

Organizational Overview

Mission: The Children's Agenda advocates for effective policies and drives evidence-based solutions for the health, education and success of children, especially for children who are vulnerable because of poverty, racism, health disparities and trauma.

Type: 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Staff: 16 staff (14.9 FTEs)

Board: 16 community leaders

Budget: \$1.78 million annually. 27% of our income comes from foundation grants, 49% multi-year contracts, 7% individuals, 18% businesses and faith groups. We do not pursue or receive government dollars, making us an objective advocate for what is best for children in our area.

Synopsis

Only The Children's Agenda improves the lives of children of all ages by engaging leaders in systemic change through research, collaboration and advocacy. Our work creates an equitable community. The organization was created in 2004 as an initiative of the Rochester Area Community Foundation with United Way and leading children's service providers to help our community make (as our tagline says) "Smart Choices & Bold Voices." The Children's Agenda does three things: **advocacy** (such as strengthening Child Protective Services or increasing funding for child care assistance), **evidence-based research** (such as analyzing proposed school district, city, county and state budget expenditures), and **collaborative systems-building** (such as staffing ROC the Future).

Recent Accomplishments

- **Approximately 2,700 toddlers ages 3 - 5 will have somewhat better access to services** thanks to Monroe County increasing its reimbursement rate to providers for the first time in 10 years.

After months of testimony and growing pressure on the County Executive and legislators, Monroe County announced a 15% increase in preschool special education rates for approximately 2,700 toddlers in March 2019, along with hiring additional care coordinators, the first such increase in 10 years. TCA helped organize parents and providers behind a common goal, wrote fact sheets and analysis of the County's budget, led meetings with County officials, and mobilized our Advocacy Network.

- **54,000 NYS infants 0 – 2 will benefit from a 5% increase in early intervention, first time in 15 years.**

TCA generated 502 messages to policymakers from 257 supporters in our Advocacy Network. Together with that grassroots pressure, TCA and coalition meetings with NYS public officials, the 2019-20 New York State budget contained the first rate increase for early Intervention services in 15 years. While the increase is modest (5% for just speech, occupational and physical therapies), it still marks an important shift in the State's approach, helps preserve some provider capacity, and gives us momentum on which to build.

- **2,200 working families will save an average of \$800 per year in child care costs**, according to Monroe County, thanks to reduced parent co-pay requirements.

After many years of TCA’s advocacy for both increased funding and reduced parent co-pays, Monroe County did both in 2019. The County’s 2019 budget increased child care subsidies by \$1.8 million over its 2018 budget, and on July 9th, County Executive Dinolfo also announced that the County was reducing parent fees from 35% to 25% of family income over the poverty threshold.

- **1,500 three year-olds will be screened** in the GROW program, thanks to insurers agreeing to now cover that ROC the Future-inspired and Children’s Institute-managed comprehensive developmental screening program.

Working together with many partners in All Kids Thrive, TCA helped the GROW program expand, with coverage from insurers and reimbursement from Medicaid value-based payment, to potentially serve up to 4,000 young children per year (approximately 460 to start). The Finger Lakes Performing Provider System agreed to spend \$1.4 million to develop a common “gold” standard for developmental and behavioral screening, expand a parent portal, improve data integration capabilities, and engage in a community-wide communications campaign on the importance of early development and screening, among other work.

- **Thousands more courses passed by students** than otherwise, thanks to reductions in suspensions (40% in 5 years) via the continuation of restorative practices and help zones in the budget.

After initially budgeting to eliminate help zones in several buildings and the Roc Restorative Team (training, coaching and hands-on support to educators on restorative practices and alternatives to suspension), the final RCSD budget retained those supports. TCA organized 354 parents and community members to send 2,478 emails to the RCSD Board of Education in response to our 2 advocacy alerts. Working together with Citizen Action, Metro Justice and Teen Empowerment, we also engaged 10 parents and 8 students to speak at the public hearings.

What We Do

Our community has many programs and organizations to help children — one by one, or year by year. But few efforts actually help change the system for all children, particularly our most vulnerable, over the long run. That’s where we come in. The Children’s Agenda was designed by key community institutions 15 years ago as a unique, trustworthy organization to knowledgeably, collaboratively, strategically and courageously fill a vacuum for three needed but missing supports for children:

1. **Evidence-based research:** Decisions affecting children’s lives should rely on more than just a hunch. We support “what’s needed most and works best” for children’s development every step of the way based on proven outcomes and the best data. We provide:
 - Detailed, annual analyses of the impact of proposed budgets on kids and the evidence-based programs supporting them best in the Rochester City School District, City of Rochester, Monroe County and New York State;

- [Reports identifying evidence-based, effective policies, programs and practices](#) that best address the problems faced by our community's children. The Children's Agenda's thought leadership is relied upon by policymakers and advocates at the local, state and even national levels;
 - Annual data-based [report cards on outcome indicators](#) of children's health and education with multiple organizations as part of ROC the Future.
- 2. Collaborative systems-building:** Instead of pointing fingers and assigning blame, we bring organizations and leaders together for shared goals and mutually reinforcing activities. We focus on the entire cradle-to-career continuum, spanning issues and ages for an integrated, whole child (physical, social-emotional, cognitive) developmental approach. The Children's Agenda is:
- Working with other leaders for a model of early childhood supports known as [All Kids Thrive](#);
 - Mobilizing our community's collective impact by helping to staff, lead or participate in local cross-sector initiatives such as [ROC the Future](#) (Pre-K – 12 education), the [Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative](#), Early Childhood Development Initiative, [Greater Rochester Afterschool Alliance](#), [Common Ground Health's Healthi Kids](#), etc., to help kids across the entire cradle to career continuum;
 - An active member of the national [Partnership for America's Children](#), a federation of 53 state and local children's advocacy organizations in 42 states. Larry Marx, CEO of The Children's Agenda, serves on the Board of Directors of the Partnership, and was formerly Co-Chair.
- 3. Advocacy:** Our reports don't sit on shelves. The Children's Agenda:
- Works with City, County, State and Federal officials behind the scenes to identify policy alternatives and funding sources to maximize the impact of evidence-based programs on children's lives;
 - Mobilizes more than 5,000 people online in our [Advocacy Network](#), on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#);
 - Engages more than 75 congregations in our [Interfaith Collaborative](#), along with grassroots and grassroots advocacy from influential business executives, higher education officials and health care providers, to weigh in on the policy process;
 - Focuses public attention on key issues via [print, TV and radio news](#) stories.