



for **ADVOCATES**[®]
CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY

Giving Every Child A Chance[®]

Dear Friend,



Cecilia Zalkind
President & CEO



Sara Thom
Chair, Board of
Trustees

The past months have challenged us in so many ways. Yet despite the COVID-19 pandemic, our commitment to children has remained steadfast as always. Amidst fast-moving policies, Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) has kept a pulse on the daily new developments and provided families, child care providers and advocacy partners with resources and tools during these changing times. This included webinars, guides, fact sheets, blogs and a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 updates. And when state leaders were determining next steps for policy decisions, ACNJ made sure that the voices of children and families were heard.

As a result, child care is now part of the conversation in our state's economic recovery. Recognizing the importance of supporting the workforce behind the workforce, Governor Murphy dedicated \$313 million in federal funding to support New Jersey's child care system during the pandemic. In addition, we kept up the drumbeat on the importance of counting every New Jersey resident in the Census, exceeding the state's 1990, 2000 and 2010 self-response rates.

Our wins are the direct result of your support, your voice and your advocacy. Though this is a challenging time, it is also a time of opportunity. We have seen sound policymaking and funding decisions from state leaders in the midst of this pandemic. We have seen child protective services and the courts move to a virtual system, working diligently to ensure that children are safe and healthy and keeping parents engaged in the process. Still, there is much more work to be done. We look forward to reimagining child care, advancing positive policies and creating brighter futures for New Jersey's children.

HIGHLIGHTS

2019

December

- ACNJ's 4th annual celebration focused on the 2020 Census and the once-in-a-decade opportunity to make kids count. The event also honored child care providers and advocates across the state, whose stories provided a powerful narrative to help ACNJ make the case for increased state child care funding.



Honorees left to right: Winifred Smith-Jenkins (Director, Zadie's Early Childhood Center), Colleen Hicks (parent advocate), Jamila Jendayi (parent advocate), Heidi Zaentz (Director, Monmouth Day Care), Naome Dunnell (parent advocate), Carl Boyd (parent advocate). Honorees not pictured: Jesse Burns (Executive Director, League of Women Voters of NJ), Valerie Frost-Lewis (Director, Peppermint Tree Child Development Center), Tracy Miller (parent advocate), Mahasin Parker (parent advocate), Sister Donna Minster (Director, Camden County Department of Children Services), Candace Raymond (Director, Happy Today and Bright Tomorrow Child Care Center).

2020

January

- The Murphy Administration announces a 50 percent reduction in copayments for parents who receive state child care assistance, saving NJ families \$23 million per year.
- ACNJ applauds signing juvenile justice legislation, which includes eliminating mandatory minimums and fines as a penalty for juvenile offenders, as well as improving the standards governing parole and revocation.
- ACNJ and its partners at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) begin parent/community outreach efforts with the NJPTA, the County Councils for Young Children and the New Jersey School Boards Association, resulting in more districts applying for public preschool funding than ever before.



February

- Senate President Steve Sweeney speaks at the South Jersey Kids Count Forum, a gathering of more than 100 community advocates to discuss the latest data surrounding children in the Garden State.
- ACNJ emphasizes the importance of the Census to the Assembly Women and Children Legislative Committee at the Statehouse. In response to our testimony, Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera (D-Camden, Gloucester) sponsored two resolutions to increase Census participation.

NJ Spotlight News

NJ Pumps Up Its Efforts for Complete Count on 2020 Census

COLLEEN O'DEA, SENIOR WRITER | FEBRUARY 25, 2020

There's a lot riding on the census, starting with federal funds and possibly a seat in Congress. And New Jersey has some populations and communities that may prove hard to count.



Going the Distance for Children

- ▶ **22** ACNJ-hosted webinars, with more than 5,000 attendees
- ▶ **247** parents/caregivers and professionals receiving information and assistance regarding the education rights of children
- ▶ **409** parents, caregivers and advocates trained on education law and advocacy
- ▶ **4,830** early childhood champions engaged in direct advocacy

Navigating the Changing Landscape of the Pandemic

How can we keep children, families and child care staff safe while parents return to work during the pandemic? How will the needs of students with disability services be met in the 2020-2021 school year? How can professionals supporting families recognize and tune in to their own needs during these changing and uncertain times? ACNJ answered these questions and more by providing resources and webinars to empower parents and professionals who work directly with children.

