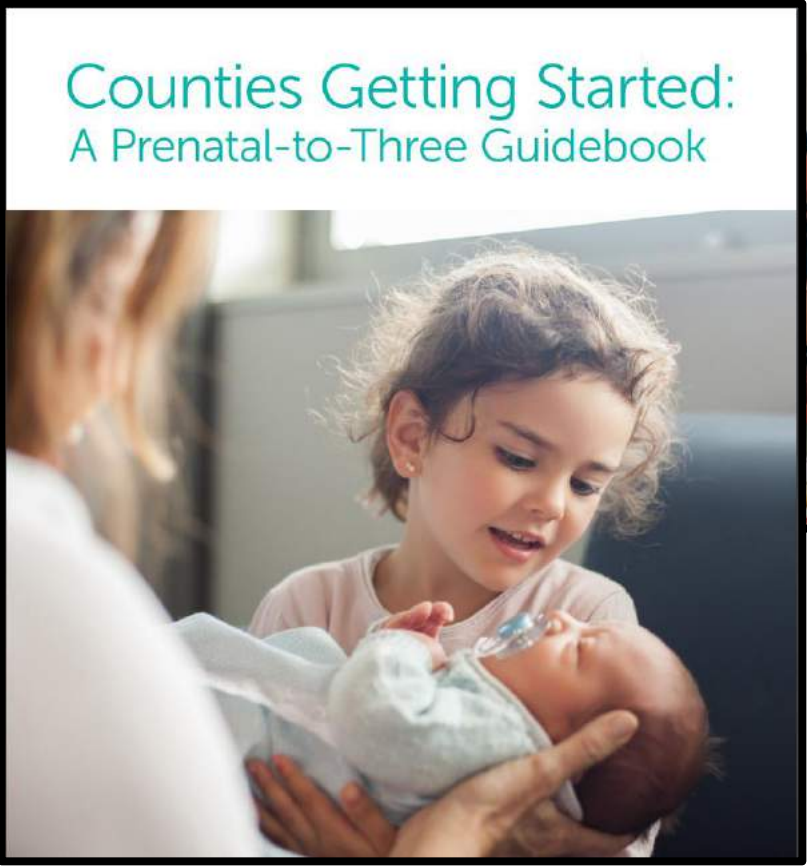
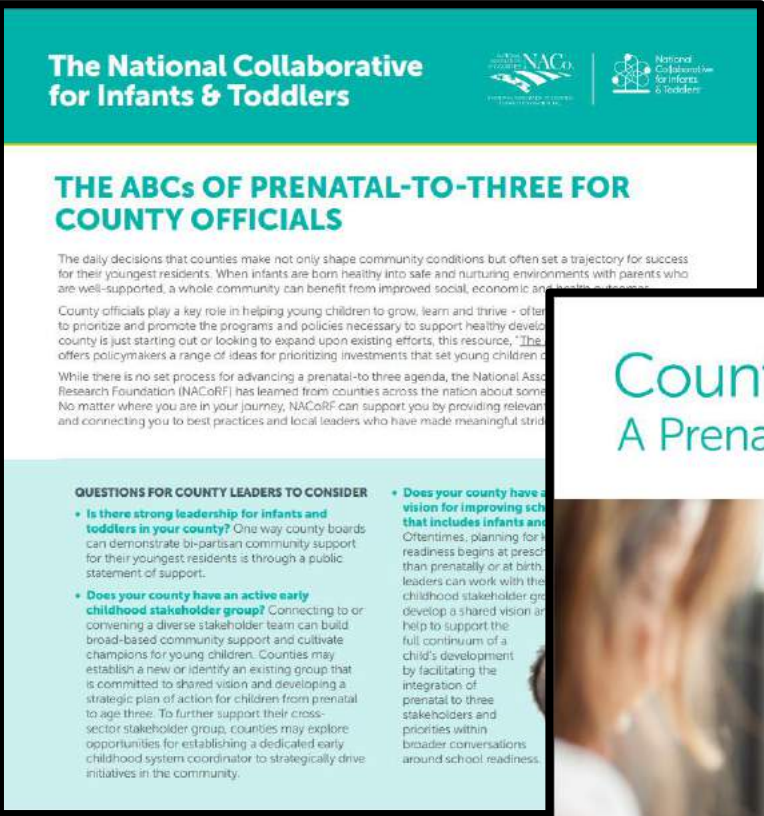


