Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember.

*Involve me and I learn.*

~ Benjamin Franklin ~

Community Renewal Team
Early Care and Education Annual Report 2016-2017
AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

High quality, affordable Early Care and Education is one of the best investments that a community can make in its own future. Each dollar invested in preschool services yields nearly $19 in benefits over the subsequent two decades, according to research prepared by the Connecticut Commission on Children. Distinguished economists find that high-quality early-childhood programs are the most cost-effective way to ensure the healthy development of children in poverty, offering the greatest returns to society (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston).

These benefits are enjoyed across the generations: Children acquire both the academic and the social-emotional preparation they need to be successful in school, and to grow into productive adults. With dependable childcare, parents’ engagement in the workforce increases and household income grows. With the addition of effective wrap-around case management, Community Renewal Team’s preschool programs help families set and meet important goals as they progress toward economic stability. Taken together, these factors result in significant long term community savings in many areas, including education, law enforcement, health care and public assistance.

In the 2016-17 school year, CRT served more than 1,600 children in Bloomfield, Bristol, Clinton, East Hartford, Hartford, Middletown, and Portland. Children and families in these programs benefitted from a multi-dimensional program that includes:

- Effective education using a proven curriculum
- Two nutritious meals and a snack each day
- Dental, hearing and vision screening, with follow-up care as needed
- Services for children with special needs, including mental health, behavior, disabilities and medical consultation
- Intergenerational health and nutrition activities
- Family advocacy and case management, with access to a broad variety of resources
- Leadership and advocacy training
- Programming tailored to families’ needs and concerns

The confidence shown by our funders, our families and our communities is evidenced in the charts shown on these pages.
CRT ECE Revenue Sources 2016
(Total: $17,845,106)

- Federal Head Start - $7,518,458
- Federal Early Head Start - $2,298,898
- State Head Start - $824,288
- State Child Day Care - $1,654,912
- School Readiness - $2,325,540
- Parents’ Fees & Subsidies - $1,569,498
- Food Reimbursement - $823,147
- In-Kind Resources - $830,365

CRT ECE Funded Enrollment 2016
(Total: 1,186)

- Federal Head Start - 646
- State Child Day Care - 61
- State Child Day Care Infant/Toddler - 100
- School Readiness - 253
- State Head Start - 36
- Early Head Start - 90

COMMUNITY RENEWAL TEAM EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM
BUDGET VS. EXPENDITURES 2016

Wages, Fringes, Training/Professional Development
Budget: $10,689,618, Expenditure: $10,131,159

Other (Administration, Equipment, Occupancy, Supplies, Contractual Services)
Budget: $3,816,148, Expenditure: $4,134,038

All figures based on 2016 audited financial statements. Differences between budget and actual expenditures are addressed by funding source budget flexibility, which allows the transfer of funds among categories.
CRT’s community assessment conducted in the summer and fall of 2017 showed a continued and overwhelming need for high quality, center-based early care and education. The number of Hartford children under 5 living in poverty has decreased over the last year to 34.3 percent. However, in neighborhoods where CRT’s ECE sites are located, the percentage reaches as high as 56 percent. This data has informed CRT’s planning for ECE classrooms in areas of the city where families need not only child care, but the wraparound services that CRT provides. The sites that are located in areas where neighborhood poverty or population rates are lower have been selected because of their proximity to places of employment for many CRT families. The table on this page details selected population characteristics of Connecticut, the city of Hartford, and specific Census tracts where CRT ECE sites are located.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th># of people in poverty</th>
<th>% of people in poverty</th>
<th># of children &lt;5</th>
<th># of children &lt;5 living in poverty</th>
<th>% of children &lt;5 living in poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Connecticut      | 3,479,672              | 360,464                | 10.4%            | 185,912                           | 30,514                            | 16.4
| Hartford County  |                        |                        |                  |                                   |                                   |
| Bloomfield       | 20,117                 | 1,347                  | 6.7%             | 951                               | 0                                 | 0
| Bristol          | 59,725                 | 6,144                  | 10.3%            | 2,745                             | 412                               | 15
| East Hartford    | 50,134                 | 7,174                  | 14.3%            | 2,803                             | 667                               | 23.8
| Hartford         | 117,233                | 37,435                 | 31.9%            | 8,463                             | 458                               | 38.76
| Middlesex County |                        |                        |                  |                                   |                                   |
| Clinton          | 12,987                 | 1,287                  | 9.9%             | 498                               | 27                                | 5.4
| Middletown       | 42,057                 | 4,888                  | 11.4%            | 2,589                             | 538                               | 20.8
| Portland         | 9,334                  | 513                    | 5.5%             | 274                               | 0                                 | 0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates

CRT’s classrooms are as diverse as the community they serve. With bilingual staff and culturally sensitive practices, CRT strives to ensure that all families feel welcome in its programs.
MEETING CHALLENGES HEAD ON

Poverty is not the only barrier to early childhood education that many families in our communities face. The number of licensed child care slots available in the region has not kept pace with the need (see chart at right). Because of this, many families find themselves faced with the choice of either placing their child in unlicensed (and potentially unsafe) care or turning down job opportunities in order to stay home and care for children themselves.

To make matters worse for families trying to make ends meet, child care subsidies have decreased over the last several years. The table at right details the average cost of care for center and home-based programs. In the past, these costs to families were offset by financial aid programs such as Care4Kids. Due to the state’s fiscal status, budget cuts have been made to that program and thousands of families have been closed out of receiving the subsidy. The chart below shows the Care4Kids enrollment trend over the last several years.

![Care4Kids Enrollment Trends Chart]
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

ECE sites underwent several projects to improve health, safety, and classroom functionality in 2016-2017. Site renovations included: playground improvements; installation of security measures such as missile-resistant windows and more secure entry doors; awnings to keep walkways safe and children and their families dry as they enter and leave the centers; repaired sidewalks and walkways that allow families to get to and from the centers safely; carpet and flooring replacements for health and safety; hands-free faucets in classrooms; and new classroom and playground equipment to upgrade quality practices throughout ECE programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Exterior</th>
<th>Interior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sidewalk repair</td>
<td>New sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamlin</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laurel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locust</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritter</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENCOURAGING HEALTHY HABITS FROM THE START

CRT’s Early Care and Education program helps children establish good health habits, eat well-balanced meals and receive regular medical and dental care. Staff recognizes that healthy habits are the foundation for appropriate developmental growth and learning, and, to that end, helps families establish both medical and dental homes with pediatric or family practices, so that children receive ongoing integrated care.

Staff utilizes the “Cavity Free Kids” curriculum in classrooms to promote oral health and encourage daily routines through lessons, play-based activities, and scheduled teeth brushing after meals. CRT has multiple partnerships that enable ECE to provide dental screenings and exams onsite. In addition to screenings, Lincoln and Goodwin college dental programs provide interactive dental education at each ECE site. Staff recognizes that there are barriers for some families in their pursuit of dental care and referrals are made to CT Dental Health Partnership for families in need of transportation assistance to appointments in the community.

During the 2016-17 school year, ECE helped facilitate these outcomes for children in our classrooms:

- **1,589** students had a medical home to provide regular and accessible health care.
- **98.9%** of children had health insurance.
- All but two children were up-to-date on their immunizations; these two met Connecticut guidelines for exemption from immunizations.
- All students received vision and hearing screenings. Vision problems were diagnosed in 32 children and 22 children were found to have hearing difficulty; all of these children had appropriate follow-up care.
- All students received on-site dental exams with fluoride treatment.
- CRT helped the families of **242** students locate a dental home during the school year. As a result, 1,402 children (87% of the students) were receiving regular care from a dental home.
- 7 children were determined to need further dental treatment, and 2 of them received that treatment before the close of the school year.
**“CHOOSY KIDS” CAMPAIGN**

In addition to its continuation of the “I Am Healthy” and “I Am Moving, I Am Learning” programs, ECE has introduced the “Choosy Kids” initiative into classrooms to promote healthy habits. The program supports healthy preferences for food choices, physical activity, and daily health routines. The program encourages children to develop health habits early in life to support positive outcomes.