14,000+
visits to ACNJ's
COVID-19 resource
webpages

Virtual Events and Webinars: ----->

Child Care/Early Childhood

- Child Care and COVID-19: FACEBOOK LIVE Q & A on Financial Resources
- Session II Live Q & A Child Care and COVID-19: State and Federal Supports
- Session III Understanding Unemployment – Benefits for the Child Care Community
- Reopening Child Care in New Jersey Webinar Series I Creating a Blueprint for Reopening
- Reopening Child Care in New Jersey Webinar Series II Operation Readiness: Implementing the New Guidelines
- Reopening Child Care in New Jersey Webinar Series III Employer Rights: Getting your Staff Back to Work
- Family Child Care Summit Webinar
- Unlocking Potential, A Roadmap to Making NJ the Safest, Healthiest and Most Supportive Place to Give Birth and Raise a Family
- Child Care and the Pandemic: A Virtual Parent Town Hall Discussion
- Panel of Motherhood: The Revision of Birth, Bringing Moms to the Table
- Third Annual Strolling Thunder
- Teachable Moments at Home: Educating Our Littlest Learners in partnership with the Institute for Families at Rutgers University School of Social Work
- CACFP 101 for Child Care Programs

March

- **Newark Kids Count 2020** provides a snapshot of child well-being in the state's largest city. The report features a special section on the importance of the Census.



- **At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ACNJ calls for closures of child care centers across NJ**, while also urging the state to address the immediate needs of the state's fragile child care system.
- **ACNJ hosts the first of many webinars equipping child care providers with the resources and tools** they need to help navigate unemployment and small business loans.

April

- **On National Census Day (April 1), ACNJ encourages Garden State residents to "make it count,"** hosting live streamed book readings and an "ask me anything about the Census" live Q & A session.
- **Beginning with the offices of Sen. Bob Menendez and Rep. Albio Sires, ACNJ hosts** its first series of congressional visits, allowing child care providers to share their stories of how COVID-19 has devastated the child care industry.

May

- **ACNJ facilitates a virtual meeting between child care providers and state officials,** including commissioners from the NJ Departments of Children and Families and Human Services, on the important role child care plays in rebuilding our economy.
- **ACNJ and NJ Association for the Education of Young Children use feedback from child care educators to provide the Murphy administration with policy recommendations,** resulting in a state reopening plan that includes \$20 million in health and safety grants for child care and youth programs.

Reopening Child Care in NJ
LIVE
Webinar Series

Operation Readiness:
The nuts & bolts of implementing the new guidelines.
Tuesday, June 9th
@ 1:00 p.m.

WATCH LIVE ON FACEBOOK @ACNFKIDS

Creating a Blueprint for Reopening
Friday, June 5th
@ 2:00 p.m.

Employer Rights:
Obligations for rehiring and training staff
Thursday, June 11th
@ 1:00 p.m.

June

- **In partnership with Programs for Parents, ACNJ launches the Reopening Child Care in NJ webinar series,** discussing the nuts and bolts of implementing the new health and safety guidelines, as well as preparing families to return to their classrooms.



- **ACNJ's release of *Unlocking Potential*, funded by the Pritzker Children's Initiative,** announces a statewide plan to expand services to 27,000 more infants and toddlers in low-income families by 2023.

View ACNJ's webinars
by visiting acnj.org

Census

- The Census is Here: What You Need to Know
- Facebook Live Chat: We Count Book Reading
- Making New Jersey Count: The Media's Role in the 2020 Census
- Special Reading of We Count With Diane Davis
- Census Push Week – Crash Course in Event Planning

Child Safety and Well-Being

- **#WeCan:** A Discussion with the NJ Department of Children and Families and Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey Preserving Connections and Preventing Child Abuse During COVID-19
- Attunement and Resiliency in the Midst of Uncertainty in partnership with the Institute for Families at Rutgers University School of Social Work
- The Role of the Mental Health Clinician
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families 2020 Fall Forum Discussions

Driving *Think Babies*™ advocacy efforts at the state and federal level

Right at the start of the pandemic, ACNJ addressed the immediate needs of the state's child care system when parents, providers and policymakers were looking for guidance, and provided essential information for planning and decision-making. Through online surveys, phone calls and social media, we engaged parents and caregivers to share their first-hand experiences. These stories helped fuel our effective advocacy efforts and elevate the conversation.

Even before the pandemic, a significant part of ACNJ's work focused on early childhood advocacy, pushing lawmakers to *Think Babies* when making decisions. We are a proud partner of the national ZERO TO THREE *Think Babies* Campaign and the Pritzker Children's Initiative. At the state level, ACNJ is also the lead advocacy organization in the Reimagine Child Care Campaign, advocating for affordable high-quality infant and toddler child care for every New Jersey child.