Counties for Kids

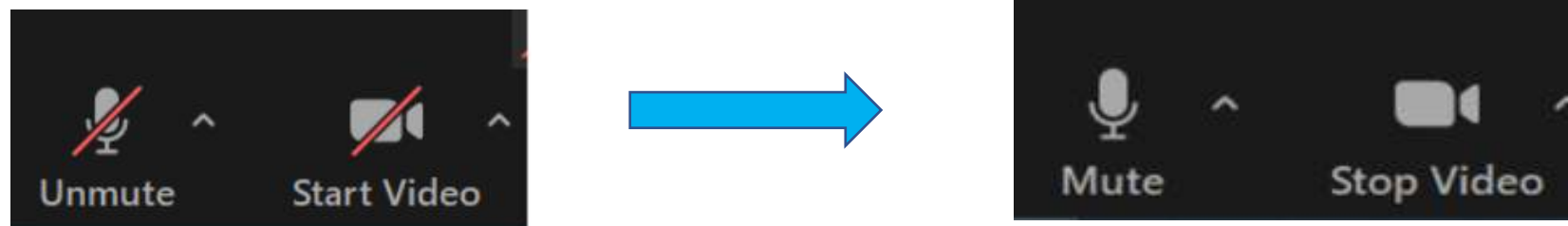
Resources



www.countiesforkids.org

Instructions

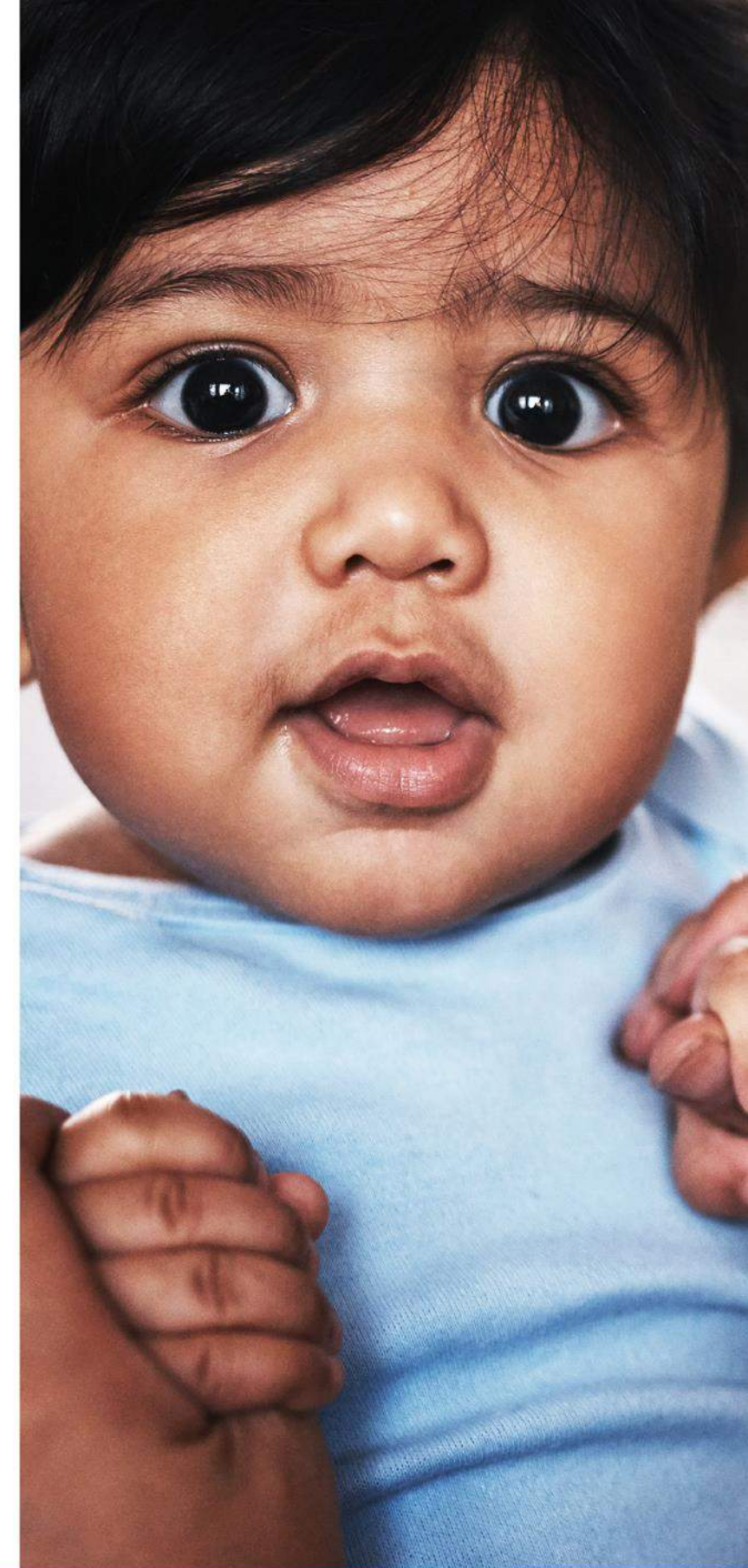
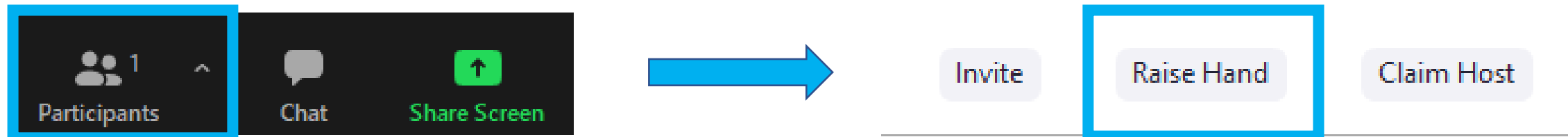
To mute/unmute and start/stop video:



To access the chat box:



To raise/lower your hand:



Agenda

Early Childhood Suburban Peer Learning Network: Improving Children and Families' Access to Services during COVID-19

- Welcome
- County Speaker – Onondaga County, N.Y. (20 minutes)
- Questions & Interactive Discussion (30 minutes)
- Conclusion





NACoRF - Suburban Peer Learning Network
Early Childhood System Building
October 26, 2020



NACo- Suburban Peer Learning Network – Early Childhood Systems Building



Laurie Black, Director of ECA



Gina Iliev, Pritzker
Fellow & Director of
Parent & Community
Initiatives



Amy McCluskey, Onondaga County
Deputy Commissioner, Department
of Children & Family Services and
Help Me Grow Co-Chair





Presentation Goals

- Highlight Onondaga County's cross-sector early childhood work
- Discuss how the cross-sector work has helped us respond during COVID-19
- Highlight two key strategies for strengthening the early childhood system during COVID and beyond
- Share lessons learned through the cross-sector work

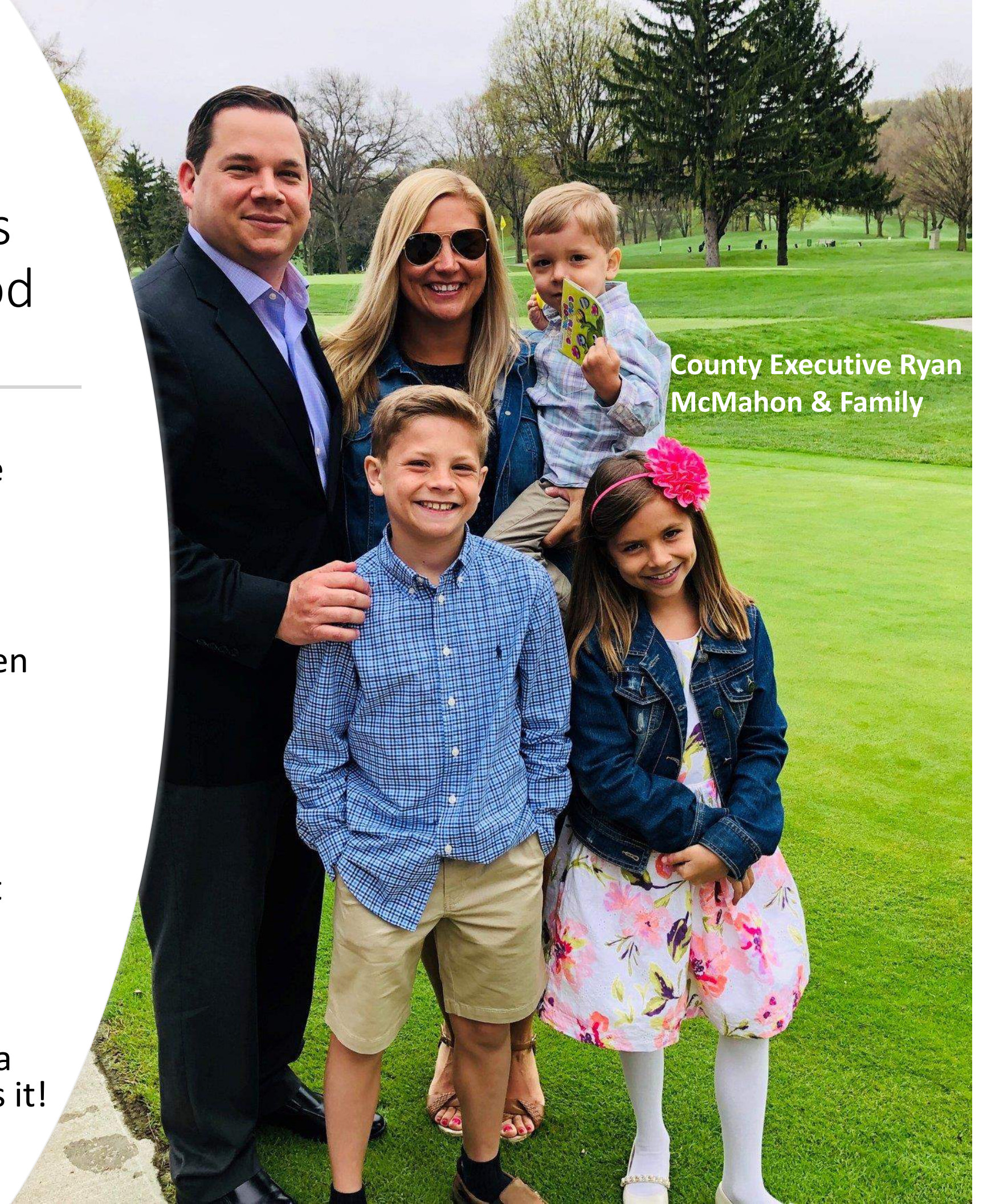
About Onondaga County, NY

- Central New York
- 470,000 residents
 - Approx. 27,000 under 5 years of age
- Syracuse is central city
 - 145,000 residents
- Challenges – stagnant population #'s, concentrated poverty, old housing, economic growth
- Strengths: Strong leadership (public, private and foundations), “just right” size, new energy, entrepreneurial spirit and forever hopeful



Why Onondaga County is “All In” on Early Childhood

- We have built a cross-sector commitment/understanding of the importance of the first five years
- County Executive and Legislature understand the connection between early childhood and educational, economic development and community prosperity outcomes
- County Executive understands that early childhood is a key part of the County’s anti-poverty strategy
- The CE has young children – he is a convincing spokesperson – he gets it!



