



CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY BENEFIT REPORT

Supporting Children and Families to Thrive

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Dear Connecticut Children's Colleagues, Partners and Supporters,

As the only freestanding children's hospital in the state of Connecticut, Connecticut Children's proudly continues to extend our impact in both clinical care and community health. In doing so, our clinicians and experts work to address all of the needs faced by children and families, including medical, social-emotional, environmental and other areas to promote optimal health, development and well-being.

As you will see in this report highlighting best practices from the past year, Connecticut Children's commitment to addressing community needs received national recognition when the U.S. Department of Education awarded our organization a five-year, \$30 million grant through its Promise Neighborhoods Program. Under the grant, Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health is now working to create the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline, which will be a comprehensive cradle-to-career system serving children and families in three neighborhoods in Hartford's North End. Our proposal was one of seven accepted from around the country and received the highest score of all applicants.

In addition, during the past year, Connecticut Children's continued to help children and families navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by providing guidance to pediatricians across the state and providing educational resources to families. We are fortunate to have helped vaccinate eligible children for COVID-19 and embraced the opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of the vaccine.

Also, we responded to the escalating mental health challenges that occurred in children and youth as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Connecticut Children's announced plans to open a new inpatient medical psychiatric unit to reduce the wait that children in crisis currently have accessing inpatient care at other facilities. Our organization is also expanding its services and footprint with the addition of a new eight-story tower, which will be home to an enhanced Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, an Advanced Cellular and Gene Therapy Unit and a Fetal Care Center. We continue to take important steps to promote children's well-being and to address mental health concerns early on, so crisis treatment can be avoided.

Throughout all of our work, we continue to embrace the importance of addressing healthcare disparities and ensuring a focus on equity in all we do. We published Connecticut Children's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Declaration to guide all of our work in this area. We also published a Land Acknowledgement honoring the Indigenous peoples who served as the original caretakers of the land on which our medical facilities are located. Through our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, we continue to look for opportunities across the organization to strengthen our culture to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment for our team members, patients and families, and community partners.

At Connecticut Children's, we are proud of our clinical and community focus that strengthens families and positions children to thrive.

Sincerely,

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HOW DO WE DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY BENEFIT?

Connecticut Children's commitment to embracing a broader definition of community benefit, beyond what is required by the federal government to maintain tax-exempt status, is central to our approach in promoting children's optimal health, development and well-being.

In addition to our clinical care, Connecticut Children's offers 17 community-oriented programs that work to strengthen children, families and communities by directly addressing needs identified during our triennial Community Health Needs Assessments. We report on our progress addressing those needs annually in our Community Benefit Reports.

As you will see in this report, our community benefit reporting includes uncompensated care, research, and education, in accordance with federal requirements. However, we also report on additional community building activities that address the social drivers of health, which are the conditions in which people live, work, learn and play. Such drivers have a profound impact on overall health, development and life outcomes, especially for families in economically and socially challenged neighborhoods that are more likely to be underserved by the healthcare sector and other child-serving sectors.

Our community building work includes family and community outreach and engagement, addressing mental and behavioral health concerns, preventing injuries, ensuring children are prepared to learn when they enter kindergarten, promoting nutrition and physical activity to prevent obesity, improving housing conditions, and furthering economic development, among other areas.

Our Total Community Benefit in FY2021:

**\$91.81
million**



OUR COMMUNITY BENEFIT BY CATEGORY

\$63.76
million

Services for Uninsured or Underinsured Patients

About 55% of patients treated at Connecticut Children's rely on Medicaid for insurance, which does not fully reimburse the cost of care. Connecticut Children's also provides significant services to children and families that lack health insurance and cannot pay for medical care.

\$21.44
million

Education for Health Professionals

Connecticut Children's serves as the primary pediatric teaching hospital for the UConn School of Medicine and maintains a teaching partnership with the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University. We offer undergraduate medical education; graduate medical residency and fellowship programs; and post-graduate continuing medical education. We also offer training and education programs for nursing, social work, and other clinical areas of focus.

\$2.88
million

Research Operating Expenses

Connecticut Children's invests in research to develop, test, and deploy the latest advances in pediatric healthcare. We are involved in several successful collaborations regionally, nationally and internationally with other research institutions. Locally, we partner closely with The Jackson Laboratory, a genomics research center, the University of Connecticut, and several community organizations dedicated to population health. Our researchers regularly present their studies at conferences; publish their work in peer-reviewed journals; and author books or chapters of books. Expenses in this category reflect costs related to maintaining our basic science and clinical research infrastructure.

\$3.73
million

Community Building and Health Improvement Efforts

Connecticut Children's community-focused work includes the efforts of Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health (the Office) and Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA). This category includes infrastructure support for the Office; annual dues paid to SINA; legislative advocacy efforts; counselors employed to enroll families in Medicaid; time employees spend serving on Boards of Directors for outside organizations; and time employees devote towards our annual Day of Caring and United Way campaigns.



A young boy with dark, curly hair is the central focus, wearing a bright red hoodie with a dark blue graphic on the chest. He is looking slightly to his left with a gentle smile. In the background, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, is smiling and looking towards the left. The setting appears to be an outdoor community event with other people and greenery blurred in the background.

