



ZERO to THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



What the Future Holds



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



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REPORT

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Leadership

For more than four decades, ZERO TO THREE has been the leading voice on behalf of babies and toddlers. And when unparalleled crises struck, we drew strength from our experience, our board, our staff, our partners, and from you—our community of Baby Champions. As we celebrate our accomplishments in 2021 and the committed supporters who helped us achieve them, we are also looking toward the future. Our impact today on children, families, and communities is creating positive, lasting change for a brighter tomorrow. Thank you for all of your support.



Brenda Jones Harden

Brenda Jones Harden, PhD
Board President



Matthew Melmed

Matthew Melmed, JD
Executive Director

**Meeting
Every
Need**



The pandemic has
made us all aware of
the importance of
good mental health,
which is especially
important for babies
and toddlers.



Transformational Care

**Strengthening Families
and Communities**

**Valuing Our Babies'
Mental Health**

Leading the Way

**New Vision for
Collaboration**

A Better Future for All

Transformational Care



MEETING EVERY NEED

When Kayla Ambesi first met baby Theo, she fell in love instantly. Kayla and her husband Kyle were foster parents for five years, but it was their first time having an infant in their care. When holding Theo, Kayla could tell he yearned for attention and love. She also noticed he was a little distant and seemed to not have the same physical strength as most six-month-olds.

Theo's pediatrician confirmed he wasn't meeting critical developmental milestones, and he had significant medical needs that required intensive support and coordinated care.

The **HealthySteps Specialist**, who was part of Theo's pediatric team, stepped in to help Kayla and Kyle confidently navigate the road ahead.

By placing highly trained early childhood development specialists alongside pediatricians, our HealthySteps program transforms pediatric care. We engage all members of the team to promote wellness, identify children and families most at risk for negative outcomes, and intervene early to set them on a course for lifelong well-being. With the wraparound care that HealthySteps provides, Theo is now thriving.

In 2021, HealthySteps launched 49 new sites and reached approximately 350,000 children nationwide. This significant growth for the fourth consecutive year is an enormous stride toward the program's goal of reaching more than 1 million children annually by 2032.

• **EXPLORE** the **new** [HealthySteps.org](https://www.healthysteps.org)

350,000+

Children reached nationwide

252

HealthySteps Specialists

213

Sites

”

**It was so much,
but I didn't feel
like it was so
much because
I had such an
incredible amount
of support and
understanding.**

Kayla Ambesi

Strengthening Families and Communities

Babies and toddlers are the largest group of children who experience maltreatment in the United States and enter foster care at a higher rate than any other group. The pandemic has only served to expose and exacerbate many long-standing problems in the child welfare system.



Our **Safe Babies Court Teams** (SBCT) are working tirelessly to transform the child welfare system into the practice of child and family well-being. Through a unique, team-based approach, our network of over 114 SBCT sites across 29 states ignites collective action in local communities to strengthen families and meet the urgent needs of infants and toddlers who are at risk of removal from their families, under court jurisdiction, and in foster care. In 2021, SBCT continued to expand nationwide and deepen its impact.

- Launched teams in **five new states:** Arkansas, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, and Washington.
- Established the **National Advisory Group for Parents' Voices**, creating space for parents with lived experiences to provide invaluable feedback on the program.
- Implemented a **Race-Equity Assessment** to address racial bias and disproportionality in the child welfare system for children of color, ensuring that SBCT teams incorporate a racial equity lens in all their work.
- Secured \$7 million in **Congressional funding** for 5 new states and 21 new sites.

We are excited to harness this momentum to bring systemic change to how we care for families, connect communities and ensure every baby has what they need to thrive.

Valuing Our Babies' Mental Health

The pandemic has made us all aware of the importance of good mental health, which is especially important for babies and toddlers. ZERO TO THREE keeps infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) at the center of our work, recognizing the importance not just of promoting positive social and emotional development, but also shining a light on the needs of young children and families struggling with mental health disorders.

With a renewed national focus on this critical issue, we established an IECMH Clinical Mentorship Program for our Fellowship class.

We also brought together stakeholders throughout the U.S. to explore the barriers and opportunities related to diversifying the IECMH clinical workforce. This resulted in the development of **The Pathways Map**, a new resource to support growing and diversifying the IECMH workforce.

