

# 2025 | ANNUAL REPORT

CENTERING RELATIONSHIPS. STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS.



**ELEVATED VOICES**



**STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**



**CONNECTED FAMILIES**



**BRIGHTER FUTURES**

*Dear Friends & Partners,*

At the Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) Onondaga, we're reminded every day that meaningful progress is measured not just in major milestones, but in the steady, quiet ways people come together on behalf of children and families. In 2025, I saw that spirit of collaboration reflected in partnerships strengthened, voices elevated, and a shared commitment that continues to carry this work forward.

2025 was defined not by radical shifts, but by the vital work of showing up for one another. We remained deeply mindful of the pressures and shifting tides that stretched our partners thin. This only deepened our focus on the quiet power of consistency. By protecting our shared momentum during uncertain times, we proved that the most durable progress is found in the decision to keep moving forward, together.

Throughout the year, this commitment took many forms. We continued to convene partners to bridge gaps in service, held space for the voices of parents and providers, and advanced the ongoing work of expanding access to high quality early learning. By centering these core relationships, we supported a more connected, reliable system of care for young children and families.

This steady progress is only possible because of the people behind it. I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our 2025 Board of Directors; their leadership provided the steady hand we needed to navigate the year.

To our community of partners, advocates, and educators: thank you. I am inspired by how you show up for one another, day in and day out. You remind us that being “in this together” is a daily practice of care, and it is that shared heart that sustains lasting change for families across Onondaga County.

As we look ahead, our focus remains unchanged: building a community where every child is valued, every family is supported, and every early childhood professional is recognized as essential.

In partnership and with gratitude,

  
Bethany Creaser  
Executive Director



## Centering & Engaging Family Voice

The Family Voice Initiative builds partnerships with parents and families in Onondaga County, provides leadership opportunities, and increases their voice, influence, and role in co-designing the work of the ECA Onondaga and its partner organizations.

Initiative Activities	
Parents on the Parent Advisory Council	13
Parent Advisory Council Meetings	12
Mothers Engaged Through the Thriving, Not Just Surviving Peer-to-Peer Group	25
Fatherhood Workshops	6
Parents Engaged Through Focus Groups	15



**31%** of Parent Advisory Council members served on other committees impacting the work of the ECA Onondaga.



**100%** of Thriving, Not Just Surviving peer-to-peer group participants reported improved social capital.

### 2025 Successes

- Partnered with the Salvation Army to provide hygiene items, gift cards, and prepaid phones to domestic violence survivors.
- Co-designed a family fishing day, gala, and holiday party with the Parent Advisory Council, creating meaningful opportunities for parent leadership, connection, and community-building.
- Increased Parent Advisory Council membership and in-person meeting opportunities, supporting stronger engagement and shared leadership.
- Delivered hygiene kits and pregnancy tests to Housecalls for the Homeless - Upstate, supporting families experiencing homelessness.



## Ensuring Children Develop On Track

Help Me Grow Onondaga empowers parents and caregivers with knowledge about child development, connects them to the services and supports their child(ren) need(s) to thrive, and strives to increase developmental screening.

Initiative Activities	
Total Intakes, Unduplicated	1,989
Intakes Through Pediatric Practices	58
New Children Served, Unduplicated	2,257
Referrals to Services & Supports	4,171
ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2 Questionnaires - 2025 Intakes	3,767
ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2 Questionnaires - Prior Intakes	4,613
Questionnaires Through Pediatrics - 2025 Intakes	270
Questionnaires Through Pediatrics - Prior Intakes	425
Books, Balls & Blocks Parent Education Events	16
Community Outreach Events Attended	61
Individuals Reached Through Outreach Events	3,295



**84%** of families who completed a screen and received support **learned something new** about child development, parenting, and/or community resources.



**49%** of families who completed a screen and received support **did something new** to support their child's development.