ADDRESSING
NEEDS IDENTIFIED
IN OUR COMMUNITY
HEALTH NEEDS
ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL READINESS

Setting Children Up For Success

In urban areas such as Hartford, children continue to face learning gaps compared to other parts of the state and the direct and indirect impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the achievement gap. Connecticut Children's continues its commitment to ensuring children are ready to succeed in school.

Building a Pipeline to Improve Academic, Health and Life Outcomes for North Hartford Children

Connecticut Children's received its largest grant ever in 2021 when the U.S. Department of Education selected the organization as one of seven grantees across the country to receive funding as part of the Promise Neighborhoods Program. Under the five-year grant, Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health (the Office) will receive \$30 million to lead a multi-partner, cross-sector effort designed to improve the educational, health and life outcomes of children in North Hartford.

Under the grant, the Office will oversee an effort to design, implement, and evaluate the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline (Ascend) in collaboration with the City of Hartford, Hartford Public Schools and additional partners. The pipeline will serve as a comprehensive cradle-to-career effort designed to help children in three North Hartford neighborhoods – Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany – reach their full potential by improving academic outcomes, developmental trajectories, long-term well-being, and quality of life.

Ascend began its ambitious efforts by:

- launching a series of monthly Community Conversations bringing together community residents with leaders of Ascend to share input on the project and ensure the voice of the community is represented;
- building a governance and leadership structure that embeds resident voices at all levels; and
- inviting Geoffrey Canada, the renowned education reformer and founder of the Harlem Children's Zone, to speak to residents and Ascend leaders about best practices they developed that can be replicated in Promise Neighborhoods-funded programs.

"We have a tremendous opportunity to build a comprehensive system to strengthen families and ensure optimal academic, occupational, and quality of life outcomes for their children," said Paul H. Dworkin, MD, Connecticut Children's Executive Vice President for Community Child Health.

Throughout Ascend, equity is a driving force behind all leadership, governance and programmatic decisions. As community partners work together to build a comprehensive system of programs and services for children and families, they will strive to eliminate disparities in outcomes based on race, ethnicity, disabilities and other factors. The project will address academic, social, economic and health inequities that have long existed and were further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Imagination Library Instills Love of Reading in Hartford Children

Connecticut Children's continues to be a lead sponsor of Hartford's Imagination Library program, which is open to all children ages birth through 5 who live in Hartford. The program continues to see much success – two years after Connecticut Children's recruited other partners to bring it to Connecticut's capital city.

Since launching in 2020, more than 4,500 Hartford children ages birth to 5 have enrolled in the program, which represents 55% of children living in the city. During that time, the program has distributed more than 30,000 books to enrolled children. Its average monthly enrollment is around 300 children.

Connecticut Children's President and CEO James E. Shmerling, DHA, FACHE, led the effort to establish the Imagination Library chapter in Hartford and enlisted financial and logistical support from Hartford Hospital, Trinity Health of New England and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut to bring it to the city.

Famed entertainer Dolly Parton founded Imagination Library to promote early childhood literacy in her hometown of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The program mails each enrolled child a new developmentally appropriate book every month from birth through age 5, building a home library of up to 60 books by the time a child enters kindergarten. Today, Imagination Library chapters exist across the United States and in other countries.



MENTAL HEALTH, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA

Intervening Early to Improve Outcomes

Connecticut Children's understands the importance of promoting the social and emotional health and well-being of children and youth. The organization offers a variety of programs and services to meet these needs and reduce the impact that adverse childhood experiences can have on overall outcomes. The following activities are examples of this important and ongoing work.

Developing a Mental Health Continuum of Care

To address the increase in children and youth facing mental health crises, Connecticut Children's is planning to open a 12-bed inpatient medical/psychiatric unit on its Hartford campus. The organization is working closely with a number of state agencies to develop this unit and pending all necessary approvals, hopes to open the unit in 2024.

The unit would target pediatric patients who have psychiatric and other medical needs. Once open, the unit would provide patients with integrated, multi-disciplinary care from a team of psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, social workers, nurses, medical specialists and care coordinators, among other disciplines.

The investment in the medical/psychiatric unit is part of a larger commitment by Connecticut Children's to develop an integrated continuum of care for children facing medical diagnoses combined with psychiatric or psychological diagnoses, who need more specialized care than is typically offered in traditional mental health treatment programs. That continuum of care includes:

- Embedding a growing number of psychologists into primary care and specialty care clinics.
- Launching the Medical Coping Clinic, which supports children and families who are facing a chronic medical diagnosis. In opening this clinic, every child receiving ongoing medical care at Connecticut Children's now has access to a psychologist.
- Launching the Medical and Mental Wellness Program, which is a multi-day, multi-hour program that treats the whole child through our team of psychology, physical therapy and occupational therapy. This program serves as a bridge for youth who need more than once a week therapy and who do not require, or are being discharged from, an inpatient program.
- Developing new programs to provide options for families so they don't need to rely on our Emergency Department for crisis intervention.
- Offering universal suicide screening for all patients ages 10 and older who visit Connecticut Children's Emergency Department and for patients on our medical floor who present with a behavioral health primary diagnosis.
- Connecting children and families to needed medical, mental health, educational, and basic needs supports through Connecticut Children's Center for Care Coordination.

