, toys, books, and more, they supplied all types of resources that would help us stay open.”**

When the restriction on child care centers was lifted at the end of May, Action for Children’s work with the Central Ohio Critical Child Care Network didn’t end. Instead, AFC expanded the COCCCN to include all providers as they remained open, or moved towards reopening, working tirelessly to provide up-to-date information and resources. **“There has not been one session that I have attended where I did not learn something new, or take away something important.”** shared Michelle, a former educator, and current director of My Place Child Care & School Age Center in Licking County.

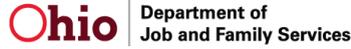
As providers continue their transition towards reopening safely, Brittany Jackson, AFC’s Step Up To Quality Coordinator and lead COCCCN facilitator is already preparing for the future. **“My vision for the Critical Care Network is that providers across Central Ohio will maximize the opportunity to collaborate with one another. It should evolve into a shared learning space where providers are invested in each other’s growth and success.”**

To learn more about our work with providers, visit [www.actionforchildren.org/professionals-providers](http://www.actionforchildren.org/professionals-providers)

AFC staff and partners work to distribute supplies to the community



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# REMEMBERING AMY ALLEGREE

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With deep sadness, we mark the passing of our teammate, Amy Allegree, in September 2020. Her work as a quality improvement coach with Family Child Care providers touched many lives and we are grateful to have had her on our team. She is missed.



# CONNECT WITH AFC

Action for Children



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