**92%** of satisfaction survey respondents indicated that their needs were met.

### 2025 Successes

- Selected as one of six Help Me Grow systems nationwide to participate in the Incubator Hub Initiative, leveraging funding and technical assistance to expand developmental screening protocols with school-based UPKs while strengthening referrals and linkages to supports for families.
- Participated in the 2025 Help Me Grow National Forum, bringing staff and community partners to Hartford, Connecticut to learn, network, and explore strategies for a more connected, resilient early childhood system.
- Distributed developmental toys to children receiving Early Intervention services to support skill-building at home.



## Supporting Early Literacy

Talk, Read, Sing Onondaga is a public awareness and action campaign that helps parents and caregivers recognize their power to boost their children’s early brain and vocabulary development through simple, everyday actions.

Initiative Activities	
Tote Bags Distributed*	2,286
Partners Trained as Trusted Messengers	14
Community Outreach Events Attended	127
Individuals Reached Through Outreach Events	1,951
Materials Distributed	7,299
Media Campaign Impressions (Duplicated)	4 Million

\*Starting in Q4 and moving forward, Help Me Grow Onondaga bags were added to this count. These bags contain Talking is Teaching materials, and the same early literacy messages are provided upon delivery.



**95%** of families who received a tote bag acknowledged the importance of reading to their child(ren) and made a commitment to do so every day.

### 2025 Successes

- Expanded our partnership with Onondaga County Public Libraries, strengthening collaboration and expanding use of Talking is Teaching materials across library programs.
- Elevated parent leadership during the Week of the Young Child by hosting a parent-led takeover of the Talk, Read, Sing Onondaga Facebook page, generating highly engaging, community-driven content.
- Hosted the fifth annual Feel the Beat Family Fest drawing record attendance and promoting music and movement as key to early childhood development.



## Strengthening Child Care & Early Learning Infrastructure

The ECA Onondaga advances strategies that strengthen Onondaga County’s early learning ecosystem by improving the quality, accessibility, and affordability of child care and early learning environments for all children.

Initiative Activities	
Children Participating in CCQI*	170
CCQI Providers Receiving Coaching	58
Coaching Hours Received by CCQI Providers	3,494
Stipends Distributed to CCQI Providers	\$271,050
Home Based Provider Steering Cmte. Meetings	15
Child Care & Early Learning Workgroup Meetings	5



Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale results for participating CCQI sites increased **16%**.



Participating CCQI sites completed **939** developmental questionnaires, resulting in **124** referrals for community services and supports.

### 2025 Successes

- Coordinated 5 legislative visits in partnership with Child Care Solutions, bringing 20 child care and early learning advocates to Albany to provide community education and raise the profile of Central New York.
- Hosted the first Home-Based Child Care Empowerment Summit, convening providers for connection, skill-building, and celebration of their essential roles.
- Released a new report, The Child Care Landscape in Onondaga County: A 2025 Supply & Demand Analysis, to inform planning and future investments in early care and education.
- Launched a multi-platform media campaign to shift perceptions of home-based child care, elevating providers as skilled early educators and small business owners.

\*The Child Care Quality Improvement (CCQI) initiative is a partnership between Child Care Solutions and the ECA and is funded by Onondaga County. CCQI is an actionable plan for improving the quality of child care within the county’s existing infrastructure of care, resulting in optimal child development and school readiness.



## Strengthening Families

Catholic Charities' ParentChild+ Program focuses on bridging the opportunity gap and strengthening families and communities to ensure all children have equal possibilities from the start and are prepared for school and life success.

Initiative Activities	
Children Served	83
Home Based Child Care (HBCC) Providers Served	3*
Children/Families Impacted Through HBCC	16*
Outreach Events	13
Sessions Held	2,614
Books & Toys Distributed	1,421



**93%** of participating families exhibited strengthened and improved parent-child interactions.



**88%** of participating families completed at least one developmental questionnaire for their child.



**92%** of 2024 graduates entered a high-quality pre-k or kindergarten program.

### 2025 Successes

- Early Learning Specialists (ELS) celebrated 13 family graduations from the core portion of the program.\*
- 3 registered providers graduated from the HBCC portion of the program.
- 100% of survey respondents were satisfied with the developmental and cultural relevance of program materials.
- 75% of participating families have annual incomes below \$50,000; 62% speak a primary language other than English; and 65% of parents were born outside the United States.

