

Action for Children



YOUR SOURCE FOR SUPPORT

FY24 IMPACT REPORT



Photos on Front Cover:
Top: Help Me Grow participants
Aleiyce and Nehemiah

Middle: Kindergarten-ready children
celebrating their graduation from
Action for Children's SPARK program

Bottom: ODJFS Licensing Meeting

Photo Below:
Educators in the
Child Development Associate
preparatory program
at Action for Children

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Board President: 2

Fiscal Year 2024 Board: 2

Mission, Vision, & Core Values: 3

Where We Serve: 4

Our Impact In Numbers: 5-6

Our Advocacy: 7-8

Parent & Family Spotlight: 9

Parent & Family Services: 10

**Early Childhood
Education Spotlight: 11**

**Early Childhood
Education Services: 12**

Facts & Figures: 13

Funding Partners: 14



DEAR FRIENDS.

For more than 50 years, Action for Children has been a source for support, working alongside parents, educators, and communities to strengthen the foundation of early care and education. As the needs of children and families have changed, so too has our approach—but one thing remains the same: whether in the home or in the classroom, we are committed to ensuring every child experiences the high-quality early learning opportunities they need to thrive.

This year, we continued to make strides towards expanding our reach and deepening our impact. Through our child care education and initiatives programs, we equipped child care professionals with tools to sustain and grow their programs. Our parenting, family, and community engagement initiatives continued to uplift families, ensuring parents and guardians have the resources they need to navigate the challenges of raising young children. And through advocacy and collaboration, we worked to secure stronger policies and funding to support the early childhood workforce—because quality child care starts with supported caregivers.

These efforts are more than just programs. They are lifelines. Families rely on Action for Children in moments of uncertainty—whether when searching for child care, balancing work and family, or seeking guidance on their child’s development.

Early childhood educators turn to us when they need business support, training, or simply a community that understands their challenges. We don’t take that trust lightly.

As we reflect on this year’s impact, we do so with gratitude. Your support, whether through partnership, advocacy, or financial investment, has allowed us to continue making good on our commitment to children and families. Together, we are building a future where every child has access to the care, education, and opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We are proud to be your source for support.

Dr. Mary Kay Irwin, EdD.
Board President,
Action for Children



FISCAL YEAR 2024 BOARD

PRESIDENT

Dr. Mary Kay Irwin
*Senior Director of School
Health Services, Nationwide
Children’s Hospital*

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Matt Sharp
Actuary, Guy Carpenter

TREASURER

Jennifer Halas
*Vice President, Senior Counsel,
Huntington National Bank*

SECRETARY

Rebecca Love
*Retired, Franklin County Board of
Developmental Disabilities*

MEMBERS

Alex Anthony
Matt Bell
Lynn Blashford
Becky Ciminillo
Lisa Cochran
Joanne Goldhand
Ann Lockett
Becky Love
Lilly Richter - Board Fellow
Ernie Sullivan
Rob White II
Rochelle Wilkerson
Tamar Williamson

Dr. Eric Karolak
*CEO, Action for
Children*

Ann Lockett
*Interim CEO,
Action for Children*

**This list is inclusive of
members who served on
our board July 1, 2023 -
June 30, 2024.*

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 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.

OUR CORE VALUES

ADVOCACY

We commit to lead the charge for increasing access to quality early childhood experiences and 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.

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 we believe that 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 support the needs, values, and backgrounds of our communities.