Connecticut Children's efforts to develop an integrated continuum of care for children with mental health concerns is having a positive impact. Psychologists are collecting patient-reported outcomes on all services to ensure care is working and to identify when it is not and when a different approach would be needed. Families report being happy to have options for mental health care at Connecticut Children's, physicians and other mental health experts report feeling greater satisfaction with their profession, and patients are improving and are able to avoid seeking crisis intervention at the Emergency Department.

Advocacy to Enhance Access to Mental Health Care

In addition to developing the continuum of care for patients in need of mental health services, Connecticut Children's experts supported the passage of wide ranging legislation during the state legislative session which

improved access and services for children with mental health conditions. Our experts also dedicate their time to serving on various state advisory committees focused on improving access to mental health services for children. Such committees include:

- Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council
- Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health
- Connecticut Hospital Association's Community Health and Equity Committee
- Connecticut Hospital Association's Health Equity Advisory Group
- Connecticut Hospital Association's Mental Health Committee
- Connecticut Hospital Association's Workgroup on Pediatric Emergency Care
- Behavioral and Mental Health Policy Oversight Committee
- Children's Mental Health Plan Implementation Committee
- State Suicide Advisory Committee

Research and Education Promoting Behavioral and Mental Health

In addition, Connecticut Children's remains committed to advancing research related to behavioral and mental health and educating parents and the broader public on best practices for supporting children's well-being.

These efforts include:

- Expanding research through the launch of a health equity and behavioral health research group, with a particular focus on enhancing care for transgender youth and exploring solutions for other social justice issues.
- Reducing the stigma often associated with mental health diagnoses through our organization's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work. Such stigma can often lead to patient healthcare inequities.
- Participating in various mental health-related webinars, conferences and media interviews to educate parents, caregivers and professionals about supporting the mental health of children.
- Publishing articles to help parents and caregivers promote their children's mental and behavioral health on Connecticut Children's Growing Healthy Blog.

Learn more about the integrated mental health supports offered at Connecticut Children's by visiting <https://www.connecticutchildrens.org/search-specialties/mental-health/>. Access the mental health articles authored by our team of experts by visiting <https://www.connecticutchildrens.org/coronavirus/mental-behavioral-health-kit/>.

Reducing Trauma Through Violence Intervention

Connecticut Children's is working with community partners to address the gun violence seen in urban areas and the trauma associated with such violence. A new Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) funded by the city of Hartford is designed to bring needed resources to families and individuals impacted by gun violence to prevent re-injury and retaliation. HVIP is overseen by experts at Connecticut Children's Injury Prevention Center and is a partnership between Connecticut Children's, Trinity Health, Hartford Hospital, Mother's United Against Violence, COMPASS Youth Collaborative, and Hartford Communities That Care.

HVIP addresses a critical concern involving young people in urban settings who are caught in a cycle of violence. Children and youth flow through the healthcare system through primary care offices and emergency departments, dealing with the trauma of violence exposure, victimization, and perpetration. For urban trauma centers, HVIP is a strategy to provide quality care that results in preventing violence. HVIP involves screening, intervening, discharge planning, and long-term care coordination.

HVIP represents the first time in Hartford that all three trauma centers have partnered to implement a coordinated gun violence prevention effort. The collaboration interrupts the cycle of violence by bringing the supports gun violence victims and their families need in the time that they need them. It is also designed to bring about long-term change in communities by reducing gun violence.

CARE COORDINATION

Empowering Families to Support Kids

Ashley Burkman and her husband, Matt Chella, were thrilled to welcome their twin sons Calvin and Carter into the world in May 2019. The pregnancy had been a healthy one for Ashley with no signs of anything abnormal for the babies. However, shortly after the boys' birth at 38 weeks, doctors became concerned about Carter's health.

"Carter initially had some issues with feeding and low blood sugar," says Carter's mom Ashley. "He spent a day in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, but we were sent home once we were stable."

After a week at home, Ashley and Matt noticed that Carter was not thriving in the same way his twin brother was. They brought Carter to Connecticut Children's, where doctors admitted him for an evaluation. After many tests, no specific cause of Carter's trouble was determined. Carter's neurologist, Gyula Acsadi, MD, PhD, Connecticut Children's Division Head of Neurology, recommended further testing to assess markers for muscle breakdown, which helped the family get answers.

"Find joy!"

Dr. Ascadi diagnosed Carter with Laminin Alpha-2 Congenital Muscular Dystrophy (LAMA2-CMD), which is also known as Merosin-Deficient Congenital Dystrophy Type 1A (MDC1A). The condition is a rare congenital neuromuscular disease that affects 1 to 4 people out of every 100,000. It causes weakness and atrophy of muscles used for movement.

After receiving the diagnosis, Ashley, a naturopathic doctor, and Matt, a chiropractic doctor, spent a lot of time researching his condition. "We felt so alone and scared with the various presentations and the real possibility that his lifespan is going to be affected," says Ashley.

Ashley says she will never forget Carter's first follow-up appointment with Dr. Ascadi after receiving the diagnosis. "I remember pulling in with a knot in my stomach knowing the gut wrenching questions I was about to ask this doctor," says Ashley. "The biggest one was how long did he expect Carter to live?"

10 years? 20 years? 30 years?

Dr. Ascadi said all were possible. Then, he said something that really made an impact on Carter's parents. "In not so many words, he said to stop focusing on the lifespan and focus on the life," says Ashley. "Live life, take trips, get sick, get well again and find joy. I couldn't hold the tears back and I also couldn't hold myself back from hugging him as we were so grateful for this news."