County Executive Ryan McMahon & Family



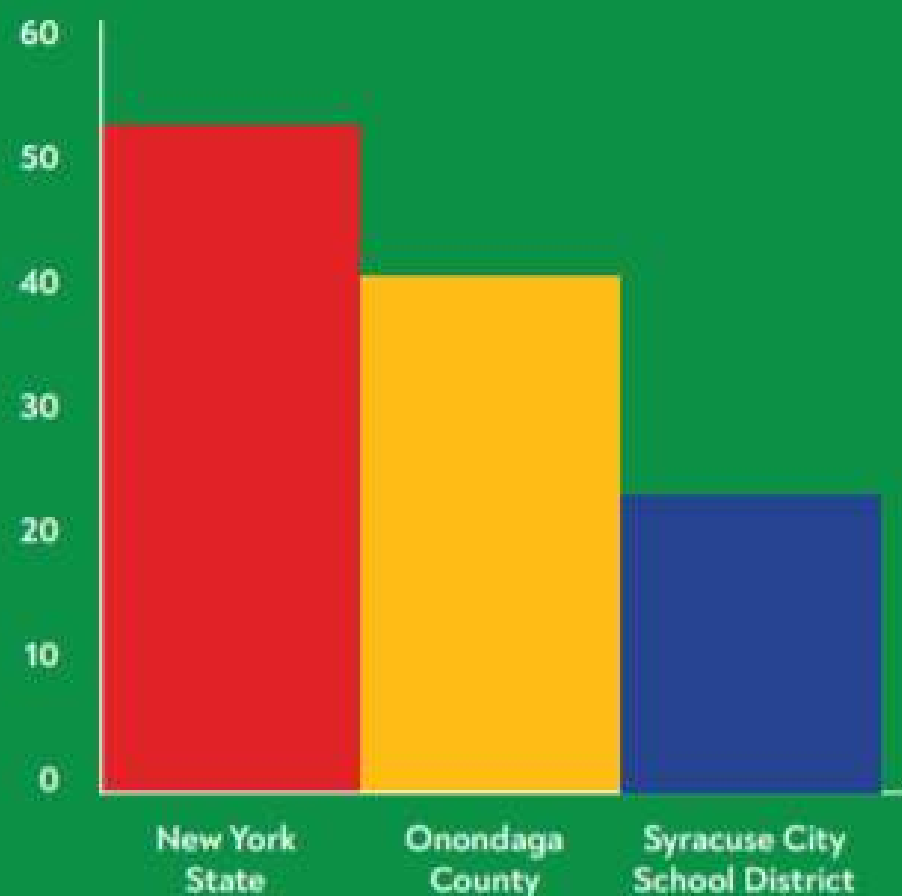
The Launch of the ECA

6 years ago we asked “how are children in Onondaga County doing in the first five years of life?”

- Answer to that question left us unsatisfied and motivated to do better
 - Other communities across the country were prioritizing early childhood
 - Data to answer the question was not available
- Since 2014 - Onondaga County has been at the forefront of our response
 - The Deputy County Executive for Human Services helped to launch the ECA in 2015
 - In 2018, with the election of our current County Executive, it became a platform in his anti-poverty strategy and in his first budget in 2019, it became a significant new investment

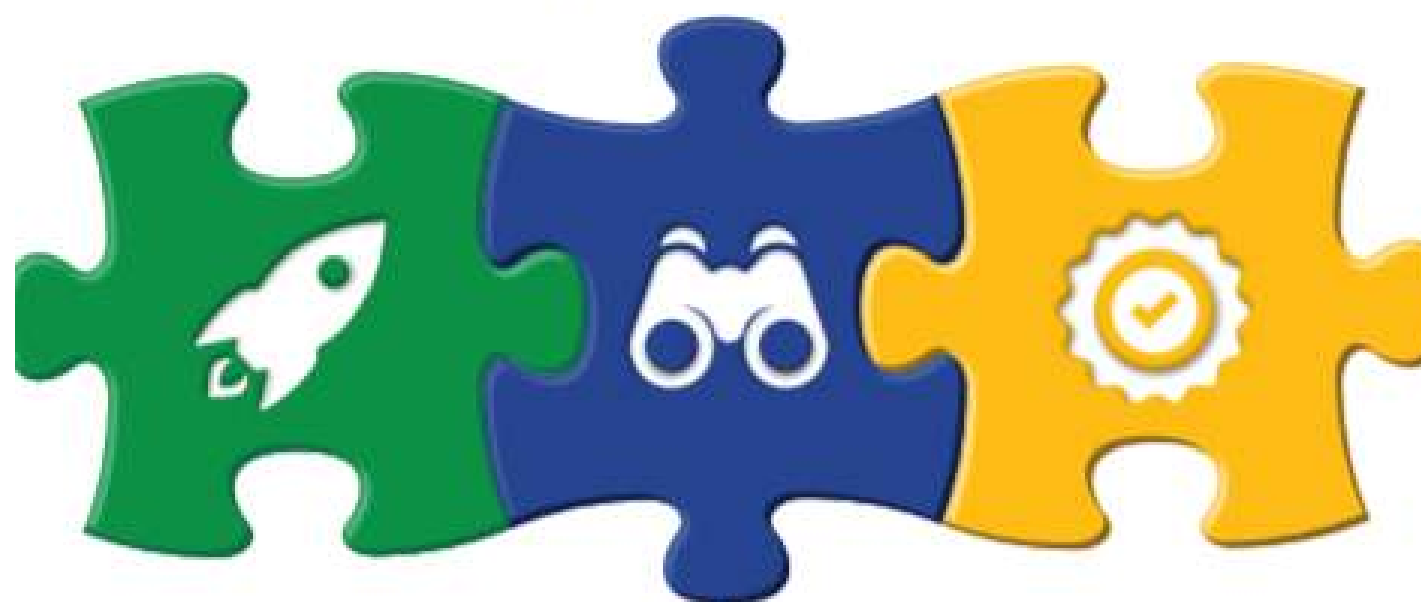


Percentage of 3rd Graders Reading at Grade Level - 2019 NYS ELA Assessment



Our Mission

The Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) facilitates cross-sector engagement and collaboration aimed at building a comprehensive and effective early childhood system that utilizes data driven solutions informed by community priorities to support young children and their families in order to advance optimal child development in Onondaga County.