Behavioral research shows that at least eight exposures or “touchpoints” are required before a person begins to form new habits. For that reason, staff works to incorporate healthy experiences into each child’s daily routine and coaches parents on how to help their children continue these practices at home.

Outdoor play and gross motor activities are a part of children’s daily experiences. All students enjoy two healthy meals and a snack each day, which are planned by CRT’s registered dietician and meet federal nutritional guidelines for children.

**THE CENTER FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES AT LOCUST STREET EARLY CARE CENTER**

In an effort to provide a full spectrum of services to ECE families, CRT Behavioral Health Services has opened a clinic for on-site behavioral health family services at Locust Street Early Care Center. The Center for Healthy Families encourages healthy family outcomes and provides ease of access to support services.

This partnership between the agency’s ECE and Behavioral Health departments is designed to support children, families, and staff to improve the classroom learning experience. ECE will make referrals to the center if teachers report behavior concerns in the classroom. In turn, Behavioral Health staff will follow up with comprehensive services including:

- Classroom visits including a summary of observations, recommendations, strengths, and improvement areas;
- Intensive intervention, counseling and supports as needed to children, families, and staff;
- Supporting Education Coordinator to develop Behavior Intervention Plans and/or Child Action Plans;
- Two trainings for parents each year;
- Home visits as needed.

BHS staff will also work with Family Service Workers to provide supportive services as requested by ECE families. For services not offered by CRT, staff has expanded linkages within the community to provide a wide and comprehensive support network. Some of these partnerships include: Birth to Three, YMCA, YWCA, Interval House, WIC, Hartford Adult Education, CRT’s Fatherhood Program, Real Dads Forever, Helping Mothers Through Education, Catholic Charities, and more.
All of CRT’s Early Head Start classrooms were licensed and opened by April 2016, and were fully enrolled for the 2016-17 school year. The program operates 10 classrooms at the following sites: Locust Street (one), Goodwin College (two), Ritter (two), and Heritage (five). As expected, the community responded positively to the high-quality infant and toddler care and CRT exceeded our funded enrollment of 80 children and 10 pregnant mothers. Cumulatively we served 88 children and 16 pregnant mothers over the 2016-17 school year. The age breakdown of the children enrolled was: 34 children <1 year, 35 children were 1 year old, and 19 were 2 years old. Of these 14 children were from homeless families.

In addition to the children enrolled through Early Head Start, CRT’s infant/toddler classrooms through the state’s Child Day Care Program serves 96 in 12 classrooms throughout the region. Even with this increased capacity, research shows that only 1 of every 10 eligible children in Hartford can find infant/toddler child care. At the end of November 2017 there were 197 children on the waitlist for a seat in a CRT Early Head Start classroom. To serve these and others in need, CRT continues to explore opportunities to expand the program.

The Early Head Start funded enrollment includes 10 slots for pregnant women. Family Service Workers and Health Nutrition Coordinators support pregnant women by helping them access and enroll in prenatal and postpartum care. As appropriate, programming includes nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support, referrals to WIC and/or SNAP, and more. Family Service Workers and Health Nutrition Coordinators link families to medical insurance providers and encourage pregnant women to attend all their prenatal medical appointments. Staff also connects pregnant women to dental services and provides general support to obtain preventative health outcomes. As part of the total safety net of services, staff also refers families for services based on the PHQ-9 depression scale and to other support such as tobacco cessation and substance abuse programming if needed. In the weeks leading to a child’s anticipated birth, the FSW and the mother discuss service options for after the birth, such as placement for the child in an Early Head Start or other infant/toddler classroom when space becomes available. FSWs continue to make home visits with the mother and baby until classroom space becomes available, and together they work through the “Partners for a Healthy Baby” curriculum.

