What the Future Holds

2021 IMPACT 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, PhD
Board President

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

350,000+

Children reached nationwide

252

HealthySteps Specialists

213

Sites
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.
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
“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
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.

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.

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.

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.
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.


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.

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

Dr. Dolores (Dodie) Norton has been an inspiring teacher and pioneering scholar throughout her career, with an unfailing 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.”
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.”
“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
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
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 Korbel Albright
Joanna Amick
Hayley Anderson
Anonymous
Anonymous in honor of Steven & Ann Pleshette Murphy
Anonymous in memory and honor of Ellen & John Tuchier
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Belayhun Asrese
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and Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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Neena Roumell, PhD, Author
Southwest Human Development
Start Early
Teachers College Press
Teaching Strategies, LLC
World Association of Infant Mental Health
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.