



Action for Children



# STEPS TOWARD GROWTH

ACTION FOR CHILDREN | FY22 IMPACT REPORT



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*Picture on the front and back cover: A busy day at Kiddie Academy child care center! In FY 2022, Action for Children provided 28 Franklin County RISE scholarships to children enrolled Kiddie Academy locations across central Ohio.*

Action for Children



# STEPS TOWARD GROWTH

# DEAR FRIENDS OF ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Over our 50 years of service, Action for Children has been part of many first steps. From our agency's inception, we have been one of the first to the table when it comes to helping children and families thrive.

In 1972, that meant devising practical solutions to the challenges facing working mothers in need of care for their children. Today, it includes partnering with public entities on innovative solutions like Franklin County RISE to address the child care crisis. Whether it's supporting mothers from their earliest stages of pregnancy with critical prenatal and postnatal services, guiding Family Child Care professionals as they complete the first steps toward being licensed to care for young children, or being part of a father's steps toward approaching fatherhood in a new way, we are committed to coming alongside parents, caregivers, and educators as they nurture young children.

The path hasn't always been clear much less easy. There are many long hours of careful planning, unassuming service, and continuous advocacy in between the big milestones. Action for Children is there for the early childhood professionals and working families, and the child care programs they rely on, as they navigate the ups and downs of caring for and educating children.

During economic downturns, pandemic disruption, and the recent challenge of unprecedented growth in the Columbus region, we've been a caring friend, a trusted guide, and valued community partner as we work together to meet the immediate and long-term needs of children and families.

As we look back on the privilege of 50 years of service, we know that our enduring impact has been the result of countless steps toward growth for young children, families, early childhood educators, and communities. As we look ahead, we ask you to join us on this journey to support, empower, and advocate for the parents, caregivers, and educators who support young children.

Sincerely,



**Eric J. Karolak, Ph.D., CAE**  
Chief Executive Officer



## FISCAL YEAR 2022 BOARD

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Wealth Strategist, PNC*

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Matthew Bell  
Melissa Hammer  
Rebecca Ciminillo  
Robert E. White II  
Tamar Williamson

Dr. Eric Karolak  
*CEO, Action for  
Children*

*\*This list is inclusive of  
members who served on  
our board July 1, 2021 -  
June 30, 2022.*

## OUR MISSION

To transform the lives of children by supporting, empowering, and advocating for the adults who make the biggest impact on children's lives—their parents, caregivers and teachers.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### ADVOCACY

We commit to lead the charge for increasing access to quality early childhood experiences and achieving outcomes that provide the strongest foundation for all members of our community. We cannot do this alone, and the best advocates are the adults who care for and educate our children: their parents, other caregivers, and early childhood practitioners. We will use our influence directly, and we will work to activate the power of other networks to fuel efforts to address this urgent need.

### COLLABORATION

Our children deserve a community that works together. We can foster and sustain partnerships among child care and early learning providers, and within the wider nonprofit ecosystem and our community as a whole. We know that we are stronger when we partner with others to embrace a shared commitment toward enriching the lives of children, caregivers and families.

### ADAPTABILITY

The needs of the community will change. We must be responsive to these changes, drawing on our considerable collective expertise. To be successful today, and in the future, we must be continuous learners and encourage creativity and new ways of problem-solving.

## OUR VISION

All children, nurtured by strong families and vibrant communities, have opportunities for quality early learning experiences that prepare them for success in school and life.

### RESPECT AND COMPASSION

We believe that achieving results is essential and the way in which we go about doing so is equally important. We take a strengths-based approach in our interactions, meeting others where they are and understanding together how to move forward. Ours will be a conscious effort to be inclusive of and to support the rich diversity of our community.