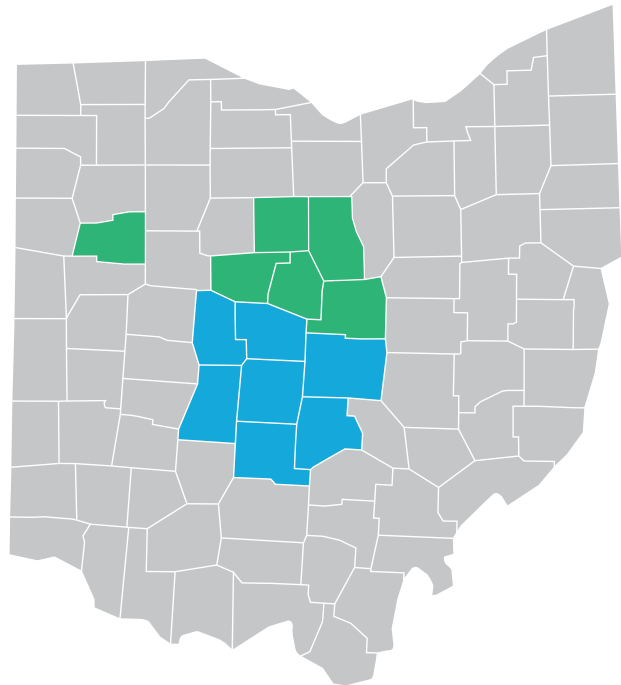




WHERE WE **SERVE**

**Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin,
Licking, Madison, Pickaway,
and Union counties.**

*During FY24, some services
were also available in
Allen, Crawford, Knox, Marion,
Morrow, and Richland counties.*



OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

These numbers reflect July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024



\$5,182,335

awarded in Franklin County
RISE scholarships,
serving **668** children



174 business-focused trainings,
networking events, and coaching
sessions offered to child care
program owners through The BOSS

395,244
nutritious meals
and snacks served
through the Child
and Adult Care
Food Program*



5,677 hours
of ongoing technical
assistance and coaching
provided to child care
professionals



1,571
hours of
professional
development
offered



72 family child care professionals
served through The Village Staffed
Family Child Care Network

88 professionals completed Action
for Children's Child Development
Associate preparatory course

2,734 hours of Step Up
To Quality technical assistance
provided to support high-quality
early care and education



**Action for Children ceased its CACFP
sponsorship program in December 2024*



2,634

families assisted
in finding quality
child care

1,454 SPARK kindergarten readiness home visits completed

1,655 parents + guardians served through parent education and
workshops, impacting **3,411** children in their households



64 mothers +
mother figures
empowered through
case management
and support programs



618 fathers
+ father figures
empowered
through case
management and
support programs

527 counseling sessions
provided to families looking
for child care

2,039 Help Me Grow home
visits completed, impacting
109 families

14,930
parents connected
to Help Me Grow's
system of supports,
improving maternal
and infant outcomes



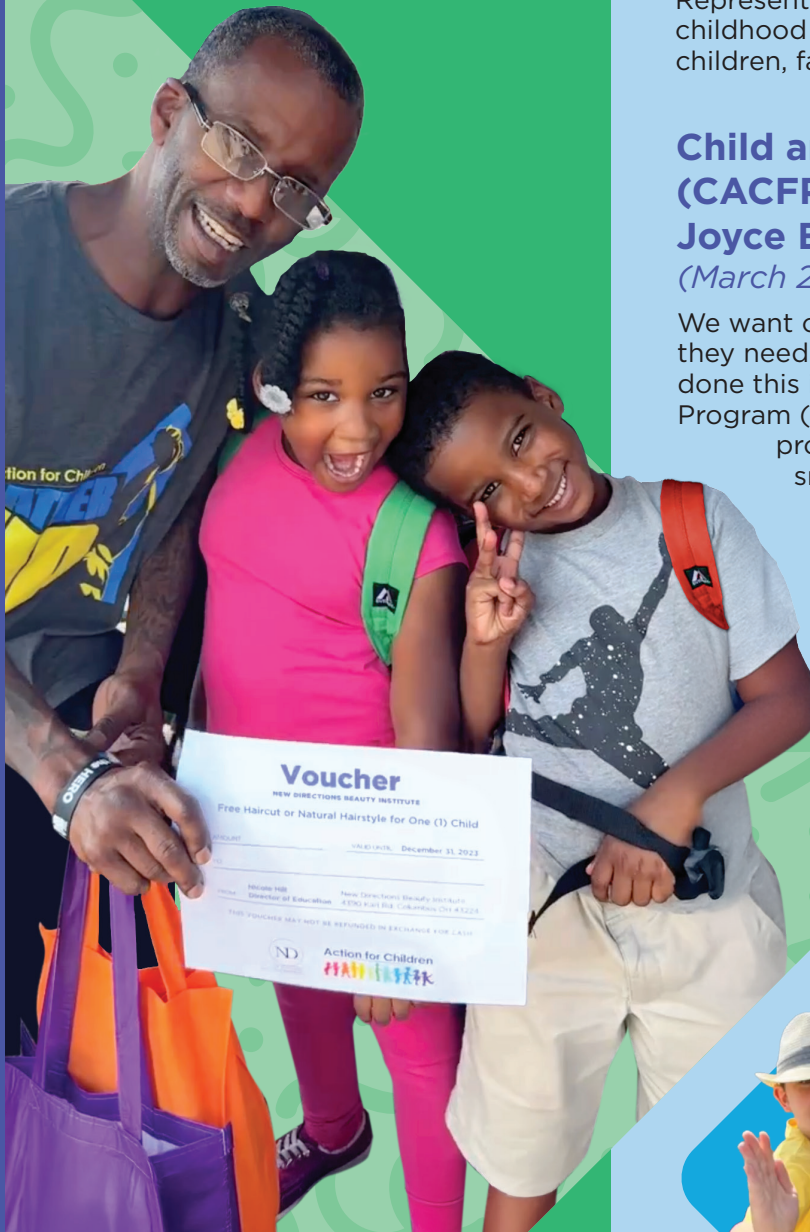
686 families reached out to inquire
about foster, kinship and adoption
support services, and