"I have her as an ally!"

Since the diagnosis, Carter has seen numerous specialists at Connecticut Children's. In addition to Dr. Ascadi, they have met with a neurosurgeon, a cardiologist, a gastroenterologist, an orthopedic surgeon, an occupational therapist and a physical therapist.

Managing Carter's diagnosis has been a challenge – from keeping track of appointments to finding and paying for the expensive equipment that will ensure he has every opportunity to thrive at home.



Early on, Connecticut Children's case management team recognized the hardships the family would likely face as a result of Carter's diagnosis. When Carter was just 3 weeks old, they connected the family with another critical support – Rachelle Tirrell, BSN, RN, a nurse clinical care coordinator with Connecticut Children's Center for Care Coordination who is able to help them navigate complex child serving systems and insurance barriers to better support their son.

"One of the things I love about working with the Chella family is the engagement and enthusiasm they have each step of the way," says Rachelle. "We work together to accomplish goals as a team."

Rachelle has helped the family find funding for two Tumble Forms chairs to help Carter sit up and play, an Explorer Mini motorized chair that helps him move around and keep up with his brother, and a special toilet seating system. Without Rachelle's help, those items would have cost the family thousands of dollars, as insurance does not cover them.

"Rachelle has come through on so much funding and support that it has greatly helped to ease our burden," says Ashley. "If she doesn't have an answer, she finds something to provide me, even if it is an understanding ear. If it's been a while since we've touched base, she will reach out and inquire as to how we are doing. I cannot explain how comforted I feel knowing that I have her as an ally."

Rachelle is helping the family appeal to their insurance carrier to cover a manual wheelchair for Carter. She has also helped them to get on the wait list for the Katie Beckett Medicaid Waiver Program since they are struggling to pay for Carter's care and equipment but are unable to qualify for Medicaid without the waiver.

"Part of our family!"

While they continue to navigate the challenges that accompany Carter's diagnosis, Ashley Burkman and Matt Chella remain grateful for all of the support they have received from physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, sonographers, x-ray technicians, certified nursing assistants, schedulers and others at Connecticut Children's.

"I feel like Connecticut Children's and their team members are part of our family, because they truly are," says Ashley.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION

Providing a Prescription for Health: Fruit and Vegetables

With food insecurity on the rise, Connecticut Children's developed and launched a new effort to provide fruit and vegetable prescriptions to families visiting the Emergency Department that screen positive for food insecurity. The goal is to meet families' needs and increase healthy eating by providing a prescription for health.

The Start Childhood Off Right program at Connecticut Children's received a Cigna Healthier Kids For Our Future grant to fund the screening and prescription program. Families that visit Connecticut Children's Emergency Department during select days and times are asked if they would like to participate in the screening. If the answer is yes, the families are asked two questions from the Hunger Vital Sign screener:

- Within the past 12 months, we worried about whether our food would run out, before we got money to buy more: often true, sometimes true, never true.
- Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to buy more: often true, sometimes true, never true.

If a family answers "often" or "sometimes true" to either question, it is considered a positive screen and they are asked follow up questions. Those who screen positive are provided with a \$20 voucher, which they can redeem right outside the Emergency Department entrance on Mondays and Thursdays at a Hartford Food System fruit and vegetable stand or at other Hartford Food System mobile market locations around the city. Start Childhood Off Right is also reaching out to other community partners to expand voucher redemption opportunities.

"With the pandemic and then inflation, we've seen rising rates of food insecurity," said Nancy Trout, MD, MPH, a Primary Care Pediatrician and Co-director of the Start Childhood Off Right program. "We are hoping to meet the acute food insecurity needs of patients and families by offering them fresh fruits and vegetables so they can have enough food to eat, while also promoting healthy eating and connecting them to other food resources."

The fruit and vegetable stand is staffed by Hartford Food System's mobile market, which sets up in locations around Hartford to increase access to healthy food for residents.

"This is our first time at Connecticut Children's," said Josh Berman, who is the Managing Director of Hartford Food System. "We're really grateful for the partnership with Connecticut Children's and for their commitment to addressing food insecurity and elevating that as an important issue for our community."

Some people are surprised to see a fresh fruit and vegetable stand outside Connecticut Children's and reaction from families that screen positive for food insecurity and receive a voucher has been positive.

"When people spend their full \$20, they walk away from the table with three to four full bags of produce," said Alyssa Jones, who is the Manager of Food Access Initiatives at Hartford Food System. "I definitely think it has been a pleasant surprise for everybody who has stopped by the table for sure."

"It's about making sure food is available in places where community members are already traveling to, already spending their time, and it's about being able to provide a high value to those community members," said Berman.



Fruit and vegetables are not only available to families that screen positive for food insecurity – anyone working at Connecticut Children's or visiting the area is able to purchase food at the stand. In addition to taking cash and credit cards, the mobile market also accepts the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits at double their value.

Chelsea Burba, of West Hartford, stopped by the fruit and vegetable stand to pick up her favorites after her daughter's appointment at Connecticut Children's.

"I think it's amazing," said Chelsea. "We just came off three years of being on food stamps after a sudden divorce. Before that, we were secure. I know firsthand that it was hard to eat healthy during that time, having come from a family that had enough means to eat healthy prior. Now we're back on our feet and we're paying cash, but either way it's good to have it as an option for everybody."

HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY FACTORS

Creating Healthier Homes for Children and Families

The Quintero family of Manchester, Connecticut is breathing much easier after Connecticut Children's Healthy Homes Program (Healthy Homes) fixed hazards in their home that exacerbated their daughter's asthma symptoms.

The Quinteros reached out to Healthy Homes after noticing their oldest daughter Emily's asthma symptoms were getting worse. The family had mold growing in the basement, among other concerns. To remediate the mold, the Healthy Homes team removed and replaced a stand up shower in the basement bathroom. They also replaced several moldy drop ceiling tiles, damaged insulation in the ceiling and walls, and a leaky hatchway that allowed water to seep into the basement. In addition, the team installed a carbon monoxide detector in the family's dining room and installed window safety guards and window screens in second floor windows to prevent falls.

"We are extremely happy and grateful because Healthy Homes allowed us to have the mold issues in our basement that led to our daughter's asthma flare-ups resolved," says Johana. "We can now have peace of mind that our home is safe for all our children."

Healthy Homes operates statewide helping to remediate lead hazards and fix safety concerns in homes. Since its inception in 2003, Healthy Homes has made more than 3,650 housing units lead safe where more than 1,800 children under the age of 6 reside. In addition, the program has educated more than 45,000 people on the dangers of lead paint poisoning and prevention measures. The program is supported by federal grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and state grants from the Connecticut Department of Housing, among other methods of support.

In addition to its federal and state funded work, Healthy Homes is also a partner in an initiative called Building for Health (BfH). BfH is a no wrong door approach for families to ensure they can easily access the services they need to live healthier lives, regardless of what sector such services fall in. Partners in the initiative include Healthy Homes, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the State of Connecticut's Putting on AIRS program, the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, and various companies that provide weatherization and energy efficiency services for homes.

In addition to utilizing the Healthy Homes program, the Quintero family was also able to connect to a weatherization program run by HE Energy Solutions and get asthma education support from Putting On AIRS through the BfH initiative. The work of Healthy Homes and the BfH initiative have made a substantial impact on residents – reducing exposure to lead and asthma triggers, reducing injury risks, reducing fire and carbon monoxide risks, and enhancing kindergarten readiness for young children by eliminating toxins known to cause developmental delays and long-term cognitive challenges.

After connecting with Healthy Homes, the Quintero's say they have already seen a difference in their oldest daughter's health.

"We have noticed Emily has needed her inhaler and nebulizer a lot less now that the work has been done," says Johana. "We know our home is a safe place to raise our children."





A CLOSER
LOOK AT OUR
COMMUNITY-
ORIENTED
PROGRAMS

Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance

Connecticut Children's has embraced a broad definition of community wellness that includes mitigation efforts and work to ensure a safe, healthy and supportive environment for all Hartford families. As a member of the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), Connecticut Children's collaborates with our partners, Hartford Hospital and Trinity College, to help children in South Central Hartford grow, learn and succeed. Social determinants – the circumstances in which people live and work – have a powerful influence on health. In the past year, two of the social determinants that SINA has sought to influence are housing and community engagement.

Safe and Healthy Housing

This year, SINA celebrated the launch of Cityscape Phase VII, to create four new homeownership opportunities on Madison and Squire Streets in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. The four vacant historic properties represent a total of 11 housing units. One of the properties was owned by an absentee landlord whose neglect led to blight and illegal activity. Once completed, the properties will be purchased by low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers. All four buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and will be restored with attention to period details. The construction will meet Energy Star 3.5 standards, including energy-efficient insulation, windows and heating systems, plus EV plugs for electric cars. An additional benefit is that the renovations will put these properties back on the city's tax rolls.



This newest phase of the Cityscape initiative received \$1.1 million from the State of Connecticut Department of Housing and an \$800,000 construction loan from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Over the years, our housing programs have received financial support from a wide range of collaborators including the city of Hartford, Travelers Foundation, UIL Holdings, Eversource and Webster Bank.

Celebrating Community Culture

Building community partnerships that can address the social determinants of health requires building trust. One way to build trust is to collaboratively celebrate a community's culture, history, and influencers. With this in mind, SINA and the Hartford Public Library have created Nuestra Historia: Frog Hollow, a project to create a digital, bilingual oral-history walking tour of the neighborhood.