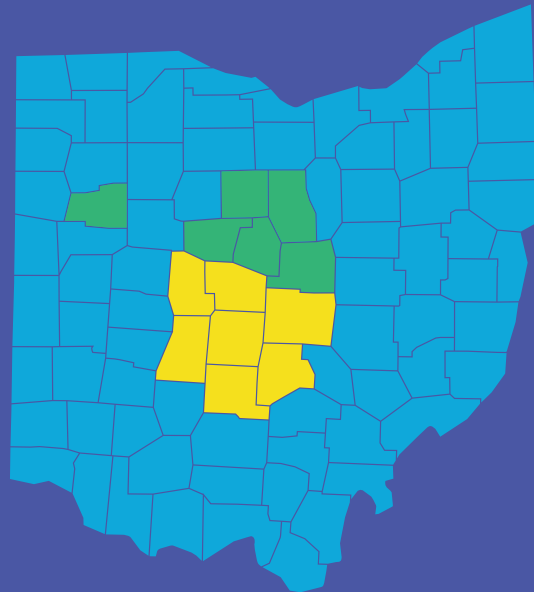
## IT TAKES ALL OF US

At Action for Children, we are committed to a culture of practice that encourages each person to be their best, authentic self. We value the evolving diversity of our community, and we affirm that our staff and board will represent the community we serve and be culturally responsive in their roles. Wherever we work, and whomever we work with, we will offer services in ways that recognize the rich assets and specific needs of all the clients and partners we serve. It takes all of us to ensure that all families are supported, and all children are prepared for success in school and beyond.

## WHERE WE SERVE

**Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, and Union counties.**

PROGRAMS ALSO AVAILABLE IN:  
**Allen, Crawford, Knox, Marion, Morrow, and Richland counties.**



# OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

These numbers reflect July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022



**714** kindergarten readiness home visits completed

**453** fathers & father figures empowered through case-management and support programs

**27** mothers & mother figures empowered through case-management and support programs, impacting 49 children in their households

**1,848** hours of Step Up To Quality technical assistance provided to ensure quality child care standards

**96** child care professionals completed Action for Children's Child Development Associate preparatory course

**11,893** hours of ongoing technical assistance and coaching sessions received by child care professionals

**1,538** hours of professional development offered, serving 1,955 participants

**573,274** nutritious meals and snacks served to children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program





**1,955**

parents & guardians served through parenting workshops, impacting 3,686 children in their households

**5,637**

families assisted in finding quality child care

**140**

families assisted in finding special needs child care

**13,918**

parents connected to Help Me Grow services, improving maternal and infant outcomes

**805**

Help Me Grow home visits completed, impacting 139 families





# 50TH YEAR INITIATIVES

See how we've supported Ohio's children and the adults who support them throughout the year!

*Initiatives are inclusive of our 50th anniversary year and may not reflect the 2022 Fiscal Year.*

**Franklin County RISE** is helping to make child care and early education experiences more accessible to all.

**The Village Staffed Family Child Care Network** offers new opportunities for Family Child Care professionals to experience connection, support, and engagement.