216 families
connected to foster
and adoption agencies





Action for Children is committed to transforming the lives of young children by advocating for the adults who make the biggest impact on their lives. See how we've been advocating this year!



ADVANCING CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

Back To School Family Fair (August 2023)

Action for Children hosted the 3rd Annual Back-To-School Family Fair, distributing countless community resources and 500 backpacks filled with supplies to children getting ready for the school year. Over 525 community members and 38 vendors attended!

Meetings with Policymakers (February - May 2024)

Action for Children reached out to all central Ohio legislators and met with a total of 13 Ohio Senators and Representatives as well as 2 United States Representatives to talk about the importance of early childhood education and AFC's role in supporting children, families, and educators.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) visit with Congresswoman Joyce Beatty (March 2024)

We want children to have access to the nutrients they need to be healthy and strong. One way we've done this is by being a Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Sponsor so that family child care professionals can provide healthy meals and snacks at their programs. During CACFP week 2024, we brought US Representative Joyce Beatty to a family child care home to see the impact the program has on providers and children.



CHAMPIONING CAREGIVERS



Launch of Provider Advisory Council (January 2024)

Action for Children launched the Provider Advisory Council (PAC), inviting child care professionals across central Ohio to share input on and enhance our child care programs and offerings. Throughout the year, PAC members have provided insight on a number of projects, including the launch of Action for Children's Shared Services program, and offering feedback on our annual child care reports.

NAEYC CHIPS Report Presentation (February 2024)

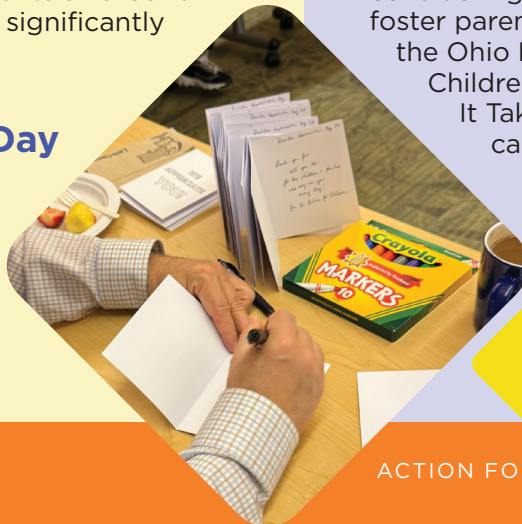
Action for Children hosted a breakout session alongside the Century Foundation at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Public Policy Forum to talk about Action for Children's CHIPS report. Session attendees had the opportunity to learn about how semi-conductor manufacturing companies can invest in child care and improve access to child care for their employees.

Columbus Metropolitan Club Luncheon: Understanding the New Landscape of Child Care (February 2024)

In an event open for anyone to attend, Action for Children was part of a panel alongside the new Director of the Department of Children and Youth, Kara Wente; the Director of Government Affairs at COTA, Aslyne Rodriguez; and Carol Haynes, the Executive Director of Kiddie Academy. While this event advocated for child care and its all around benefits, equity for providers was significantly highlighted.

Provider Appreciation Day (May 2024)

Action for Children brought together the community to decorate thank you cards showing appreciation for early care and education professionals.



DEFENDING FAMILIES

Convened the first of three listening sessions with the Department of Children and Youth and families receiving AFC's services (September 2023)

Action for Children supported the creation of Ohio's new Department of Children and Youth by bringing families and providers to the sessions. The sessions gave families a chance to listen to what's in store and give their feedback.