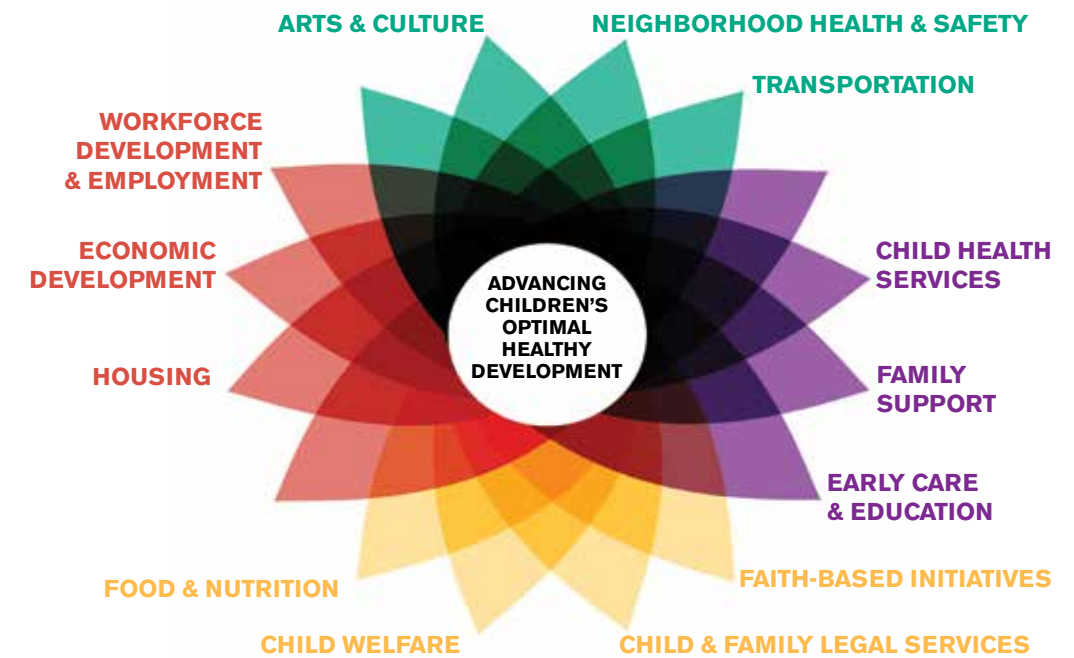
Nine new murals were unveiled in the Frog Hollow section of Hartford this year. Longtime residents of the neighborhood can recognize the nine faces because they are residents who have been designated Frog Hollow Heroes in recognition of their dedication to and impact on the community. The Heroes were chosen by a community nomination process and the murals – at 463 Park Street, 493 Park Street and 988 Broad Street – were created by about 130 volunteers under the direction of artists Emida Roller, Jaii Marc and Deka Henry, all working under the umbrella of CT Murals.



Nuestra Historia received \$22,000 from a Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Beautification Grant and research by students from Trinity College's Liberal Arts Action Lab will form the script for the digital walking tour. According to the student researchers, "the purpose of the tour is to tell outsiders, and reaffirm to Frog Hollow community members, that what is here matters: there are stories to be told, voices to uplift, heroes and projects to be celebrated." SINA and its Nuestra Historia partners hope that the tour will allow visitors to the neighborhood to have more empathy for the community and encourage residents to have pride in their shared history.

Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health

Connecticut Children's is a national leader in supporting families and communities to promote optimal health, development, and well-being of all children, especially those who are at risk for adverse outcomes. Formed in 2012, Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health (the Office) is recognized as a pioneer in utilizing a cross-sector approach to build stronger child-serving systems, strengthen families and advance equity. Paul H. Dworkin, MD, leads the Office after previously serving as Connecticut Children's physician-in-chief for 15 years. Under his vision and direction, the Office helps shape federal, state and local policy regarding child services; builds partnerships between internal and external programs across all sectors that influence child health, development and well-being; and cultivates innovations to support children who are at risk for poor health and life outcomes.





COMMUNITY PROGRAM QUICK FACTS FROM 2020:

Childhood Prosperity Lab (the Lab) collaborates with changemakers to cultivate and advance social innovations that improve outcomes related to social determinants of health and help all children reach their full potential. During 2021, the Lab:

- Facilitated five consultation sessions with external changemakers.
- Supported the Help Me Grow National Center's Pediatrics Supporting Parents project.
- Began facilitating a work group to develop a goal concordant care framework for early childhood in partnership with the Help Me Grow National Center.
- Led the development of a \$30 million Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Program grant application in partnership with the City of Hartford and other stakeholders from across the community to design, implement, and evaluate the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline. The grant was funded and began January 1, 2022.

The **Children's Center on Family Violence** represents a partnership between the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) program at Connecticut Children's, the Injury Prevention Center (IPC) at Connecticut Children's, and the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV). These partners have continued their work together through the pandemic, and in 2021 their work included:

- Collaboration between CCADV advocates and Connecticut Children's child life and protective factors experts to help CCADV advocates support children entering shelters or motels during the pandemic
- Piloting universal education on domestic violence for caregivers in the SCAN outpatient clinic
- Joint presentation on Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Practice in the Global Pandemic presented by Connecticut Children's and CCADV staff at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting

The **Co-Management** program's digital platform serves as a guide for primary care providers to manage common lower severity conditions independently, thereby freeing up specialists' schedules for patients who need timely access to specialty-level care. The platform, called CLASP (Connecticut Children's Leaders in Advanced Solutions in Pediatrics), incorporates an easy-to-use, algorithmic approach to outline the circumstances under which a patient is safely managed in primary care or when they should be referred to specialists. Links to the community/online resources, clinical decision tools, and family-centered materials are provided as needed. In 2021, CLASP broadened its reach by 16% with 508 verified users statewide. The program co-authored the promising results of its prior collaboration with a large Connecticut Federally Qualified Health Center that combined CLASP with a complementary strategy, e-Consults. The program leveraged that experience to fund the build out of an e-Consult platform in Connecticut Children's EpiCare link and to plan an e-Consult pilot that expands access to behavioral health services.

Connecticut Children's Center for Care Coordination worked to develop a targeted care coordination program to support the Connecticut Children's/Signify Health partnership, focused on implementing value-based payment programs. This program targets State of Connecticut employees and dependents and provides chronic disease care management for diabetes, asthma, depression and anxiety, and trauma/stress disorders. The program hopes to improve the quality of care and reduce overall healthcare expenses by minimizing avoidable adverse events, services and emergency department visits, while also enhancing the patient and family experience.

