



Together For Kids Coalition

The Future of Our Community

Together for Kids is a coalition of early childhood champions with a mission to promote the social-emotional well-being and general health of young children (prenatal through eight) and families throughout Greater Worcester

- Early childhood service-providing agencies
- Parents/guardians
- Health care providers
- Human service organizations
- Business Leaders and Employers
- Community and Religious Leaders
- School and university personnel
- Local and state government representatives

It comes down to a simple idea: When the youngest among us do well, we all do better

“The emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important for success in school, the workplace, and in the larger community.”

- Key Concepts in Brain Architecture - The Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University



Our communities are facing a burgeoning childcare crisis

- Providers are leaving the field due to physical and emotional demands of the work itself
- There is critical tension between the required levels of education and credentialing and extremely low compensation
- The need for sufficient high quality, affordable care is now amplified by a shortage of qualified professionals to fill early education and care positions.

The TFK Coalition’s work is guided by four principles:

- **Children’s success is everyone’s job**
- **There is no time to wait**
- **Early childhood is critical to health equity**
- **The Return on Investment is significant**

The crux of the matter

- Worcester’s total licensed EEC capacity is for approximately 4,600 children 5 years old and younger
- Worcester has a population of 7,185 children whose caretaker must work outside the home
- “Caretakers” are not just parents but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, and family friends
- 2500+ children/families are on their own in arranging care

By the numbers

- Worcester's family poverty rate is 22%; almost double the state as a whole. Specifically, among children, the rate is 31%.
- For families of color the family poverty rate is even higher; for African American families, 22.7%, for families of two or more races, 33.5%; for Latino families, 37.2%
- Over half of Worcester's renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing
- 8 out of 10 of Worcester kindergarteners are classified as "high need"
- More than half of Worcester kindergarteners begin school with no preschool experience
- Rates of neonatal abstinence syndrome (opioid withdrawal in newborns) in Worcester have doubled since 2012

If every family has

- Work that will support a family
- Safe, affordable housing, nutritious food and reliable transportation
- High quality early education and care
- Access to preventative care (immunizations, exercise), and basic health knowledge for caretakers

Then

Parents and caregivers of children prenatal to age eight are completely able and ready to provide the environment needed to raise healthy young people



Our Plan

1. Accessible, affordable, non-stigmatizing parenting education and family support and health (including behavioral health) services that make family life easier
2. Access to high quality affordable early education and care for all Worcester children and families
3. Family resilience and community connection for families experiencing toxic stress and trauma
4. Advocacy opportunities (in partnership with others) for livable wage jobs, safe affordable housing, access to nutritious food and efficient transportation
5. Coordination of services and supports, including the development and tracking of indicators and benchmarks to measure progress and inform future planning

As a result of this work and continued commitment to early childhood development, in five years we will achieve the following outcomes:

- A robust data system
- Increased access to high quality education and services
- Increased funding and policy support
- Measurable reduction in health disparities affecting young children

You can help!

togetherforkidscoalition.org

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