



ALL OUR KIN INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

All Our Kin, Inc. Annual Report 2009

"My life has been changed by All Our Kin. AOK supported my child care provider's licensing, and helped her prepare a wonderful space for children. They offer her many supports, and she shares all of her knowledge of parenting and child development with me and my children. I feel confident leaving my children in her care.... All Our Kin helps us both, me and my child care provider, to do our jobs."—AOK parent

All Our Kin, Inc., a New Haven-based nonprofit organization, trains, supports and sustains community child care providers in order to ensure that children and families have the foundations necessary for future success. Since 1999, we have worked on behalf of a community of children's first teachers, including parents, licensed family child care providers, unlicensed caregivers, and relatives and neighbors who provide informal care to children.

Because of the support of donors like you, we now serve over 250 parents and providers who touch the lives of nearly 1,500 children. Our program has become a model throughout the state and, increasingly, the nation.

Filling a Critical Need

In Connecticut, there is an acute shortage of childcare. The state's families have a need for almost 160,000 child care spaces, but licensed centers can only accommodate approximately 72,000 children. Licensed family child cares can provide space for less than 17,000 children. In New Haven alone, there is a shortfall of almost 3,000 licensed child care spaces for infants and toddlers. Home-based providers play a crucial role as the teachers of our youngest and most vulnerable children and in providing urgently needed child care spaces. In New Haven, they care for 68% of infants and toddlers, and as many as 77% of low-income children.

We work with a diverse group of predominantly low-income parents and providers from a range of neighborhoods and towns in the greater New Haven area. Ninety-eight percent of the providers and parents we serve are female; they range from ages 18 to 70. Approximately 45% are African-American, 50% are Latina and 5% are white or other. All Our Kin works directly with providers serving our lowest-income children: 72% of the children in their care qualify for Care4Kids subsidies, state funding only available to low-income working families and families on public assistance. Describing our work, Connecticut Voices for Children explains, "*projects like [All Our Kin's] which target family child care providers reach a segment of the population who are particularly in need of workforce development, and who are particularly hard to reach: mainly women with low levels of education, many of whom are immigrants and/or for whom English is a second language.*"

All Our Kin is simultaneously increasing the number and quality of child care choices available to working women throughout the region and ensuring all young children have the early learning experiences that will prepare them for success throughout their lives. We are helping professionalize the female-dominated field of child care. Through increased revenues, decreased fear of regulatory authorities and greater opportunities to join networks of early childhood education professionals, providers can create better lives for themselves, their children and their communities.

Our Programs

All Our Kin invests in children's first teachers through innovative teaching and learning models that support and engage child care providers from all walks of life and at every stage of their personal and professional development.

Step 1: The Toolkit Program. All Our Kin provides materials, mentorship and support to help unlicensed family, friend and neighbor caregivers meet health and safety standards, fulfill state licensing requirements, and become part of a professional community of child care providers. When a child care provider becomes licensed by the state, we know that the program meets health and safety standards and operates under state supervision. The result: more children in greater New Haven spend the day in safe, healthy settings. Licensing is also transformative for providers. Their earnings increase; they gain pride and professionalism; and they are able to serve more children, and serve them better, with the equipment and training they need to provide safe, educational child care.

Step 2: The Family Child Care Mentor Project. Once a participant receives her family child care license, she begins work with a skilled master teacher who visits her program and offers individual coaching and support specifically for new child care providers. The mentor covers a range of basic educational topics, including an overview of how children grow and learn, how to design curriculum, choosing appropriate materials, and family engagement.

Step 3: The Family Child Care Network. The provider then transitions to the Family Child Care Network, which offers educational mentorship, professional development, advocacy and leadership opportunities, and a network of relationships with other family child care providers. The Family Child Care Network is a high-touch program built on best practices in early childhood consultation and teacher mentoring grounded in the Connecticut Early Learning Guidelines. A hallmark of the All Our Kin network is the program visit, in which early childhood consultants visit family child cares to lead model lessons, demonstrate new strategies, and reflect with providers on their work. Consultants bring books and materials, professional articles, and curriculum ideas, and offer suggestions to enhance children's learning. Consultants and providers reflect together on the work and collaborate on setting goals for continuous improvement.