We are also centering equity in all our work, including in the field of IECMH. This year, we conceptualized and launched the IECMH Clinical Workforce Diversity Collective, inclusive of a diverse group of clinicians, students, researchers, parents, and leaders in the field. The collective aims to

develop solutions to increase the diversity of the IECMH clinical field through a series of national convenings, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of our efforts.

Through our policy work, we focused on increasing equitable access to high-quality IECMH services and supports for young children. The House and Senate appropriations committees significantly increased the amount of IECMH funding available to programs that benefit infants and toddlers. We also secured key IECMH language in congressional block grants, opening new funding streams for the future.

• [EXPLORE zerotothree.org/pathways](https://zerotothree.org/pathways)

“It’s more important than ever for us to lift each other up and care for each other as a community. When we reach out and take care of each other, we grow as professionals and as people.”

Brenda Jones Harden, PhD

Leading the Way

As part of our commitment to infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH), we recognize and celebrate new leaders who are making incredible advances for babies and toddlers. Our **2021 IECMH Emerging Leadership Award** honorees are visionaries leading the way through their cutting-edge work to transform practices, policies, and systems at the local, state, or national level in promoting IECMH.



Practice Award

**Nat
Vikitsreth**

DT, EdM, LSW, CEIM

Nat is the founder of Come Back to Care, Inc., in Chicago, Illinois, which provides group psychoeducation to parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers interested in strengthening their relationship with their children by addressing intergenerational family trauma and internalized oppression.



Policy Award

**Ashley
McCormick**

LMSW, IECMH-E®

Ashley is the endorsement and communications director for the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health (Alliance) based in Southgate, Michigan. She is a demonstrated policy leader who coordinates and collaborates with multiple state leaders and administrators, as well as with key champions overseas.

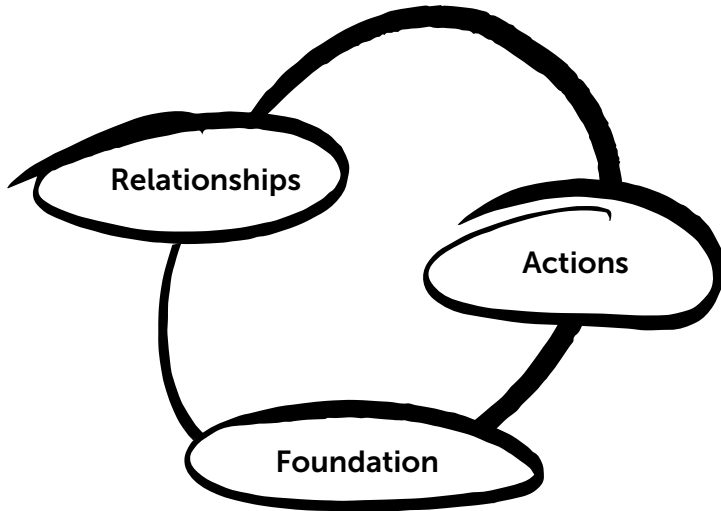


Research Award

**Kathryn
Humphreys**

PhD

Kathryn is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology and Human Development at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Her research focuses on improving the characterization of early experiences, tracing the impact of those experiences on long-term outcomes, and conducting interventions to improve children's early experiences.



New Vision for Collaboration

In communities across the country, families are striving to give their children a good start in life, sharing in the common desire for their babies to be healthy, happy, and secure. Yet far too many face considerable obstacles in raising their children, including health concerns, safety issues, and racial and economic inequities.

That is why we partnered with four complementary, evidence-based models – Family Connects International, HealthySteps, Help Me Grow, and Nurse-Family Partnership – to develop **Hand in Hand: A Community Framework for Early Childhood Collaboration**.

This new framework helps tear down silos and build trust within communities to achieve positive, equitable outcomes for all young children. The practical guide ensures families receive the services they need in a coordinated manner and strengthens highly collaborative early childhood systems.