Our Vision

All young children in Onondaga County are healthy, thriving and successful in school and life; and all families of young children are supported in their parenting and have the knowledge, skills, confidence, and resources they need to raise their children in healthy and nurturing environments.

Our Values

- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Family-Centered
- Collaboration
- Shared Decision-Making & Governance
- Systems Building
- Data Driven



Our Goal

Improve 3rd grade reading levels in Onondaga County.

Who is involved in the work?

Over 200 stakeholders involved in ten committees

- County Departments –DCFS, DSS, DoH
- Non-profits providing family supports
- Child healthcare providers
- Child Care advocates
- Foundations
- Business Leaders
- Families

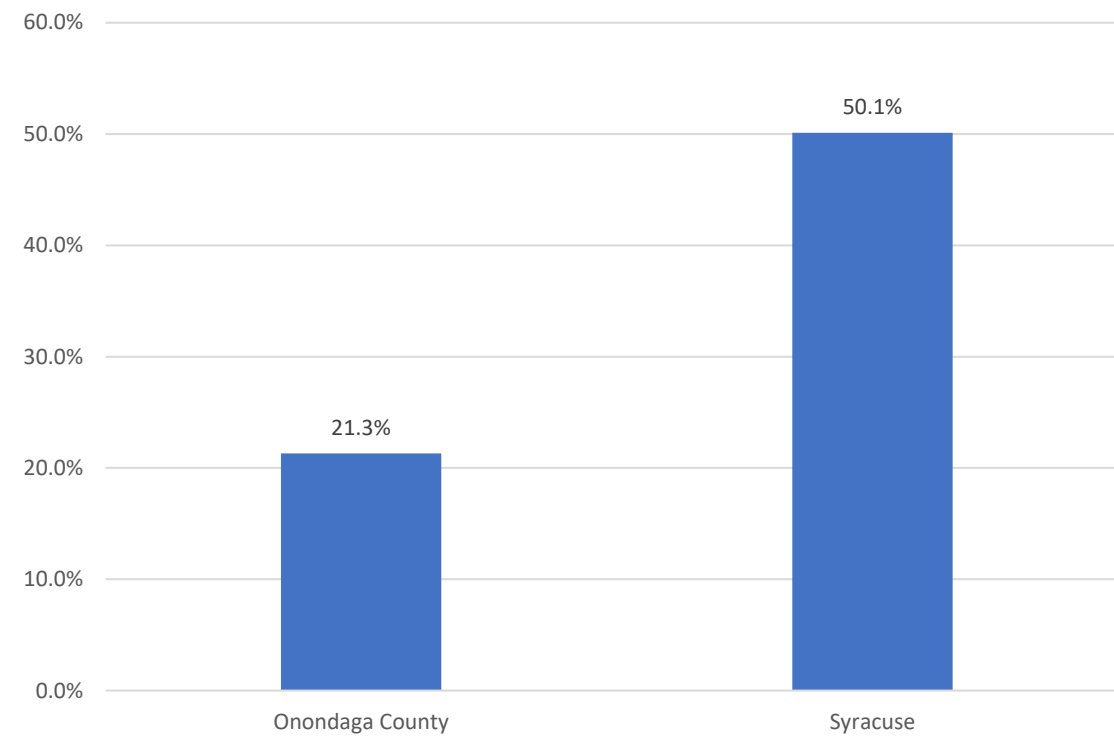


Organizational Chart

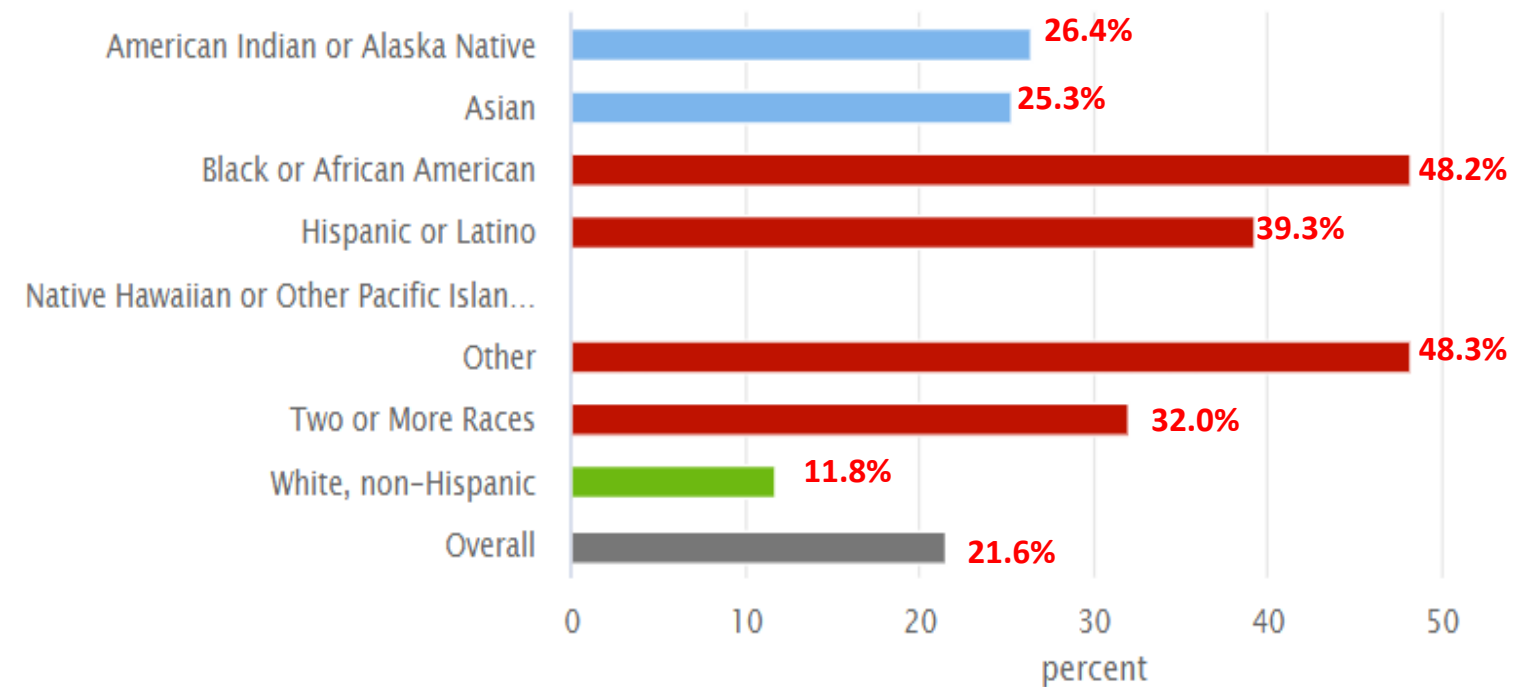


Onondaga County - Community Context

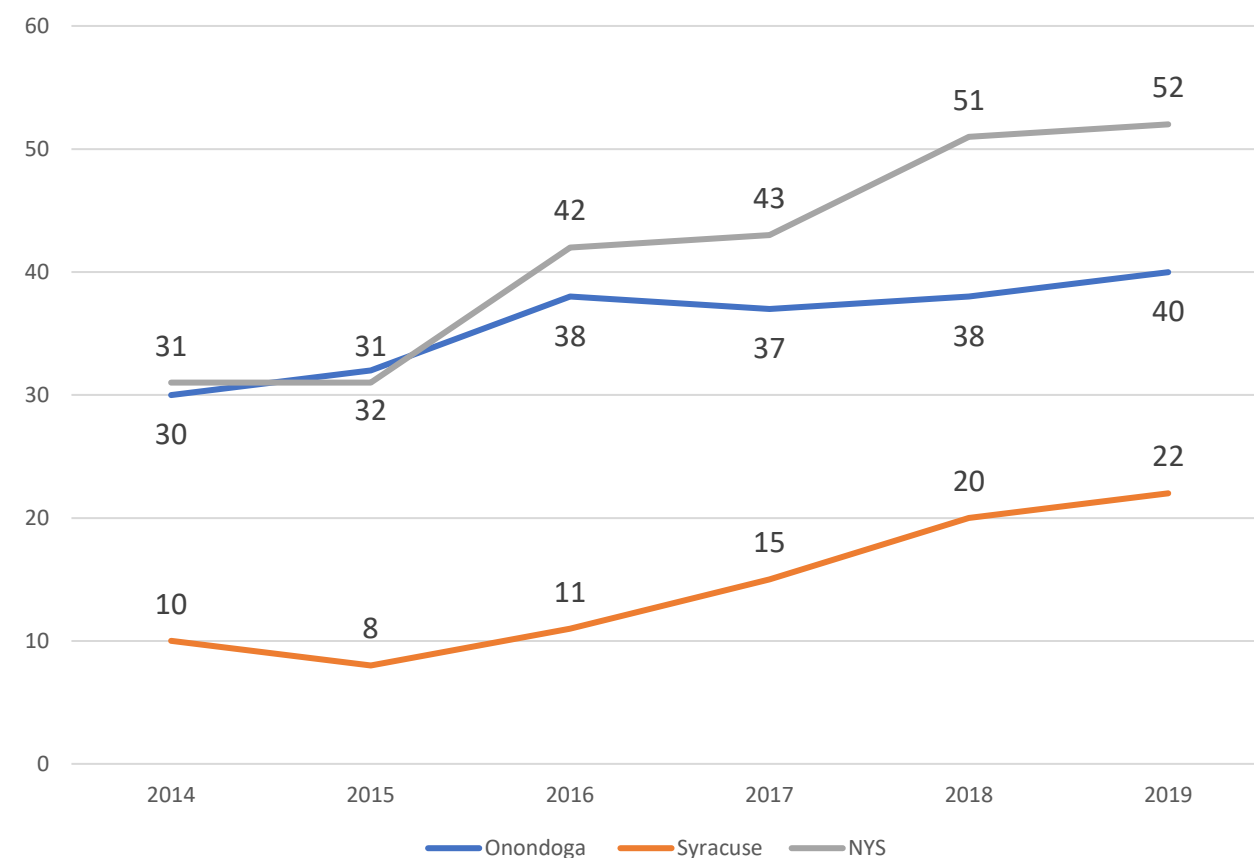
Children under 5 years below poverty level



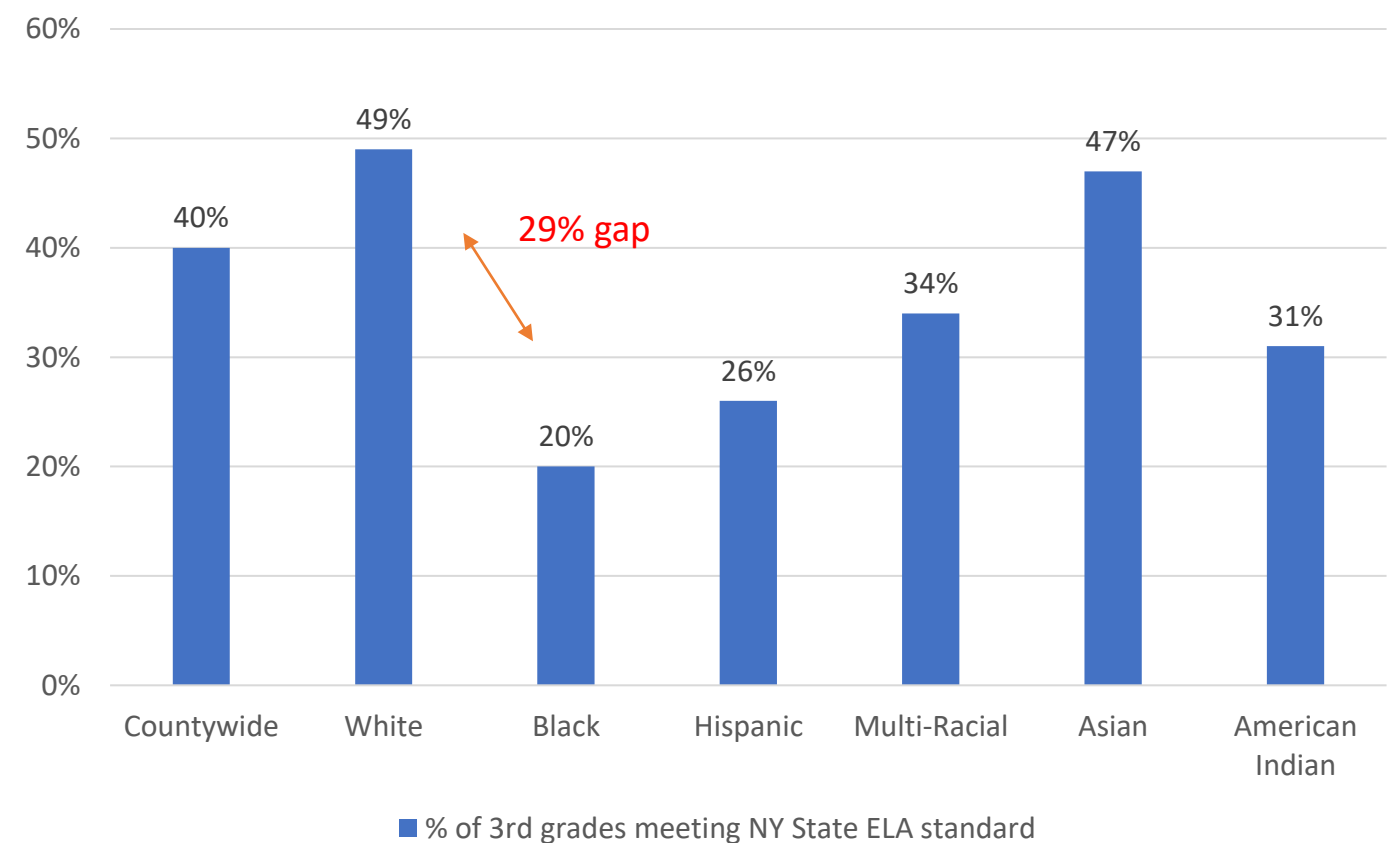
Children Living Below Poverty Level by Race/Ethnicity



