



Advocating for Children in Southeastern Pennsylvania



WHY CHILDREN NEED A POWERFUL ADVOCATE:

150,000 children are growing up in poverty.

Black and Hispanic children are two times more likely to be living in poverty than White children.

More than 37,000 children do not have health insurance.

Schools educating some of the wealthiest children have \$16,000 more to spend per student than schools educating the poorest children.

Black and Hispanic children are six times more likely to attend an underfunded school than White students.

Less than half of young children can attend high-quality early learning programs like pre-k and Head Start.

So what do we do?

Children First, formerly known as Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), serves as the leading child advocacy organization working to improve the lives and life chances of children in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Children First undertakes specific and focused projects in areas affecting the healthy growth and development of

children, including child care, public education, child health, juvenile justice, and child welfare. Through thoughtful and informed advocacy, community education, targeted service projects, and budget analysis, Children First watches out and speaks out for children and families.

WHERE WE WORK:

- + Bucks County
- + Chester County
- + Delaware County
- + Montgomery County
- + Philadelphia County

Join us to improve the lives of children.

+ Volunteer

Be part of our corps of 1,200 volunteers that help children.

+ Advocate

Join our growing and engaged network of 10,000 advocates who help us call for action to improve the lives of children.

+ Donate

Make a contribution to support the work we do on behalf of the nearly one million children who live in our region.

Visit us at childrenfirstpa.org and get involved today!



"I am so grateful to be part of an organization like Children First that is always looking out for the best interest of our children."

- *Melissa Blatz, parent*

"We are grateful that Children First unites us across the region to demand the resources our schools and communities need for our children."

- *Tomás Hanna, Superintendent, Coatesville Area School District*

"We need to advocate for our children and their best interest, and thankfully Children First brings stakeholders together in a thoughtful and intentional way to create positive results for our most vulnerable and precious citizens."

- *Marcus Allen, CEO, Big Brothers/Big Sisters Independence Branch*

“Children First successfully engages policymakers to deliver resources that can change lives of Black, Hispanic and low income children. They are effective and persistent advocates for children.”

- *Dr. Tyra Bryant Steven, Center for Health Equity, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia*

Children First believes that children have the right to a healthy childhood.

TO HELP CHILDREN GET THE HEALTH CARE THEY NEED, WE:

- + Advocate for policies that ensure every low income child qualifies and is enrolled in publicly supported health insurance, including immigrant children.
- + Make the case for funds to remove lead paint from homes where children live and eliminate asbestos and mold in public schools most dramatically harming the health of children of color.
- + Fight to give access to quality mental health services for Black, Hispanic and low income children.
- + Offer free health care navigation, and dental and eye care services to more than 3,000 children annually.

COALITIONS:

Center for Health Equity and Justice of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Delaware County Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition
Dream Care Coalition
Give Kids Sight Day
Give Kids a Smile Day
Lead Free Philly
National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition
PA Lead Free Promise Project
Philadelphia Healthy Schools Initiative

Fast Facts on Child Health

Nearly 40,000 children are growing up in Pennsylvania without health insurance, which means they can't see a doctor when they are sick or get care for ongoing medical problems.



Children First Gets Results



Children First led the charge to increase the share of children eligible for subsidized health insurance, and each year we help 1,000 children get insured and close gaps in their health care services or coverage.

Children First built a bipartisan coalition of more than 100 organizations to permit immigrant children to enroll in the PA CHIP program.

Children First focuses on the most formative years to ensure that young children have access to great early childhood education programs that prepare them to succeed in school and life.

TO MAKE SURE CHILDREN THRIVE AT THE YOUNGEST AGES, WE:

- + Advocate to ensure affordable high-quality child care and pre-k programs are available to every child and increase the share of Black and Hispanic children enrolled.
- + Push to increase resources for child care and pre-k programs so every child is exposed to a high-quality, early learning program.
- + Support Black and Hispanic early learning and care providers and parents so that children are exposed to a culturally rich early learning curricula and staff who respect and reflect the diversity of all children served.