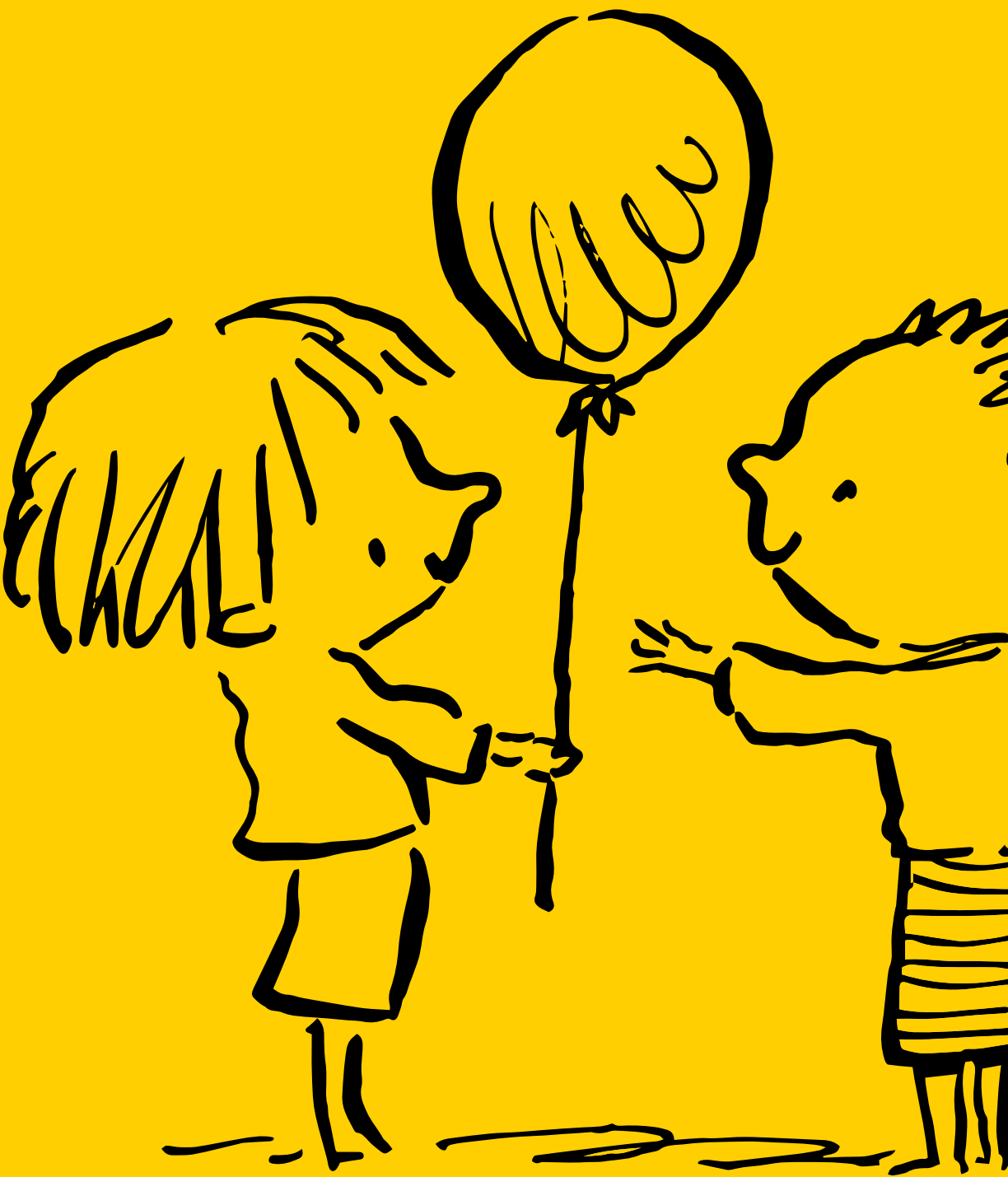
A Better Future for All

This dynamic event provided insights and tools for helping little ones build racial literacy.

Throughout the year, we hosted 70+ webinars on a range of critical and emerging topics in early childhood that attracted over 15,000 attendees. One of our most popular webinars, **Resources for Racial Justice**, was hosted in partnership with **Sesame Street in Communities** and attracted over 1,700 RSVPs. This dynamic event provided insights and tools for helping little ones build racial literacy — the skills needed to talk thoughtfully about race and to identify and respond to racism. We also released a new resource series on promoting racial equity in early childhood, offering parents and professionals guidance on helping their children develop a just and inclusive worldview.



**A
United
Front**



Over the course
of the year, our
advocates and
policy specialists
have worked hard to
promote cohesive
family policies.



Real World Impact

Families Making
a Difference



Real World Impact

Our policy and advocacy work is changing the lives of millions of children across the country.

Over the course of the year, our advocates and policy specialists have worked hard to promote cohesive family policies, including child care, paid family and medical leave, and the child tax credit. These policies were included in President Biden's Build Back Better framework and have garnered more political support than ever before.