\*HBCC Coordinator and ELS positions have been vacant since August 2025. As such, there was no enrollments in the program for the second half of 2025.



## Centering Voices, Building Power: Parents and Providers Lead the Way

In 2025, the ECA Onondaga continued to center parent and provider leadership, creating opportunities for those closest to children and families to shape the systems that serve them.

### Parents Shaping Systems

Parents brought lived experience into local and national conversations through opportunities such as the ZERO TO THREE LEARN Conference, helping ensure policies and practices reflect the experiences and needs of families. Through the Fathers' Leadership and Advocacy Cohort with the Center for the Study of Social Policy, parents strengthened their advocacy and leadership skills.



### Providers Leading Change

Home-based child care providers reclaimed the narrative of their profession through a bold, countywide media campaign, challenging the “babysitter” label and reframing home-based care as essential early education. This work was complemented by the Home-Based Child Care Empowerment Summit, where providers shared expertise, built skills, and strengthened connections.



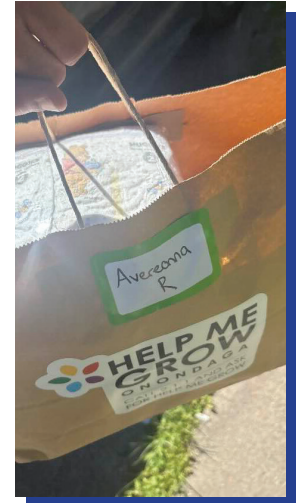
## Reducing Barriers, Expanding Access: Meeting Families Where They Are

In late 2025, uncertainty surrounding federal funding and essential services created anxiety for many families across Onondaga County. During these turbulent months, the ECA Onondaga pivoted quickly to ensure families remained connected to the support they needed.

Meeting families in the spaces they already know and trust was central to that effort. Through a partnership with Onondaga County Public Libraries, trusted neighborhood spaces became hubs for community closets and food pantries, bringing essential resources closer to families.

Ensuring support remained within reach required multiple approaches and the capacity to scale our impact when the community needed it most. By extending our DoorDash delivery radius to 15 miles, we reached families beyond the Syracuse area who might otherwise have struggled to access resources. A partnership with Syracuse Healthy Start ensured families relying on school-based nutrition maintained access to meals during the holiday break, while our localized Lyft service helped connect families to critical services and supports by reducing transportation barriers.

In moments of uncertainty, these efforts helped ensure families could access the resources they needed most.



## Family Voices in Focus

“ Help Me Grow has truly been a lifeline for my family. When resources felt just out of reach, they stepped in, providing essential supplies like diapers and formula when they were needed most. Knowing that help is available without judgment has brought so much peace of mind during stressful moments.

~ Miranda Pare



“ It 100% helped because I was able to focus and connect with other moms and was able to openly talk about what I felt and what troubles I was having. I was able to be comfortable in the group setting without feeling pressured and overwhelmed.

~ Thriving, Not Just Surviving  
Peer Group Participant



“ ParentChild+ has been a great experience for both me and our son. I've seen so much growth in him with his learning, confidence, and overall development since being in the program. It's also helped me grow as a parent by giving me more tools, ideas, and confidence in how I support him.

~ Gabriella



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## Thank You to Our 2025 Funders

The ECA Onondaga deeply appreciates the generous support of the many funders who make our initiatives and systems work possible. We're especially grateful to County Executive Ryan McMahon and the Onondaga County Legislature for their continued commitment to early childhood as a key part of their antipoverty strategy. We're also proud to partner with philanthropic and private sector leaders who match this investment, helping expand and enhance the services available to children and families across the county.



\*With the fiscal support of Docs for Tots

\*\*The RAPID-Onondaga parent survey partnership and the Zaentz Community Fellowship are made possible by the Stanford Center on Early Childhood.