In addition, the Center started providing targeted care coordination to families whose children screen positive for rare conditions during the newborn screening process. As the Connecticut Newborn Screening Network identifies gaps in care for children ages 0 to 5 as well as infants who may be high risk, they connect those families to the Center for comprehensive and culturally-competent care coordination services. The Center also continues to have an embedded care coordinator on the hospital's medical and surgical floors, as well as in the Emergency Department in response to the escalating mental health crisis.

Connecticut Children's Center for Global Health strives to improve the health of children living in resource-limited settings through the development and maintenance of high-quality, sustainable, collaborative, capacity-building healthcare partnerships. The Center partners with medical facilities and organizations around the world to increase the capacity of local pediatric physicians, nurses and other team members to ensure they offer high-quality pediatric healthcare. These efforts include in-person visits where students, staff and faculty affiliated with the Center work with local pediatric leadership to develop mission goals based on the needs of partners and prepare trainings to help them achieve their self-determined goals. The Center's work also includes remote sessions, which have been critical to maintaining partnerships and outreach during COVID-19. The Center's partners include St. Damien Pediatric Hospital in Taberre, Haiti; Hospital Bernard Mevs in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Justinien University Hospital in Cap-Haitian, Haiti; NICE Institute in Hyderabad, India; University Teaching Hospital of Rwanda – CHUK in Kigali, Rwanda; Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra, Ghana and Mengo Hospital in Kampala, Uganda.

Even with supply chain delays and labor shortages stymieing the construction trade, **Connecticut Children's Healthy Homes Program** (Healthy Homes) continued delivering innovative and effective ways of making homes safe and healthy for families across Connecticut. Healthy Homes set a new milestone in 2021 by making more than 160 housing units lead safe and healthy. During 2021, Healthy Homes continued to expand across Connecticut by serving property owners in 51 towns. Healthy Homes is proud to be a key partner in the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline. As part of that, the program will bring its resources to scale to help residents in North Hartford's Promise Zone live in safe, healthy and energy efficient housing.

In 2021, the **Easy Breathing** asthma management program underwent an expansive revision in response to the release of the 2020 Focused Updates to the Asthma Management Guidelines. Because Easy Breathing adheres to these guidelines, the program has diligently worked with the pediatric primary care community to adopt and implement the 2020 updates in a format that is usable and effective. The adaptation of Easy Breathing began with the announcement of the program's new Co-Director of the Asthma Center, Dr. Melanie Collins, from the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology. Then, over the course of several working groups, the program was refined to include the new, evidence-based asthma management strategies outlined in the focused update to the guidelines. The program was also able to engage a new Easy Breathing Physician Champion, Dr. Caleb Wasser, a Connecticut Children's pediatrician.



The **Educating Practices** program paused activities starting in March 2021 after its transition from the Child Health and Development Institute to Connecticut Children's. During the year, the program negotiated with the Department of Public Health for financial support and potential support for the development and spread of specific modules focused on breastfeeding and school-based health services.

Prior to March 2021, Educating Practices presented four modules to practices around the state:

- Breastfeeding
- Substance Use Prevention Identification & Brief Intervention (presented twice)
- Suicide Prevention

The **Hartford Youth HIV Identification and Linkage Consortium** (HYHIL) enhances the well-being and quality of life of patients/clients and their families and prevents the spread of HIV through a multidisciplinary approach to health service delivery. HYHIL is part of Connecticut Children's Pediatric, Youth and Family HIV Program, which consists of child/adolescent medical specialists, nutritionists, recovery support specialists and other professionals who offer medical and other support services to families.

HYHIL has provided uninterrupted HIV prevention services for women, infants, children and youth throughout COVID-19. The program partnered with the San Juan Center to successfully increase COVID-19 vaccinations and HIV testing in Hartford communities. Forty-five residents received housing assistance in the program's new housing initiative and 96% of those served through the housing program now have affordable permanent housing. HYHIL's HIV and Hepatitis C testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) navigation services, funded by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, help adolescent women of color and Black and Latino men who have sex with men.

In addition to 16 new communities in affiliate states beginning Help Me Grow (HMG) implementation, the **Help Me Grow National Center** led its National Affiliate Network in a number of strategic initiatives. Such initiatives include:

- National, state, and local level response to COVID-19, including the provision of more than 2.6 million basic needs items for babies through support from The JPB Foundation
- A national work group to consider innovative modernizations to the HMG Centralized Access Point
- Professional development for HMG staff, offered at no cost through partnership with Start Early
- A community of practice to promote collaboration between HMG and providers of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- The development of tools that allow HMG affiliates to calculate and communicate the return on investment associated with implementing the HMG Model
- The development and piloting of a novel, integrated pediatric technology platform that supports pediatrician-family partnerships and promotes social-emotional development of young children
- Engagement in a strategic planning process to articulate and accelerate growth and impact priorities of the HMG National Center over the next five years

The **Injury Prevention Center** (IPC) works to reduce the occurrence of preventable and predictable injuries in children and adults through research, program implementation, education and training, and policy advocacy. IPC faculty are active researchers in the Department of Pediatrics with 11 publications in peer-reviewed journals and multiple professional presentations of their work at conferences in 2021. The IPC's Safe Kids Connecticut program continued to be active throughout the COVID-19 period providing training and implementing school-based programming and direct services. The IPC's signature fellowship program for matriculating college students, the Hayley Petit Injury & Violence Prevention Fellowship program, hosted 15 women, providing each with education and training in the science of injury prevention. The IPC has a long history of advocacy. The program lent its voice to the developing 2025 State Health Improvement Plan and participated in a coalition of hospital-based violence intervention programs that successfully advocated for Medicaid reimbursement for violence intervention services.