Providers in the Network also come together for monthly meetings, workshops and trainings, including Child Development Associate training, and an annual professional development conference. They have access to a "warm line" they can call for advice at any time. In addition, All Our Kin offers financial management and education training, together with a microcredit loan program for family child care providers. In 2010, All Our Kin launched an Early Head Start program, offering federally-funded slots in qualifying family child care programs to needy families. All services are bilingual.

Outcomes

All Our Kin increases the supply of quality child care in the community. Between 2000 and 2007, Connecticut lost more than 32% of its family child care programs. This translated into 7,500 fewer child care spaces for Connecticut's families. In New Haven the story was very different. Thanks to All Our Kin's efforts, the number of licensed family child care programs increased by nearly 27% in New Haven during the same period. The result: more affordable quality choices available for children and families.

All Our Kin increases provider revenue and helps providers build better lives for their own families. Upon entry into the Toolkit Project, participants' average annual income is \$3,750; immediately after completing the project, average income rises to \$12,500; and twelve months later, average annual income is \$20,000. This is an invaluable **233% increase in income** from project entry to project completion, and an additional **60% increase** 12 months post-project completion.

All Our Kin increases the quality of family child care. Research shows that raising the quality of child care can increase children's school readiness by 50%. Through All Our Kin's child development classes, workshops and hands-on educational program visits, family child care providers gain greater knowledge of child development and learn new strategies for supporting children and families. Providers become part of professional networks with access to resources, information and ongoing support. Evaluations of provider practice find that 97% of All Our Kin's family child care programs demonstrate significant increases in quality.

Notable Events in 2009

Early Head Start: In partnership with the United Way of Greater New Haven, All Our Kin has secured competitive federal stimulus dollars to provide Early Head Start child care spaces in family child care programs. Through the grant, All Our Kin will: (1) continue providing quality enhancement services to participating family child care providers; (2) pay providers a higher, and fairer, rate than is currently available through the state's child care subsidy program; and (3) provide comprehensive services, including physical and mental health services, to the children and families in the program. We are deepening and enriching the supportive services we offer families. We have hired a family advocate who will counsel parents and connect them to a range of vital community resources; contracted a nurse consultant, who will work with providers and parents to support the physical and mental health of the infants and toddlers in their care; and strengthened our partnerships with agencies across New Haven. Our goal: to build an interconnected network of resources that can support and sustain our youngest children and neediest families.

The Family Child Care Loan Fund/Entrepreneurship Training: In 2009, All Our Kin launched a microcredit program designed to offer zero-interest loans to licensed home-based family child care providers in All Our Kin's Family Child Care Network. Limited funds hamper providers in their efforts to purchase materials and supplies, make capital investments or pursue professional development opportunities. Access to interest-free microcredit makes an enormous difference in their ability to improve program quality and build sustainable businesses. Loans can be used to improve materials, equipment and capital needed to run a quality family child care program. For example, funds from loans can purchase sand and water tables; books and bookshelves; cots; carpeting; vans and car seats for field trips; additional child-sized sinks and toilets for bathrooms; fenced-in play areas and outdoor play equipment; and ramps for wheelchair access. Improvements like

these improve the quality of care children in these programs receive and make the family child care programs more attractive to families and more viable as businesses. Program improvements can also qualify providers for NAFCC (National Association of Family Child Care) accreditation. This accreditation can be used to market their businesses and also qualifies the providers to receive higher state subsidy payments for low-income children in their programs.

The project includes a financial education and training component. For the first time in Connecticut, All Our Kin pioneered the First Step Fund's thirty-six hour "Family Child Care Entrepreneurship" training program, a bilingual (Spanish-English) business curriculum created in conjunction with the Kellogg Foundation. The course is mandatory for loan recipients, but is open to all members of the Family Child Care Network. Fifty-five providers have already completed the course. We began offering it anew in its bilingual format during mid-2010.

Building Capacity in Other Communities: With the support of the Graustein Memorial Fund and the Connecticut Department of Social Services, we have created a plan to build the capacity of other communities throughout Connecticut who are eager to emulate All Our Kin's work and success with family child care providers. We will be expanding the Toolkit Project to 2 additional communities in Connecticut and training up to 20 more.

Press and Awards: In 2010, GreatNonprofits.org listed All Our Kin as a "Top Rated Job Training & Placement Nonprofit" in its "Great Guide to Giving & Volunteering." In 2009, All Our Kin's founders, Jessica Sager and Janna Wagner, received the "Working Class Hero" award from Miller-McCune Magazine.

Thank you for partnering with us to support the children and families of greater New Haven!