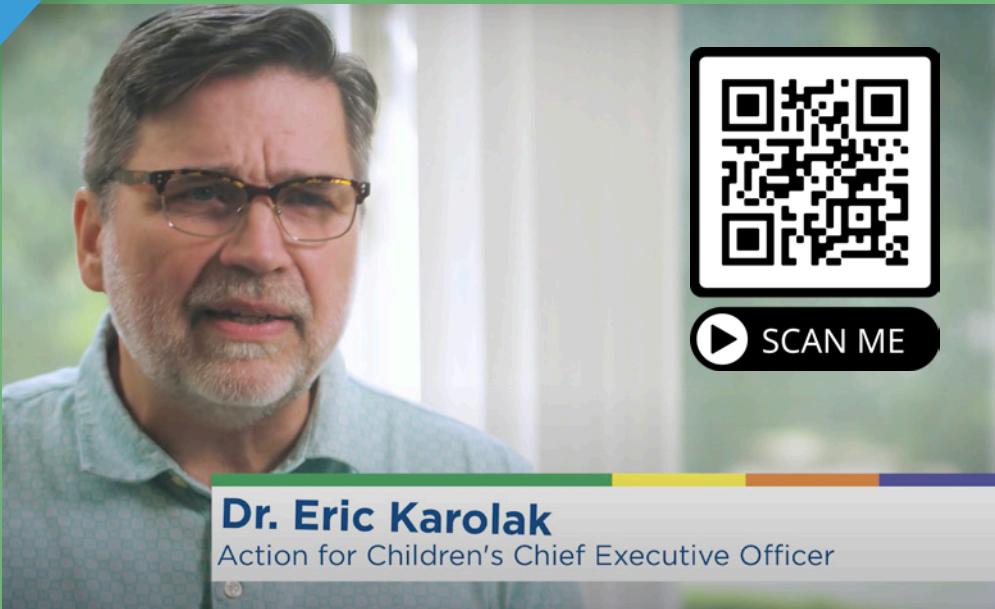
**Empower Awards** are providing monetary support for child care programs across central Ohio for increasing their quality and meeting families' needs.

**The BOSS** is empowering child care owners and administrators to unleash the full potential of their programs by learning key marketing, business, and operational skills.



**Children Services Hub at Action for Children** offers guidance and support to families considering foster, adoptive, or kinship care.

Scan the code to hear about AFC's 50th year initiatives from our CEO!



**Dr. Eric Karolak**

Action for Children's Chief Executive Officer



# ADVOCACY



SCAN ME

Learn more about these advocacy milestones!



## Child Tax Credit Alert (July 2021)

Shared vital information and resources to raise awareness of available Child Tax Credit (CTC) expansions for families through The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

## Press Conference on New Child Care Initiatives (September 2021)

Partnered with the City of Columbus to announce the result of child care recommendations proposed by Action for Children for new child care initiatives that would later become Franklin County RISE.



## Taking a Toll Report (November 2021)

Published the Taking a Toll report, providing an update to previous reports and critical information on the state of child care in central Ohio



## EITC Awareness Day (February 2022)

Provided free resources and detailed information to assist families in taking advantage of multiple tax credits on Earned Income Tax Awareness Day.



## Big Voices for Little Kids (March 2022)

Joined forces with Groundwork Ohio and Ohio organizations to advocate for young children, families, and child care workforce in person at the Ohio Statehouse.



## Franklin County RISE Launch (March 2022)

Launched a public-private partnership program with the City of Columbus and Franklin County Board of Commissioners to provide child care scholarships, program incentives and signing bonuses, funds for child care programs, and Emergency Rental Assistance for child care educators.



## PARENT & FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: **FATHER UP LAUNCH**

***“FatherUp is the best workshop you can run into if you want to better yourself as a man, as a father, as a spouse, son... just a better person all the way around.”***

Walter, FatherUp Graduate

Being a father is no easy task. For many, the pressure to provide, guide, and leave a legacy as a father is monumental and can be overwhelming without support. As a father of young children, embroiled in a custody battle with the mother of his children, struggling to maintain a difficult work schedule, and facing the possibility of losing his apartment, Walter felt like he was drowning. However, FatherUp was there for him at the right place and the right time.

In FatherUp, Walter found a safe place with genuine program staff, facilitators, and other fathers on similar journeys who cared not just about his children – but also about him. In his earliest FatherUp interactions, Walter received key insights on empowered fatherhood through a 4-week cohort and direct assistance from a case manager to help him stay in his

apartment, support him throughout his custody journey, and find a new job that allowed him to care for his children full-time. Motivated by the desire to create a better parenting experience for his children, Walter soaked up what he was learning, engaging in the weekly group workshops and finding connections with other fathers along the way.