% of students meeting NYS 3rd Grade ELA Standard



% of 3rd grades meeting NY State ELA standard





Launch of the
ECA

Launch of ECA
Committees

Launch of
Talking is
Teaching

Invited to NCIT
and hiring of
Pritzker Fellow

Launch of Help
Me Grow
Onondaga

Launch of Parents &
Communities THRIVE

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

Developing of
Strategic Plan
2015-2020

Committee
Identification
of Strategies

Hiring The ECA
Director

Joined CSSP's
EC-LINC

Launch of
Parent Child
Plus and
Layla's Got You

Onondaga
County Executive
proposes \$1.5
million for Early
Childhood
Alliance

Developing of
Strategic Plan
2020-2025

Launch of
Child Care
Quality
Improvement
Pilot



EC-LINC
An initiative of CSSP

ParentChild+
Equal Possibilities From The Start



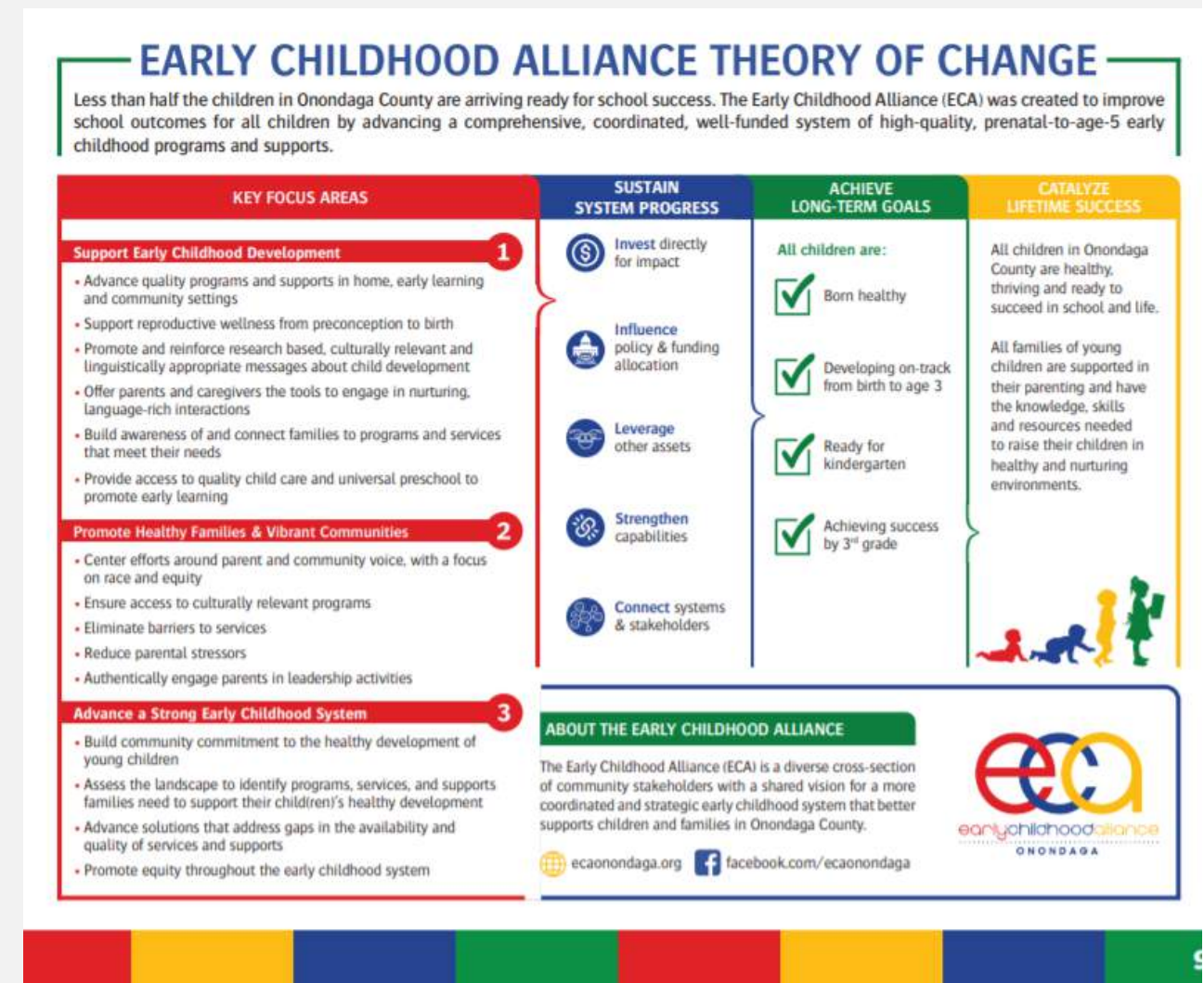
Goals for Early Childhood System Building

Child & Family Level Changes

- Decrease unintended pregnancy rates
- Increase healthy births
- **Increase children meeting developmental milestones**
- **Increase children entering school ready**
- Increase children reading on grade level by 3rd grade

System changes

- **Increase investment in early childhood system**
- **Increase role of parents in the system**
- **Deepening understanding of child development**
- Increase quality in services
- Equity in service delivery
- Diversity in workforce



System Building Resources

- National Association of Counties - <https://countiesforkids.org/>
- Center for the Study of Social Policy – EC-LINC – <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/early-childhood-learning-and-innovation-network-for-communities/>
 - *Early Learning Community Action Guide* and Progress Rating Tool
- National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers - <https://www.thencit.org/>
- Build Initiative - <https://www.buildinitiative.org/>



What the Pandemic Reveals about Early Childhood

Early Childhood is the **Silent System**-
Not as much conversation or resource investment in the early childhood system during pandemic

- In a pandemic the system's fragmented nature is amplified
- Addressing basic needs is the priority for families – concepts like child development and early literacy are taking a backseat
- It is hard to gain a clear picture of what is happening in the first five years – data is not collected or reported in a timely manner



How are families doing in the pandemic in Onondaga County

- Increased rates of poverty and unemployment
- Decreased well-child visits
- Decreased referrals to Early Intervention - Part C
- Decreased numbers of children in childcare and UPK (social distancing)
- Decreased referrals to child protective services
- Decreased families receiving home visiting
- Increased disparities related to digital divide
- Overall sense of greater stress facing families – we know chronic stress negatively impacts brain development

Sound familiar to your community?



The Only Way Forward Is To Build A Better System

Despite COVID - We must remain steadfast in building a comprehensive array of high-quality services & supports

- weaving together the system of supports and helping parents navigate these services – Help Me Grow
- engaging families as central partners in the work – Parents & Communities THRIVE



Why Help Me Grow

When the early childhood system is not well organized, it can be difficult for families to access resources for their children and challenging for service providers to connect families to needed supports.

- *“One of the most attractive characteristics of Help Me Grow is that it is elegant in its simplicity”*