ECE has continued its long-standing partnership with WIC and has strengthened linkages and streamlined the referral process with La Leche League, post-partum support groups, pediatricians, SNAP, and United Way.
Parents and guardians are a child’s first teacher, and that role doesn’t end once children enter a classroom. Parents are always encouraged to drop in to visit or to volunteer regularly in the classrooms as CRT recognizes that they play an important role in all of our ECE programs. Staff makes every effort to communicate with parents in their preferred language. Children who see that their parents value education and participate in school activities are more likely to be excited, engaged learners themselves. CRT encourages parents to be involved in their children’s education at all levels. From volunteering for story time in the classroom to serving on parent committees or the Head Start Policy Council, parent involvement is crucial to the success of early childhood education. In addition to classroom activities, 2017 saw parents attend a variety of workshops, conferences, and parent meetings at individual sites.

ADVOCACY

CRT Early Care and Education programs help parents become leaders and strong advocates for themselves, their children, their families, and their communities. Parent Committees at each center give parents and guardians a voice in their children’s education. Each committee sends a representative to the monthly meetings of the Head Start Policy Council, whose chair sits on the CRT Board of Trustees. In September, several members of the Policy Council accompanied ECE leadership to the national Head Start conference in Washington, DC. While there, committee members were able to deepen their understanding of governance, standards, policies and more. They also had the opportunity to meet with members of Connecticut’s Congressional delegation to discuss the state of early childhood education in the state.
ECE leadership makes it a priority to support understanding of transition planning through CRT’s programs. This begins with pregnant mothers and follows children from their entry into an infant/toddler program, to preschool, and then to kindergarten. Before a child even enters the classroom, a Family Service Worker visits the home to assess family and child needs. This forms the basis of the ongoing partnership between CRT and families to provide individualized services. This tailored transition limits separation anxiety for young children ... and their parents.

CRT recognizes that, just like the initial transition into a preschool program, the move from preschool to kindergarten can be stressful for both parents and children. Preparation for kindergarten starts as soon as a child enters preschool. CRT uses the research-based Creative Curriculum in all ECE classes, which supports cognitive, reading and language development, as well as mathematics, social and emotional competencies, motor development and physical health. The curriculum meets the standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Connecticut Department of Education’s Common Core Standards.

Following the Head Start Performance Standards, CRT ensures that all children going to kindergarten know how to write their names, know at least ten letters of the alphabet and are able to count to ten. CRT’s Transition Services provides parents with a simple checklist to help them keep track of the required pre-kindergarten skills that their children have mastered.

At the close of the 2016-17 school year, CRT saw 371 children successfully make the transition into kindergarten.

To lessen anxiety and help parents be fully informed of their education options, CRT has partnered with the Regional School Choice Program. The collaboration between agencies provides information to families including the benefits of public, charter, and magnet schools, and parents are given a schedule of open house, dates, times, and locations. FSWs continue to assist parents with the application/registration process for their school of choice. Children with special needs have a Transitional PPT (Pupil Placement Team) meeting prior to entering kindergarten, which includes parents, the CRT teacher and Special Needs Facilitator, and Board of Education staff from the town in which the child will be attending school.
LOOKING FORWARD

For the coming school year, CRT has entered into a partnership with AmeriCorps’ Jumpstart program, a national early education organization working toward universal school readiness. Throughout the year-long program, 30 students from local colleges will spend two hours, twice a week, teaching language and literacy skills to children in CRT Head Start classrooms. The Jumpstart curriculum is specifically designed to focus on key skills that research shows are critical in supporting children’s language, literacy, and social-emotional development.

CRT is eager to take part in this unique program and expects the focused curriculum and experiences to result in significant gains for children in participating classrooms. Three classrooms will receive this literary infusion, and CRT hopes to expand the program in years to come.

As part of the federal Head Start reauthorization signed in December 2007, Head Start providers were asked to publicly share information on funding, enrollment, education and support services. These pages provide a snapshot of CRT’s Early Care and Education Programs, which CRT supports with funding from many sources including federal and state Head Start, School Readiness from the City of Hartford; child day care from the Office of Early Childhood, and more.