FatherUp gave Walter peace and a new definition of fatherhood that revolves around giving his children his time and his energy; not just being a provider. While his story is still in progress, he knows that there is always a place for him in FatherUp, and he makes sure that other dads know that, too. Today, Walter’s children see his change and are thriving because of it, proving that empowered fathers truly do empower families.



Scan the code to watch Walter’s impact video and hear more about his story!

# PARENT & FAMILY SERVICES

**Accessing Quality Child Care:** Our Information and Referral team helps families in central Ohio locate the best child care and early education programs for their children by increasing their knowledge of quality indicators, financial assistance, and other resources. Action for Children maintains a database of more than 1,500 regulated child care and early education programs in central Ohio, including nonprofit and for-profit child care centers, family child care homes, preschool programs, Head Start programs, and school age programs. Families may also use our online search tool to access the database.

**Help Me Grow:** Action for Children serves as the single point of entry for Help Me Grow Home Visiting and Early Intervention services in central Ohio. Our Central Intake and Referral (CIR) team connects pregnant women, caregivers with new babies, and families with young children with developmental delays or disabilities with services that will provide tools and information to nurture the healthy growth of their child through their earliest years. Action for Children also offers its own Help Me Grow home visiting services, which provide critical prenatal and postnatal support to families in Franklin County.

**Children Services Hub:** Every child deserves a safe, consistent, and loving home. Becoming a kinship, foster, or adoptive parent offers a safe space for children to continue to learn and grow. Action for Children provides support, guidance, and answers to questions families may have as they consider starting this rewarding journey. Our services, including individualized planning and preparation for pre-screening and home study inspections, help families navigate their options, the licensing process, and more.

**FatherUp:** Action for Children recognizes the unique qualities, strengths and talents of fathers that make them critical to their child's healthy growth and development. Our fatherhood programming offers hands-on parenting and co-parenting skills, and provides job-readiness and workforce development services to help fathers find and keep stable jobs. We serve fathers who meet any of the following criteria: are unengaged or under engaged with their children, are living in poverty, are unemployed or underemployed, have child custody/visitation or support issues and/or involved with the courts, are incarcerated fathers, or are fathers who desire to enhance their parenting skills.

**Mothers Matter:** Mothers play a special role in their children's lives. But some mothers in central Ohio

have extra circumstances that make it challenging to give their children the best. Our Mothers Matter program serves mothers who meet one or more of the following criteria: teen mothers, single/divorced/separated mothers, non-custodial mothers, living in poverty, minority population, involved with the courts, child welfare, or penal system. These classes are also open to any mother interested in parenting skills enrichment. In this program, mothers gain skills and knowledge that lead to healthy relationships with their children and co-parents and teach them new ways of communicating that can strengthen those bonds.

**Positive Parenting Program:** Raising children isn't always easy and many parents feel they've run out of ways to engage their children. The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) gives parents fresh new ideas and a chance to meet other parents. We provide simple, practical strategies parents can adapt to suit their family's values, beliefs and needs.

**Putting the Children First:** Navigating divorce, dissolution and legal separation can be stressful for parents and children. Action for Children's Putting The Children First program (PTCF) understands that each situation is unique and helps parents in Franklin County (and parents in outlying counties via the online course) by giving them new knowledge and skills that can help them co-parent successfully and help children feel secure during the separation process.

**Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids:** At Action for Children, we believe parents are a child's first and best teachers. Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) is a family-focused intervention program that collaborates with parents to help them prepare their 3 and 4 year old children for school by building reading, language and social skills to create a seamless transition into school. While 33% of children entering the program were below average in their skills readiness, post screening showed that 85% of children were average or above average at the end of the SPARK program year.