In March, Congress passed the **American Rescue Plan Act**, which invested in babies and families. The plan included the expanded child tax credit, a policy ZERO TO THREE has long supported, which resulted in immediate and far-reaching benefits. Research has shown that after just a few months of direct payments to families, child poverty in the U.S. was reduced by 29%.

In April, we continued to make the case for what babies need in highly visible and impactful ways. ZERO TO THREE staff testified at the Senate HELP Committee hearing on child care and appeared in national news outlets such as *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *NPR*, and *MSNBC*.

We also released our **State of Babies Yearbook: 2021**, a comprehensive look at how the state where a baby is born and lives in their first three years impacts their chances at a strong start in life. As COVID-19 continued to upend the lives of virtually every American, the report showed families of young children were arguably among the hardest hit. And more and more policymakers and advocates are relying on the Yearbook's findings to promote responsive policies.

• **EXPLORE** stateofbabies.org

Families Making a Difference

Parent advocates were on the front lines throughout the push to pass these important policies, reaching out to their congressional representatives as part of our Think Babies™ movement.

Strolling Thunder™ made its return to Congress, with families from every state and Washington, DC holding virtual meetings with their representatives to discuss the importance of making the potential of every baby our national priority. Strolling Thunder parent and advocate Dasja Reed from New Orleans passionately testified at the Senate HELP Committee hearing on child care, where she shared her major struggle with finding child care for her son for almost two years.



55,000+

Contacts to Congress in support of the Build Back Better Act

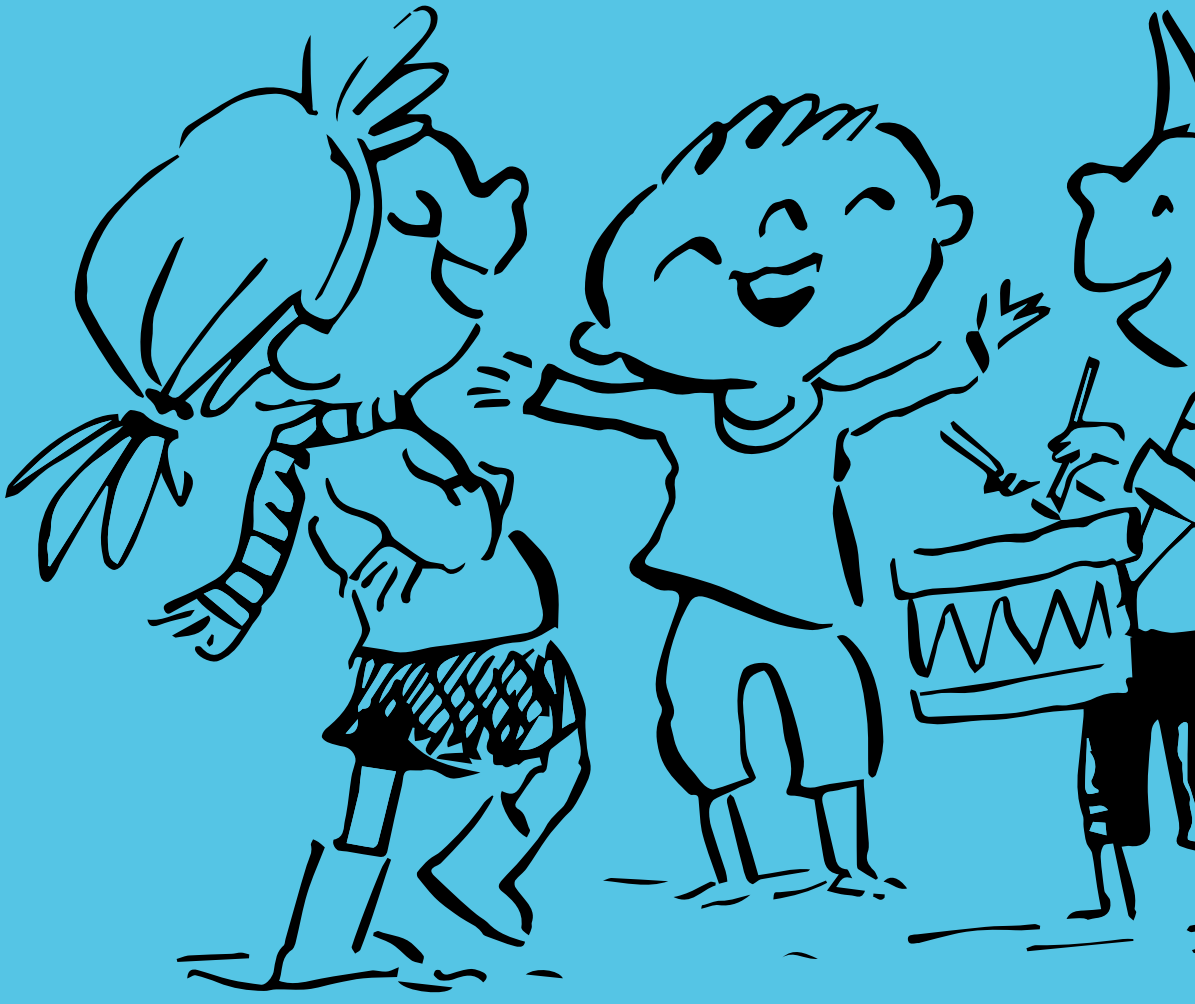
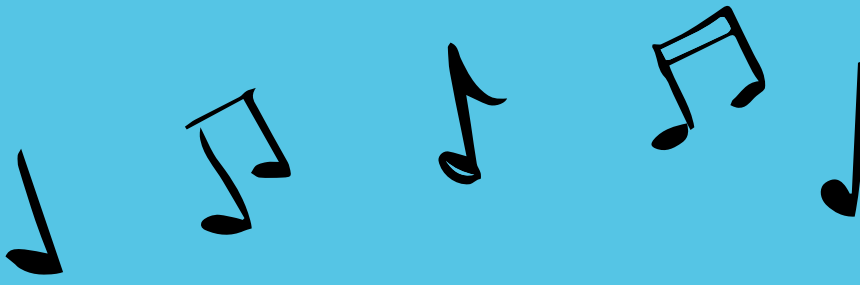
100