Dr. Paul Dworkin - Founder of Help Me Grow

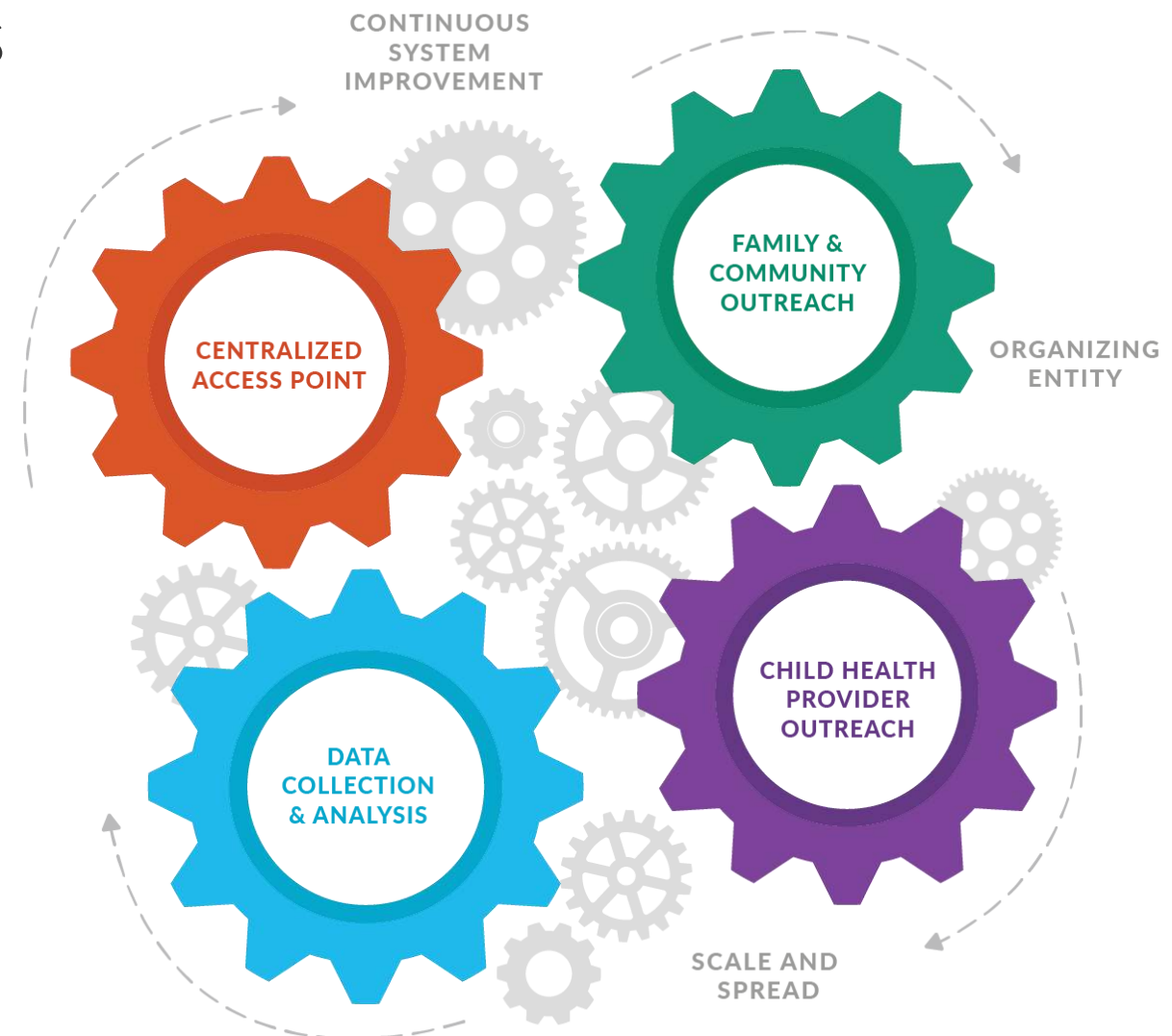


HELP ME GROW SYSTEM MODEL

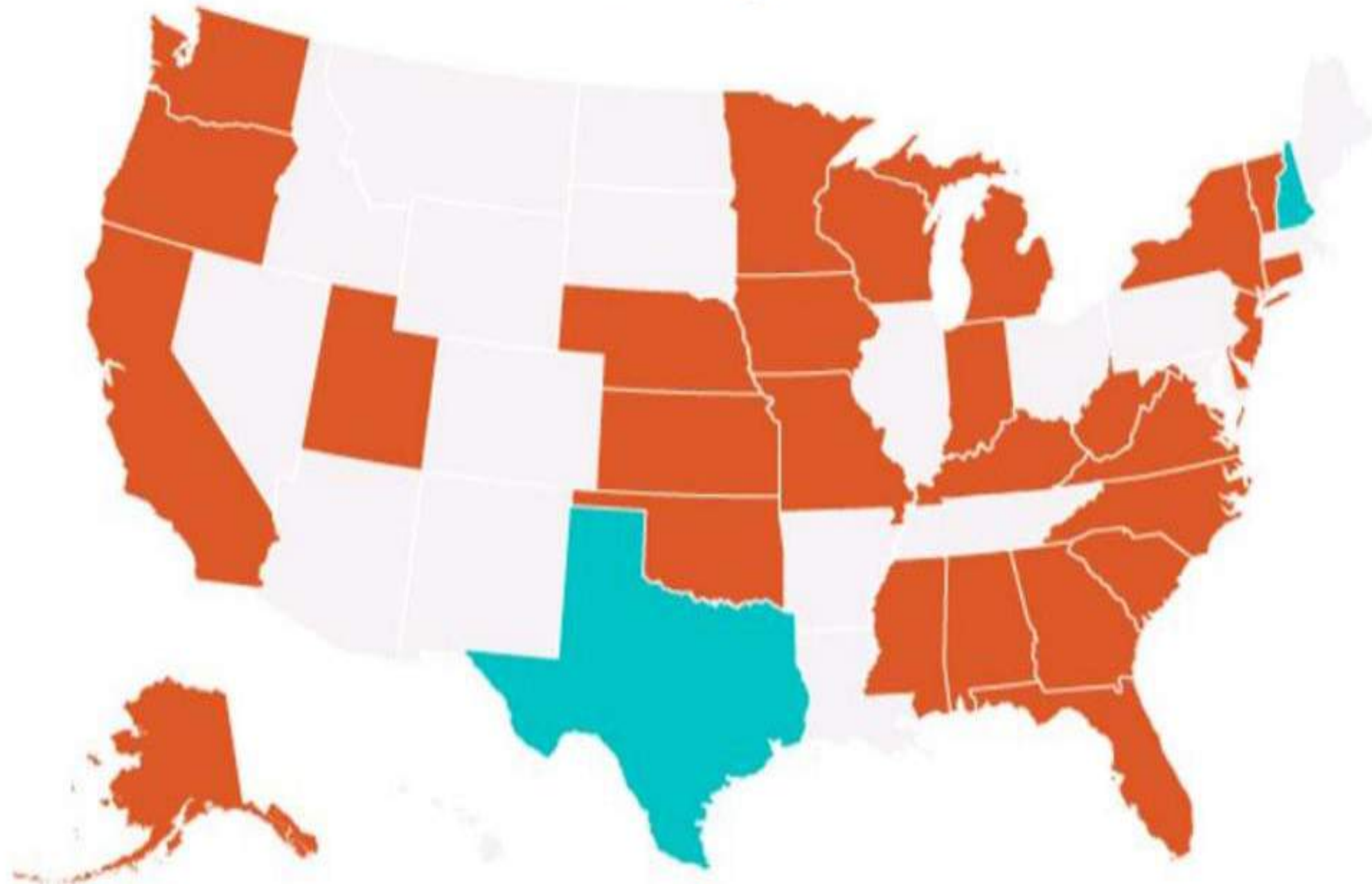
COOPERATION OF FOUR CORE COMPONENTS

A system model that leverages and enhances existing resources in order to develop and enhance a comprehensive approach to early childhood system building in any given community.

It is the **Co-operation** of the core components that defines the system



At the close of 2019, the National Affiliate Network consisted of 104 HMG systems embedded within 31 states across the country and Washington D.C.