The **Newborn Diagnosis and Treatment Network** expanded family access to genetic counseling services by launching telehealth. In collaboration with PATH CT, the Network started one of the nation's first newborn screening family advisory groups, which resulted in improved workflows and educational initiatives. The Network began implementing and evaluating a comprehensive, family-centered, long-term follow up (LTFU) newborn screening model. The project leverages evolving electronic data-sharing platforms for input and merging of indicators of preventive primary care with the already tracked specialty condition-specific quality and outcome indicators. The goal is to improve LTFU outcomes by addressing family needs and by identifying and addressing care gaps across the care continuum.

As part of the **Person-Centered Medical Home** (PCMH) program, the National Committee for Quality Assurance recertified Connecticut Children's Primary Care East (East Hartford) and West (Farmington) locations as Person-Centered Medical Homes in April 2021. In keeping with the PCMH model, the practices conduct universal screening to identify and evaluate behavioral and developmental concerns. In response to the mental health crisis, amplified by the pandemic, the practices follow a model of integrated behavioral-medical care, with psychologists and care coordination on site. The pandemic has also negatively impacted children's school readiness. The practices are active participants in the early literacy promotion program, Reach Out and Read (ROR), and were accepted by the ROR National Center to pilot an early numeracy promotion program, "Math Counts." Primary Care East and West serve as laboratories for many programs of the Office and participate in Connecticut Children's Care Network.



The **Practice Quality Improvement** program helps primary care physicians use a data-driven, quality improvement approach to enhance services provided to children. The program has developed about 30 projects that are eligible for Maintenance of Certification and Continuing Medical Education credits for participating providers, which include identifying children with autism and other developmental or behavioral concerns early and connecting them to services; implementing best practices in managing asthma; improving lead screening; and managing obesity co-morbidities in a pediatric primary care setting.

The **Resident Education in Advocacy and Community Health** (REACH) program returned to usual programming in April 2021 and added two new partners - Knox Community Gardens and The American Place. Resident- and medical student-led efforts included written testimony, op-ed pieces and several independent community projects. Kayla Gonzalez, MD, was a national finalist in the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Advocacy Essay Contest. Faith Crittenden, MD, submitted a Resolution to the AAP Leadership Forum that was sponsored by District 1, several AAP state chapters and two subcommittees. Lenora Codrington, DO, and Margaret Blondal, MD, were awarded the Capital Area Health Consortium's Community Service award, making it the 4th consecutive win for REACH residents.

The **Start Childhood Off Right** (SCOR) program experienced limitations in implementation due to COVID-19. However, the program was able to provide 325 toolkits and feeding guidelines to pediatric practices for distribution to families with young children at well-child visits. The program's community wellness events included: virtual prenatal yoga in collaboration with Stronger Families, Stronger Futures and WHY Yoga; "grab 'n go" reading and activity kits for families in collaboration with the Hartford Public Library; and an information table at Connecticut Children's World Breastfeeding Week event. Nancy Trout, MD, MPH, gave talks on childhood and adolescent obesity prevention and treatment for the American Academy of Pediatrics Connecticut Chapter school health conference and for the Tristate Obesity Society. The program finished the fourth and final year of its Kohl's grant in September 2021.



ENSURING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THRIVE INTO THE FUTURE

Connecticut Children's is committed to strengthening families so they are best positioned to promote their children's optimal health, development and well-being now and in the future. As this report has shown, our community-oriented work addresses the many varied factors that influence child health and well-being outcomes. We are proud that our community-oriented work, led by Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health, is a model for other organizations to follow locally, regionally and nationally.

We are honored to have so many child advocates as partners in this work. Without such collaboration at the local, state and national levels, our pioneering clinical and community-focused approach would not be possible. We look forward to building on these collaborations going forward to ensure a bright, healthy, and equitable future for children.

For more information on our work, connect with us here:

Website: www.connecticutchildrens.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ConnecticutChildrens/>

Twitter: @ctchildrens

Blog: www.connecticutchildrens.org/blog

Connect with Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health:

Website: www.connecticutchildrens.org/community-child-health/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ConnecticutChildrensCommunityHealth/>

Twitter: @advancingkids

Blog: www.advancingkids.org

Connecticut Children's Foundation

Website: www.connecticutchildrensfoundation.org/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ConnecticutChildrensFoundation>

Blog: <https://www.connecticutchildrensfoundation.org/about-us/blog>



Connecticut Children's is the only health system in Connecticut dedicated to children, providing more than 30 pediatric specialties. Kids and parents love our exceptional care offered at multiple locations in three states, and through Video Visit. Our experts and community leaders are committed to breakthrough research and innovative partnerships which have won us multiple awards. We are Magnet recognized, a designation only 7% of hospitals achieve, and U.S. News & World Report has named us a best children's hospital in the nation.