Strolling Thunder™ meetings between families and congressional offices

81

National partner organizations participating in our *"For Crying Out Loud"* week of action

Above and Beyond



In October, we
proudly recognized
two of the most
prominent leaders
in the field of early
childhood.



Lifetime Achievement Awards

Dolores Norton, PhD
Joy Osofsky, PhD

Lifetime Achievement Awards

The ZERO TO THREE 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individuals who have made substantive contributions to improving the lives of infants, toddlers, and their families. In October, we proudly recognized two of the most prominent leaders in the field of early childhood, **Dolores Norton, PhD**, and **Joy Osofsky, PhD**.

Dolores Norton



”

I have learned more from the members of ZERO TO THREE than I have ever given. I've learned more from you and I'm enriched by you... Any of you could have received this award and it would have been genuine.

Dr. Dolores (Dodie) Norton has been an inspiring teacher and pioneering scholar throughout her career, with an unflinching commitment to improving the lives of children and families. Her groundbreaking research, “Children at Risk: The Infant and Child Development Project,” followed 37 Black children raised in segregated and impoverished Chicago neighborhoods over 20 years in order to observe differences in children’s everyday interactions with caregivers related to developmental outcomes and school achievement. Her work exemplifies a diversity-informed, culturally sensitive, relationship-focused, and strengths-based approach to research and scholarship.

Dodie is the Samuel Deutsch Professor Emerita in the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice at the University of Chicago. Throughout her career, Dodie published on early linguistic interaction and school achievement, diversity, early socialization, and temporal development in children, and Black family life patterns. She is also a past board member of ZERO TO THREE.

Accepting the award at ZERO TO THREE’s Annual Conference, Dodie shared, “I have learned more from the members of ZERO TO THREE than I have ever given. I’ve learned more from you and I’m enriched by you... Any of you could have received this award and it would have been genuine.”

Joy Osofsky



”

This award reflects the work that we've all done together over many years, which is far greater than the work that any of us could do by ourselves.

Dr. Joy Osofsky is an extraordinary leader whose vision and dedication has inspired thousands of professionals to put the development and well-being of babies at the center of their work. She is a pioneering and passionate innovator in the fields of infant and early childhood mental health and child welfare. She also led the effort to create what is now known as ZERO TO THREE's Safe Babies Court Team. And, following the impact of Hurricane Katrina in her hometown of New Orleans, Joy worked tirelessly to address the needs of young children who were victimized by the historic natural disaster.