COALITIONS:

*Early Childhood Education Racial Equity Task Force
Early Learning PA
Pre-K for PA
READ by 4th Campaign
Southeastern Pennsylvania Early Childhood Coalition
Start Strong PA
Thriving PA*

Fast Facts on Early Childhood Education



High-quality early learning programs cut the need for special education by 50% and reduce the share of children held back in school by 33%, but only 50% of all young children get access to these programs.



Children First Gets Results



Children First persuaded elected officials to fund expanded access to pre-k, Head Start and high-quality child care for nearly 20,000 children statewide and led the charge to dedicate the Philadelphia soda tax for 4,000 children to attend pre-k.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CHILDREN FIRST'S PUSH FOR HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION:
childrenfirstpa.org/early-learning

Children First opens up opportunity by advocating for every student to have the tools and schools they need to succeed.

TO HELP STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR BEST, WE:

- + Expose the gaps in resources and outdated policies that impact students facing the greatest odds in life.
- + Identify and push for targeted solutions that boost educational quality where it's needed most.
- + Demand and build support for strategies that can guarantee an equitable education for Black, Hispanic and low-income students.
- + Put parents and students at the table with decision-makers to improve schools.

COALITIONS:

*PA Schools Work
The Campaign for Level Up
The Resource Equity Collaborative
Voices for Children of Delaware County*

Fast Facts on K-12 Education



Students in 35 other states outperform PA students on the college entrance exam (SAT), and only 40% of all Pennsylvania students can read well at 4th grade. Every state doing better than Pennsylvania spends more per student; Pennsylvania spends less per student than 44 other states.

Children First Gets Results



Children First helped pave the way for nearly \$2 billion in new funding for schools and was the catalyst addressing equity in schools in state education policy.

LEARN MORE
ABOUT CHILDREN
FIRST'S FOCUS ON
EDUCATION:
[childrenfirstpa.org/
education](http://childrenfirstpa.org/education)



Children harmed by their families or in their community need protection and support to heal.

TO MAKE SURE THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN ARE NURTURED, WE:

- + Demand that institutions that harm children are shut down.
- + Advocate for safe options that keep children with their parents and out of foster homes or detention facilities as much as possible.
- + Build support for increased investments in prevention activities that help children develop positive social skills.
- + Help more children in foster care and the juvenile justice system graduate high school.

COALITIONS:

The Philadelphia Task Force on Youth Residential Placement

The Trauma Alliance of the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

Voices of Children of Delaware County

Fast Facts on Child Abuse and Juvenile Justice



About 60% of children sent to live in a jail or secure institution are there for minor offenses. Reforms to the juvenile justice system can save over \$90 million and keep children out of jail.

More than 25,000 children are in foster care every year, and most need more intensive emotional supports than the foster care system provides.

LEARN MORE ABOUT
HOW CHILDREN
FIRST WORKS TO
SUPPORT WORKING
FAMILIES:
[childrenfirstpa.org/
family-stability](http://childrenfirstpa.org/family-stability)

Children First Gets Results



Children First played a key role in reducing the number of children sent to institutions in Philadelphia.

Children First led the charge to create the first Youth Services Ombudsman's Office in the state for institutionalized children to contact when they are in harm's way.

Children First won the first ever review of the education children receive when forced to live in an institution.



There is no magic bullet and no do-overs. We must put children first and ensure they all have equitable access to the building blocks needed to thrive: health care, high-quality child care and pre-k, great schools, proper nutrition, safe homes with supports for struggling families and summer and afterschool enrichment programs.

Children First uses one hand to serve our kids, while the other applies pressure to public officials. This sets us apart from other organizations. It makes us a uniquely effective champion for children.

CHILDREN FIRST CAMPAIGNS



Improving the lives and life chances of children in Southeastern Pennsylvania through thoughtful & informed advocacy.

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