CSH appearance with Reynoldsburg Mayor Joe Begeny on the 12:00 Mayor Joe Show (October 2023)



The Children Services Hub team at Action for Children had the opportunity to discuss fostering and kinship care with Reynoldsburg Mayor Joe Begeny on the 12:00 Mayor Joe Show! Whatever the path to parenting is, Action for Children supports families across central Ohio as they grow together.

AFC's first-ever Foster Care Expo (April 2024)

Action for Children convened an interactive expo that offered trainings, resources and supports for current licensed families and families considering becoming foster parents as part of the Ohio Department of Children and Youth's It Takes 100% Heart campaign.



PARENT & FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: THE ART OF POSITIVE PARENTING (TAPP)

"I really appreciated how this class gave me a better idea of how to interact with my children and build a bond with them," she said. "There are a lot of skills that I've been inspired to use already, and I can't wait to implement more. I am really grateful to have been able to have been a part of this class."

Deja, The Art of Positive Parenting (TAPP) participant



Parenthood is a journey that often involves learning opportunities, growth, and challenges along the way. For Deja, that journey has come with obstacles, but also with hope, support, and new perspectives that are shaping her as a mother.

When she enrolled in The Art of Positive Parenting (TAPP) at Action for Children, Deja had taken parenting classes before, but none had truly prepared her for the real-life challenges of parenting. This class, Deja shared, wasn't just about reading strategies in a book—it was about learning from real experiences and gaining the tools to build stronger, healthier relationships with her children.

One of the most powerful lessons Deja learned was that the way we describe our children shapes how we see them and how they see themselves. Instead of saying a child is "nosy," she's learned to recognize their curiosity. Instead of seeing a child as "bad," she now understands that they are figuring out their world through trial and error.

"How we talk about our kids really matters," she said. "I've learned that instead of saying my child is quiet, to say that she's attentive. It's helped me see my kids differently and not put labels on them." This simple mindset shift has transformed the way she approaches parenting, allowing her to set more realistic expectations and nurture her children's individuality.

For Deja, the biggest transformation has been in her perspective. In addition to the techniques she learned, Deja also gained confidence from taking Action for Children's TAPP class.

"I really appreciated how this class gave me a better idea of how to interact with my children and build a bond with them," she said. "There are a lot of skills that I've been inspired to use already, and I can't wait to implement more. I am really grateful to have been able to have been a part of this class."

Action for Children became a source of encouragement, guidance, and reassurance, reminding her that parenting is a journey, and every step forward matters.

"It has been my experience over the past 8 years that many parents come into these classes feeling that they are parenting alone, and when they complete the classes, they feel supported. They have a group of peers that are going through similar situations, and they learn that it is never too late to do something different, to learn more and to try something new," Parent Education Coordinator, Jenn DeStefano said.

Deja's journey is still unfolding, but with newfound confidence, parenting tools, and a steady source of support, she is embracing the path ahead—one step at a time.

PARENT & FAMILY SERVICES

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. Action for Children maintains a database of more than 1,500 licensed 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.

Children Services Hub: Every child deserves a safe, consistent, and loving home. Becoming a kinship, foster, or adoptive parent offers a safe space for children to continue to learn and grow. Action for Children provides support, guidance, and answers to questions families may have as they consider starting this rewarding journey. Our services, including individualized planning and preparation for pre-screening and home study inspections, help families navigate their options, the licensing process, and more.

FatherUp: Action for Children recognizes the unique qualities, strengths and talents of fathers and father figures 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 and workforce development services to help fathers find and keep stable jobs. 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.



Help Me Grow: 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. Action for Children also offers its own Help Me Grow home visiting services, which provide critical prenatal and postnatal support to families in Franklin County.

Mothers Matter: Mothers and mother figures 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, non-custodial 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.

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. Action for Children's Putting The Children First (PTCF) program 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.

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. Through Franklin County RISE, Action for Children's SPARK team is also partnering with Future Ready Five to offer interactive parent workshops to help families get their children kindergarten-ready.

The Art of Positive Parenting: Seeking coaching and advice, parents have been coming to Action for Children for over 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 and guardians listen to children's problems, effectively engage children's cooperation, encourage responsibility, and manage stress.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If you were to ask Natasha about her professional journey, she'd tell you she's come a long way – and so has Action for Children. In 2012, Action for Children was offering only in-person professional development classes for child care educators and Natasha, a newcomer to the profession, was there. She was looking to learn new skills and tools to become a better educator and help others do the same, and achieve her dream of being a child care program administrator.