Joy is the Paul J. Ramsay Endowed Chair of Psychiatry, the Barbara Lemann Professor of Child Welfare at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans and director of the Harris Center for Infant Mental Health. In addition to serving as clinical director for Child and Adolescent Initiatives for the Louisiana Spirit following Hurricane Katrina, Joy was a co-principal investigator for the Mental and Behavioral Capacity Project following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Joy is a past president and current ZERO TO THREE board member. She stated that the award "reflects the work that we've all done together over many years, which is far greater than the work that any of us could do by ourselves, and that the partnerships we make and the work we do together really makes a difference in the lives of infants, toddlers, and families."

“Dodie and Joy are shining lights in our field. Their impact is felt in virtually every aspect of early childhood, and their fingerprints are on every inch of our organization.”

Matthew E. Melmed, JD

Strength in Numbers

UNIQUE
WEBSITE VISITORS

4,725,442

ORGANIZATIONAL
MEMBERS

3,653

RESOURCE MATERIAL
DOWNLOADS

214,079

Number of Media Articles Reflecting Preferred Issue Framing

656

Number of Professionals Trained

89,222

Number of Policy Network Members

59,489+ advocates

Social Media Followers

175,025

Financial Highlights

2021 REVENUE



\$48,956,799

■ 46%
Federal and State Government
Grants and Contracts

■ 44.9%
Private Grants, Contributions,
and Contracts

■ 7.9%
Program Service Revenue

■ 1.2%
Investment Income

2021 EXPENSES



■ 84.7%
Program Services

■ 14.2%
General and Administration

■ 1.1%
Fundraising and Development

Baby Champions

Your continued support allows us to extend our work to advance the proven power of nurturing relationships and creating connections.

We worked hard to recognize all of those who supported our work in the 2021 Fiscal Year through their financial generosity. If you were inadvertently omitted, please let us know.

Individuals

Mike Acosta

Ashley Aghayan

Therese Ahlers

Carol Airone

Madeline Korbelt Albright

Joanna Amick

Hayley Anderson

Anonymous

Anonymous in honor of Steven & Ann Pleshette Murphy

Anonymous in memory and honor of Ellen & John Tuchler

Alexander Archer

Belayhun Asrese

Lynette Aytch

Jennifer Babcock

Doug Ball

David & Naomi Balto

Richard Bar

Nicole Battle

Carol Baxter

Harry Beam

Paul Becker

Virginia Becker

John Beckwith

Marjorie Beeghly, PhD

Marianna Beigel

Shannon Bekman, PhD

Kathleen Benecke, MA, LPCC, IMH-E IV

Ernestine Benedict

Ron Benham

Sarah Benjamin, MA

Elizabeth Berendt

Susan Berger

Yael Berger

Jennifer E. Berke

Michael Berman

Ruanne Bernaldo

Richard Berner

Diane Bernstein

Paula & William Bernstein

Victor Bernstein

Elva Bevan Johnson

Peter A. Bigot

Sarah Birss

Anne Blackstock-Bernstein

Patricia Blackwell

Wil Blechman

Lynn & Wolf Blitzer

Elsa J. Blum, PhD

Catherine Bodkin

Stephen Boos

John Braden

Claire Brady	Felicia DeHaney, PhD	Lawrence & Gail Gerry
Patricia Brady	Ganie B. Dehart	Lynsey Gibbons
Fran Kempster Britton, MPH	Taletha Derrington, PhD	Anne Gilbert
Emmy Brockman	Salil Deshpande	Walter Gilliam, PhD
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Dr. Joy V. Browne	Betsy Dew	Jane Gish
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Carol Lou Young-Holt
John & Jean Yule
Philip Zinser
Sharon Zone

Public Funds

Arkansas Department of Human Services
Connecticut State Department of Children and Families
First 5 Orange County
Frederick County, MD Department of Social Services
U.S. Department of Defense
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Health Resources

and Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
University of Maryland, Baltimore

Foundations & Corporations

Alliance for Early Success
The American Dream Charitable Fund II
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Blue Meridian Partners
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The Burke Foundation
Center for the Study of Social Policy
The Duke Endowment
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ZERO to THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS
2445 M STREET NW
SUITE 600 | WASHINGTON, DC 20037



ZEROTOTHREE.ORG

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER REYNOLDS

Our mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. At ZERO TO THREE, we envision a society that has the knowledge and will to support all infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential.



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

