

Since 1957, Children's Institute (CI) has been serving unmet needs of children, parents, educators, and child-focused providers. Our offerings support children of all ages, facilitating early learning, school readiness, healthy development, and youth leadership by improving quality in home, school, and other community environments. We provide capacity building, consultation, coaching and professional learning for educators to create affirming and culturally responsive learning environments centered on equity-based social emotional learning and restorative instructional practices.

Trusted partnering is key to our work; parents guide us, including through our Family Advisory Council, and we team with other child-serving organizations in communities across the greater Rochester area, New York State, and nationally. Through rigorous program implementation, evaluation, and research, we demonstrate that our services (1) result in positive outcomes for children and youth, (2) provide effective support for families, and (3) sustain transformative partnerships with educators through evidence-based programs and initiatives.

CI envisions communities where children, youth and families thrive as they live, learn, and play.

Recognizing the diversity of the communities we serve, we are committed to identifying and addressing racism and other inequities to ensure every person's identity is honored and respected. Our commitment has begun in our workplace with self-reflection, listening and learning. We are integrating that learning into our work and how we engage with the families and systems we serve to ensure our effectiveness.

Programs and Services

Children's Institute started as 'Primary Mental Health Project', and has grown to include a robust Programs and Services group focused on the social-emotional development and well-being of young children. Our five signature service areas include:

- **Primary Project:** Serving children for over 60 years, Primary Project is an evidence-based tier 2 intervention designed to help children with school adjustment issues through one-on-one play-centered interaction with a trained paraprofessional. Each year, the program serves thousands of at-risk children, in 75 schools in New York State and 39 across the country. Research has shown that Primary Project has an impact on improving chronic absenteeism and socioemotional adjustment for children who receive the services.
- **Behavioral Supports for Children (BSC):** BSC addresses the critical needs of very young children through consultation for their caregivers. Mental health consultants work in partnership with early childhood education staff and families to identify mental health concerns, improve adult practices, and promote children's healthy development.
- **Rochester Area Parent Program (RAPP):** An adaptation of the evidence-based Chicago Parent Program (CPP), RAPP is an 8-week curriculum (6 asynchronous modules, 4 virtual group sessions) designed to help families develop skills to support their children's social emotional development at home. In 2020, the program moved to a virtual model, and in partnership with CPP, is continuing to test and refine the virtual model for national dissemination. Evaluation has shown that these initiatives improve adult practices, increase understanding of child development, and lead to increased parent confidence.
- **Get Ready to GROW (GRTG):** An affiliate of the national Help Me Grow system, this program provides universal comprehensive developmental screening in partnership with schools, healthcare providers, and human service agencies. Through this comprehensive approach we annually screen over 2500 children, then identify and refer those in need of assessment, support, and/or targeted services.
- **Quality of Early Care (e.g. RECAP):** Founded in our local community's RECAP model, our services support improving quality in early education centers and school districts. Funders and policy makers receive reliable and valid feedback on curriculum, instruction, improvement needs, policy, and student outcomes. Our trained childcare quality experts and master observers offer training and classroom observation support for New York State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early childhood programs, improving and sustaining high quality early learning environments across the state.

Whole Child Connection

Our Whole Child Connection (WCC) team works to develop affirming, equitable, and relationship-centered learning environments where all adults intentionally foster the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills young people need to thrive. Our approach focuses on the intersection of Social & Emotional Learning (SEL), Restorative Practices, and Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Practices. We offer capacity building services, including professional learning, coaching, and support for data driven decision making. We work with K-12 educators, out-of-school time (OST) programs and early care and education centers across the community. Examples of our recent work include:

- Developing a practice-based observational assessment and coaching tool for teachers that features equity-centered social emotional learning practices for the classroom.
- Working with our youth leadership council, comprising 12 youth who identify as Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), to develop and deliver workshops to over 700 educators across the region on how to build relationships with youth and create more welcoming school and classroom environments.
- Developing a series of parent/caregiver and child workshops that provide parents with strategies for supporting social emotional learning at home.
- Facilitating a process in four schools districts to complete a comprehensive revision of their code of conduct and providing associated professional learning for teachers on how to be more student centered, supportive, and restorative in order to align the code with student supports for social and emotional skill building

Research and Evaluation

Supporting all of our offerings, our Data and Science area combines (1) research, (2) program evaluation, and (3) data management functions in an integrated unit. For decades we have been trusted experts in crucial, timely, child-focused data collection and analysis, valuing our community partners across human services, education, and health fields. The team gathers, analyzes, and reports on the evidence that showcases the effectiveness and impact of our various efforts across our programs and services, and also conducts psychometrics research to ensure that child behavior measurement tools remain reliable and valid. Using cutting edge statistical modeling techniques, we contribute to the broader research community through publishing insights from high quality program data.

Support our Work: You could help fund one of these key future projects

- Conduct a research study with our youth leaders on how to build empathy in the digital age
- Develop a toolkit and coaching model for teachers on supporting social and emotional development in the classroom
- Expand Primary Project to more schools outside of New York State
- Expand the Get Ready to GROW comprehensive screening model to more communities
- Increase the number of parents who learn effective parenting strategies from the RAPP program
- Test a new SEL program to help children who have experienced maltreatment

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