Over the years, Natasha returned to Action for Children for classes and was encouraged by her coaches and instructors to enroll in Action for Children's Child Development Associate preparatory course in 2024. In the course, she gained a deeper understanding of child development, educational theories and methods, leadership, and engaging families and children, and put what she learned in practice in her child care role.

“Taking classes with Action for Children is probably the best decision I've ever made,” Natasha said. “It's helped me change my perspective on early care and education. You can be in child care for 20+ years and you think the same way until you take one of these classes and you realize there's a different way to think about child care.”

Since 2016, Natasha has served in two administrative child care roles and has been able to mentor several teachers, leading to higher quality education opportunities for young children. Natasha is currently finishing her Child Development Association application with the CDA council and is looking forward to seeing where it takes her!

Action for Children's goal of providing valuable training opportunities that help educators to think differently about early care and education has grown along with the Professional Development program. Today, Action for Children offers an expansive catalog of more than 80 trainings in different formats, including in-person, live virtual, asynchronous, on-site, and even virtual reality training!

Ryan, who directs The Goddard School of Gahanna, reached out to Action for Children to organize an onsite training for his staff last year. He says that the onsite training has allowed him as an administrator to show his team that he's interested in helping his employees professionally and show them that there are avenues for them if they want to grow as educators.

“Action for Children always seems to open our eyes to different ways to do things,” he shared. “Having a resource out there to give us information in a fresh way, that follows best practices, and is in-line with licensing expectations is something we can count on from Action for Children.”



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES

Child and Adult Care Food Program: 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, Action for Children's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) helps Family Child Care professionals in central Ohio receive annual nutrition training and reimbursement for the nutritious meals and snacks they serve at their programs. **Action for Children ceased its CACFP sponsorship in December 2024.*

Child Development Associate Program: 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. Through Action for Children's CDA program, students also have access to on-site, personalized coaching, helping them to better understand and apply the concepts acquired in their coursework.

Empower Awards: Child care professionals in central Ohio go above and beyond every day for our community. Action for Children's Empower Awards provide support for programs as they care for children and families. By rewarding providers for achieving goals such as signing a new PFCC agreement, meeting SUTQ goals, becoming licensed, or opening child care classrooms, AFC is helping to strengthen child care businesses while simultaneously improving the quality of child care available to families and young children in central Ohio.

Family Child Care Services: Family Child Care professionals serve their community by providing child care services within their homes. These educators are often challenged to connect with a professional network, as they typically care for and educate small groups of children independently. Our services help Family Child Care professionals in central Ohio become licensed, maintain mandatory training requirements, connect with other providers, and improve the quality of their programming.

Franklin County RISE: Action for Children is helping to make child care and early education experiences more accessible to families in Franklin County with child care affordability scholarships. Through Franklin County RISE, many families have been able to enroll their children in child care for the first time, setting their little ones up for success in school and beyond. In addition to child care scholarships, Franklin County RISE has also provided incentive grants for child care programs, signing bonus funds, and Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) for early childhood educators to help programs recruit educators, enroll new families, and maintain and grow their businesses.

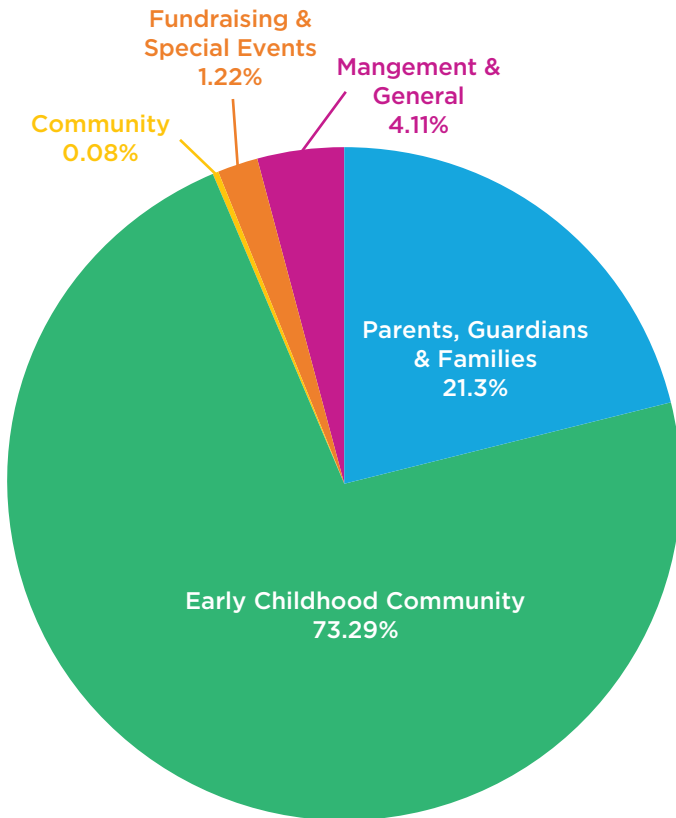
Professional Development: AFC provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities through classes, special training events, networking opportunities, study groups, and more. We offer required health and safety trainings, as well as specialized training for quality improvement on a range of topics, including language & literacy, classroom management, promoting child and teacher resilience, leadership development, equity & inclusion, relationships with families, and more. In 2023, Action for Children also used Language ENvironment Analysis (LENA) technology to improve the quality and quantity of teacher-child interactions. This program provided coaching to 89 teachers in 44 classrooms, impacting 384 children.