**The Art of Positive Parenting:** Seeking coaching and advice, parents have been coming to Action For Children for nearly 20 years to learn new knowledge and skills that help them create a healthy, mutually respectful family life for children. The Art of Positive Parenting (TAPP) provides three- and six-week interactive education classes designed to help parents and guardians listen to children's problems, effectively engage children's cooperation, encourage responsibility, and manage stress.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT: FRANKLIN COUNTY RISE

***“A lot of people think of child care as just babysitting, but it actually allows children to develop foundational skills and create safe and secure attachments that they may not be getting at home. Franklin County RISE is about bringing access to this quality care to everyone, and I’ve loved watching families thrive through the program.”***

Ashley, Early Childhood Educator

Ashley initially never saw herself in the child care field. She went to school for accounting and finance, but knew she loved working with children. During her time in school, she happened to take an elective course that allowed her to discover how she could use her passion to help her community. Knowing she wanted a career that could combine both passions, she finished her accounting degree and returned for her master’s in special education.

Now, as Columbus Early Learning’s Chief Resource Officer, Ashley gets to use her business skills to secure funding and growth for the program while still working directly with the children and families that drew her to the field.

When the mother of a child enrolled in Columbus Early Learning passed away, Ashley and her team worked hard to find a solution that would allow them to keep the child enrolled in the program and provide a much-needed sense of stability. In 2022, thanks to the implementation of Franklin County RISE, Ashley helped the child’s guardian enroll them in preschool through a tuition scholarship, and it has made all the difference.

Over the last year, Ashley has helped enroll several families at Columbus Early Learning, thanks to the RISE Scholarships. Her commitment has eased the burden for many families and enabled many children to take their first steps toward healthy growth through access to high-quality child care.



Scan the code to learn more about the impact of Franklin County RISE!

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES

**Child and Adult Care Food Program:** On average, more than two-third of families have all parents working, and children are in child care for more than 35 hours per week. Yet not all families can assure their children have access to nutritious snacks and meals. Much like the school lunch program, the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) helps Family Child Care professionals in central Ohio receive annual nutrition training and reimbursement for the nutritious meals and snacks they serve at their programs.

**Child Development Associate Program:** Since our inception, AFC has prioritized supporting the early childhood workforce. One aspect of our training and professional development services is preparing central Ohio early learning educators to earn a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™. The CDA is the national para-professional credential in early childhood education, and is an important means of strengthening and professionalizing the early childhood workforce. In acquiring a CDA credential, participants invest significant time and effort to become more skilled in their interactions with children, and thus enhance the overall quality of their program. Through Action for Children's CDA program, students also have access to on-site, personalized coaching, helping them to better understand and apply the concepts acquired in their coursework.

**Empower Awards:** Child care professionals in central Ohio go above and beyond every day for our community. Action for Children's Empower Awards provide support for programs as they care for children and families. By paying providers for achieving goals such as signing a new PFCC agreement, meeting SUTQ goals, becoming licensed by ODJFS, or opening child care classrooms, AFC is helping to strengthen child care businesses while simultaneously improving the quality of child care available to families and young children in central Ohio.

**Family Child Care Services:** Family Child Care professionals serve their community by providing child care services within their homes. These educators are often challenged to connect with a professional network as they care for and educate small groups of children within their homes. Our services help Family Child Care professionals in Franklin County and surrounding counties become licensed, maintain mandatory training requirements, connect with other providers, improve the quality of their programming and meet state quality-rating requirements.