HMG's Value During the Pandemic

- Helping families navigate the fragmented system
 - Call Line - 2-1-1
- Helping to meet basic needs
 - Advancing a rapid response to those basic needs
 - Using the data to address system barriers
 - Formula
 - Technology
- Assisting parents & providers with developmental promotion - Books, Balls & Block Virtual Events



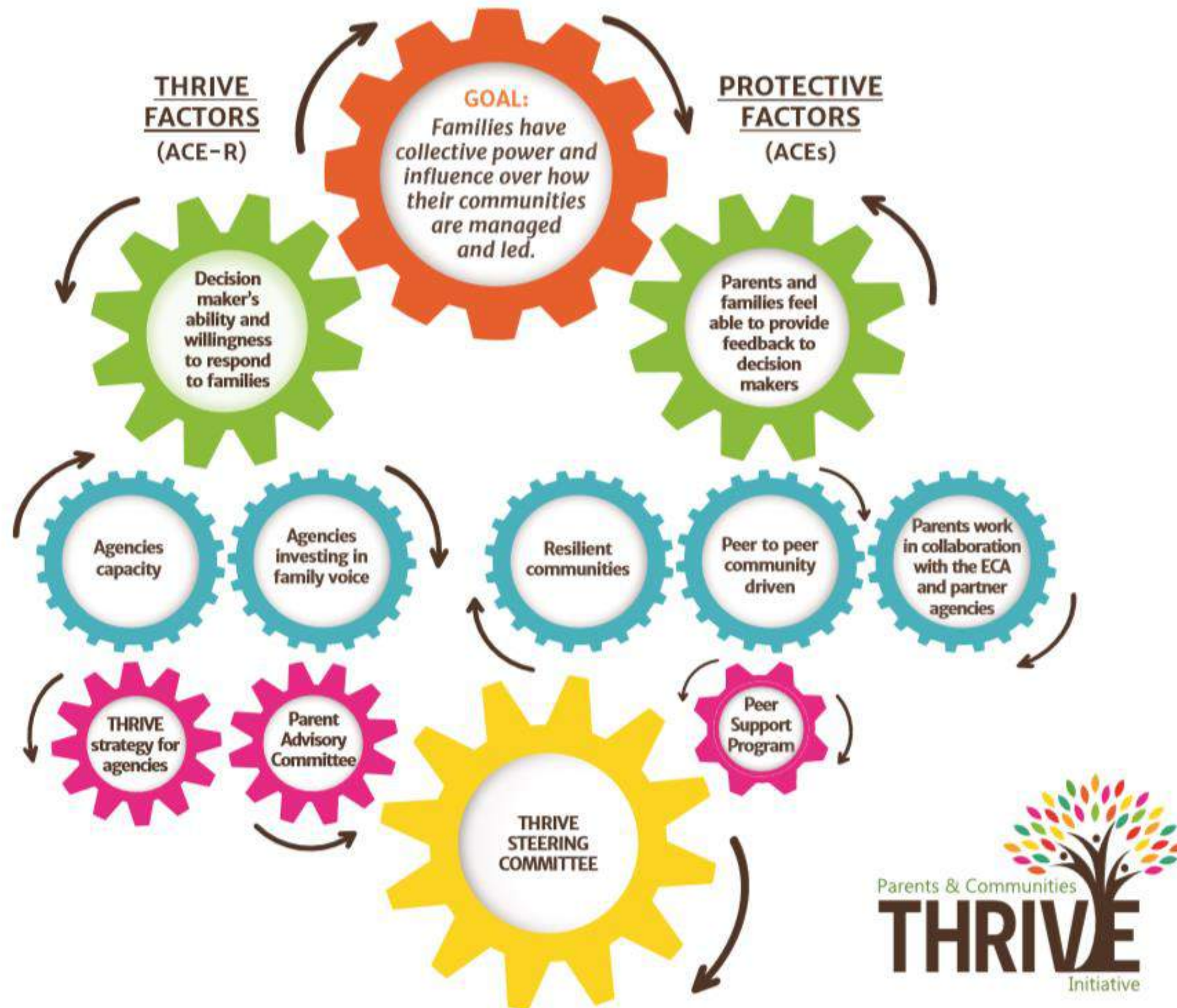
County Investment in HMG Onondaga

- HMG is a **cornerstone initiative** in our early childhood system change work
- **County government leadership true partner** in the work
- **HMG is part of an anti-poverty & equity strategy** - County Executive Ryan McMahon ran for election on an **anti-poverty platform** that included early childhood as top priority





Parents and Communities THRIVE Initiative engages parents to identify community barriers to their success and works with parents and local non-profits to strengthen community programming. Families and parents have collective power over how their communities are managed and led



Building
a Collaborative Early
Learning System that
Centers the Voices of
Parents:

The Early Childhood Alliance
has made great strides in
reducing the
fragmentation of Onondaga
County's early childhood
system, but the parent voice
has been absent from the
table.

There is no common
understanding of parent
leadership within our system
or strategy around best
practice.



Program Reach & Impact



- Conducted landscape scan of 20 partner agencies using CSSP's Parent Leadership Assessment.
- Tool to determine the level of parent involvement in Onondaga County.
- Utilizing human-centered design, 35 parents and caregivers have helped to create THRIVE's peer-to-peer program.
- The steering committee is comprised of parents, non-profit leaders and government stakeholders, while the Parent Advisory Committee is comprised solely of local parents and caregivers.
- Coordinated quarterly online Parent Conversations to offer a space for parents to discuss their experience of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic.

System Building Lessons Learned Over 5 Years

- Identify key strategic people and the best champions of your message. Who is well-regarded? Who is well-respected?
- Learn from other communities.
- Education is a huge part of the work. Help your community understand the issues, and how much they matter to individuals, to families, to society.
- Manage expectations. Remind people that one strategy alone cannot address all needs.
- Coalitions require patience and diplomacy.
- Be strategic, data-driven and make the best use of limited resources.





ECA's System Building Priorities Over the Next 5 Years

- Focus on equity
- Address root causes of disparity
- Co-creating with parents and community
- Disaggregated data for community level data and local programs
- Increase funding in the under-resourced system

"If you want to go fast,
go alone.

If you want to go far,
go together."

- African Proverb



Contact Us

Amy McCluskey, Deputy
Commissioner, DCFS

315-435-7017

Amy.McCluskey@dfa.state.ny.us

Laurie Black, Director ECA

315-436-9857

ecaonondaga@gmail.com

Gina Iliev, Director THRIVE

315-863-8374

ecaonondaga2@gmail.com



Discussion Questions

- Is your county experiencing any budget challenges due to COVID-19?
- What other models have you been using to best meet children and families' needs in your county?
- Are you working with states, cities, and other municipalities to improve coordination on policy and funding efforts?
- How is your county engaging stakeholders and partners? In particular:
 - Business community and local philanthropy
 - Colleges and universities
- Are you leveraging telehealth and other tech approaches and platforms to connect hard-to-reach families with vital services? If so, what are your approaches for expanding these services and reaching families?



CONTACT US

www.countiesforkids.org
info@countiesforkids.org

Arabella Pluta-Ehlers, Program Manager
202.942.4227 | aplutaehlers@naco.org



Thank you!



© NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC.

660 North Capitol St. NW | Suite 400 | Washington, D.C. 20001
202.393.6226 | www.NACo.org

fb.com/NACoDC | [@NACoTweets](https://twitter.com/NACoTweets)
youtube.com/NACoVideo | www.NACo.org/LinkedIn