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-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 increase their ratings through free on-site and virtual coaching, continuing education and professional development training, and by hosting events to encourage community support.



FACTS & FIGURES

Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)

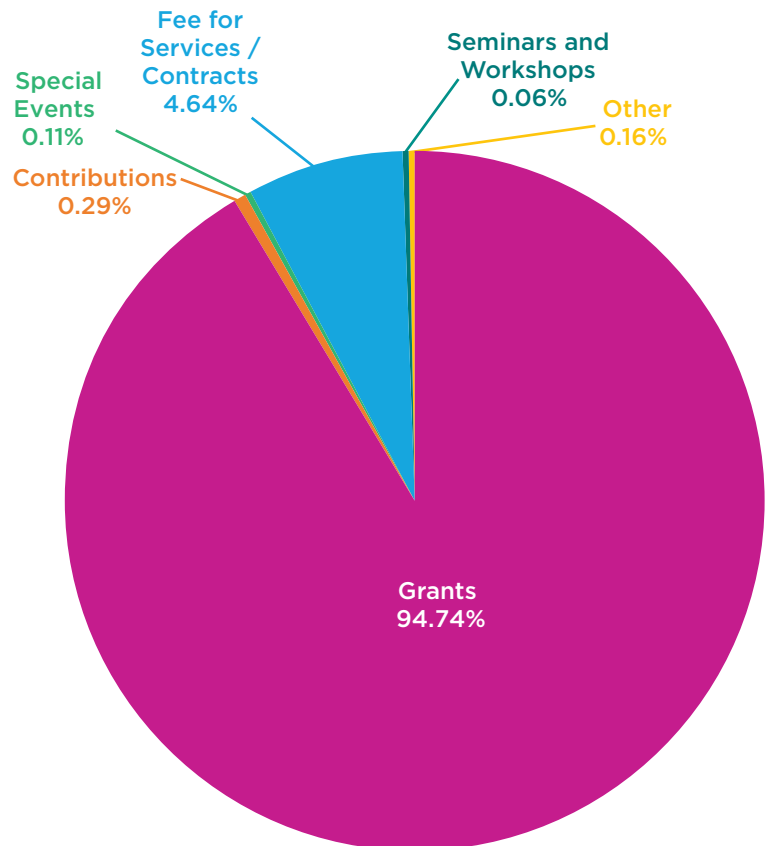


Expenses

Parents, Guardians & Families	\$4,090,422
Early Childhood Community	\$14,073,609
Community	\$115,752
Fundraising & Special Events	\$234,326
Management & General	\$789,519
Total	\$19,203,628

Public Support and Revenues

Grants	\$17,714,396
Contributions	\$54,506
Special Events	\$19,897
Fee for Services / Contracts	\$868,361
Foundations	—
Seminars and Workshops	\$10,610
Other	\$30,589
Total	\$18,698,359



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS WHO HELP TO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE.

FUNDING PARTNERS & SPONSORS



SCAN TO DONATE TO ACTION FOR CHILDREN



Action for Children



78 Jefferson Ave, Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-224-0222 | www.actionforchildren.org



@Act4Kidz



@actionforchildren1



@Act4Kidz



@action-for-children-of-central-ohio



@action4kidz



@actionforchildren4463