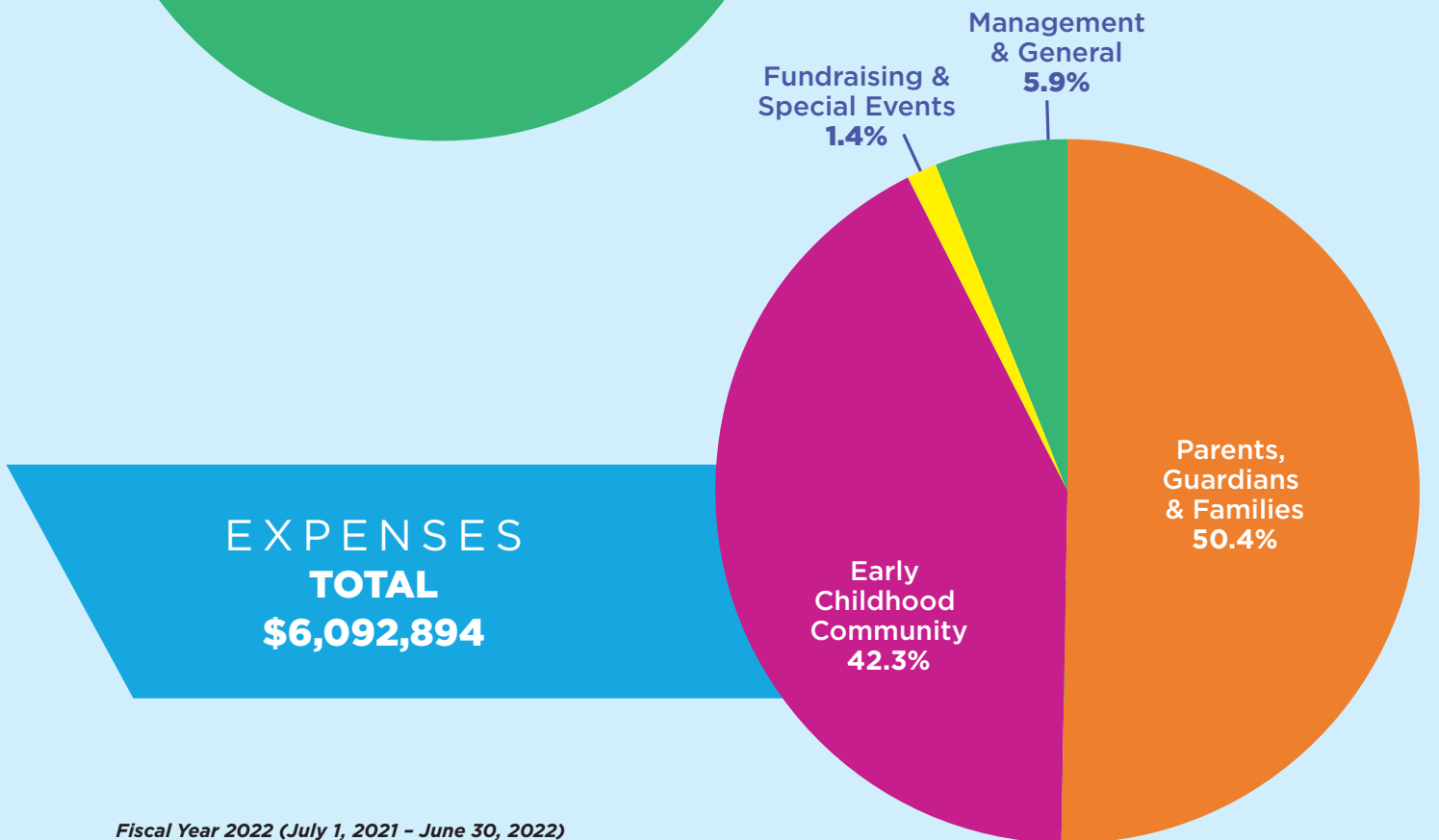
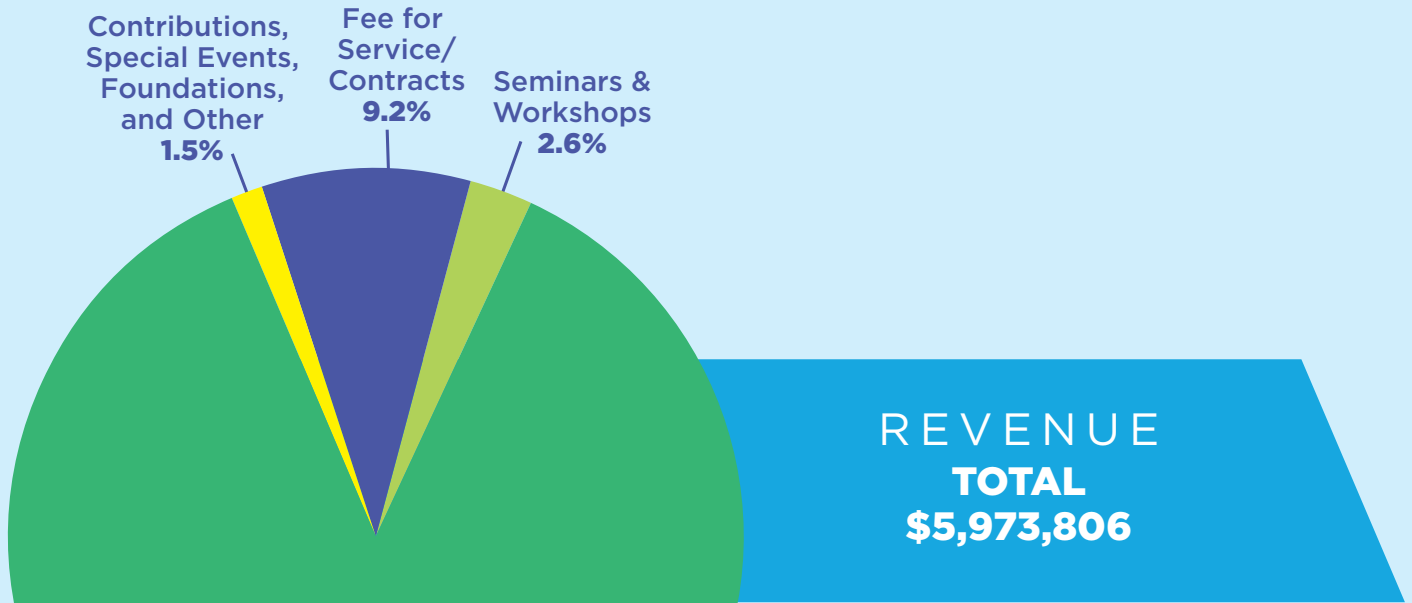
**Franklin County RISE:** Action for Children is helping to make child care and early education experiences more accessible to families in Franklin County with child care affordability scholarships. Through Franklin County RISE, many families have been able to enroll their children in child care for the first time, setting their little ones up for success in school and beyond. In addition to child care scholarships, Franklin County RISE also provides incentive grants for child care programs, signing bonus funds, and Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) for early childhood educators to help programs recruit educators, enroll new families, and maintain and grow their businesses.

**Professional Development:** AFC provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities through classes, special training events, networking opportunities, study groups, and more. We offer required health and safety trainings, as well as specialized training for quality improvement on a range of topics, including language & literacy, classroom management, promoting child and teacher resilience, leadership development, equity & inclusion, relationships with families, and more. In FY 2022, Action for Children also provided intensive curriculum coaching to professionals in central Ohio to reach higher levels of fidelity to quality early childhood curriculum.

**Step Up To Quality:** The availability and quality of child care varies widely in central Ohio. The Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) rating system creates a continuous quality improvement path for providers. SUTQ star-rated programs have demonstrated a commitment to meet stronger standards for staff, environments and curricula, which have been validated to improve children's Kindergarten readiness. Our Technical Assistance coaches help child care programs obtain, maintain, and increase their star-ratings through free on-site and virtual coaching, continuing education and professional development training, and by hosting events to encourage community support.



# FACTS & FIGURES



Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)

# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS WHO HELP TO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE.

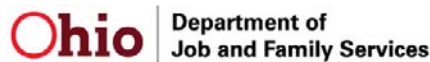
## FUNDING PARTNERS & SPONSORS



EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER



FRANKLIN COUNTY Court of Common Pleas Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch



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