1,179 survey responses from parents and child care providers

60 child care providers attending Zoom meetings with aides from 11 congressional districts

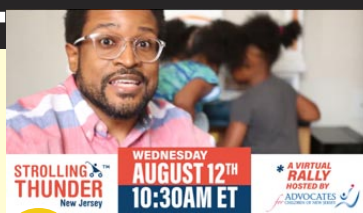
3,000+ messages of support urging Congress to fund child care

3,000+ early childhood professionals participating in ACNJ's webinars aimed at helping our essential child care sector navigate unemployment, small business loans and reopening

\$313 million in federal funding allocated to address child care during the pandemic

- To discuss ideas and advance policy recommendations for strengthening family child care, ACNJ convenes a virtual NJ Family Child Care Summit.

- ACNJ helps organize and testify on the impact of COVID-19 on child care before members of the Assembly Women and Children Committee.



August

- ACNJ's third annual **Strolling Thunder NJ 2020**, held virtually, reaches more than 1,500 early childhood advocates across the state.
- **Reimagine Child Care** is launched.



July

- NJ's Strengthened Paid Family Leave goes into effect, allowing parents more time to bond with their newborns.

September

- Governor Murphy signs a \$32.7 billion FY2021 budget into law. The budget also allocated \$250, which covers all planned spending between October 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. State funding includes:

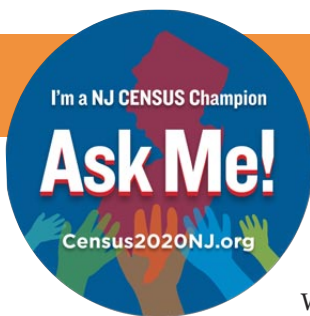
- Expansion of the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to include more young adults,
- \$10 million for preschool expansion,
- \$25 million in extraordinary special education funding for school districts,
- \$3 million to school lunch aid to make meals free for more students, and
- \$5 million to the lead hazard remediation fund.

The budget also includes \$250 million in federal dollars to address child care during the pandemic, including \$150 million in tuition assistance for school-aged children (ages 5-13).

December

- Join us for our annual breakfast for an insightful and inspiring discussion on racial equity and child advocacy in the current political climate. The event features Bruce Lesley (President, First Focus on Children), Dr. Myra Jones-Taylor (Chief Policy Officer, ZERO TO THREE) and Michael Hill (News Correspondent). Visit acnj.org to register.

- The release of ACNJ's **2020 NJ Kids Count County Pocket Guide** not only measures the state of children in each of the 21 counties, but also serves as a baseline to track the effects of the pandemic moving forward.



On the Move to Get Out The Count!

Spearheading the statewide non-profit Census coalition, ACNJ worked tirelessly with national groups, state officials and community leaders to ensure an accurate count in the 2020 Census.

We crisscrossed the state presenting to county/local governments, state legislators, early childhood stakeholder groups and advocates.

When it became clear that in-person outreach events were no longer feasible due to COVID, we pivoted. Instead of promoting the Census inside classrooms, during church services, city functions, parades and at non-profit events, we used social media and digital messaging to get the word out that everybody counts.

NJ's Final 2020 Census
Self-Response Rate:

69.5%

beating out its rates
in 2010, 2000
and 1990.

Census by the Numbers

30 participants who joined ACNJ's Census webinar for local media, leading to articles and news clips in English, Spanish and more.

300+ Census trainings and presentations across all of New Jersey's 21 counties.

1,886 viewers in ACNJ's storytelling of the Census children's book, "We Count," including a guest reading from Broadway actor Diane Davis, who plays Ginny Potter in the production *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

10,000 text messages sent to encourage Census response.

100,000+ Census outreach materials distributed.



ACNJ Census Outreach Associates Weslyne Zizzamia (left) and Miguelina Maldonado (right) at an outreach event.



About Us

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 40 years. A cornerstone of ACNJ's success is our independence. We are non-partisan and accept no state funding for advocacy, giving us the freedom to speak up for children who have no voice and no vote.

Our work results in:

- better laws and policies,
- more effective funding and
- stronger services for children and families.

*This means more children are given the chance to grow up **safe, healthy** and **educated**.*

Want to Connect with ACNJ?



@ACNJForKids



www.acnj.org

A heartfelt thank you to all of our supporters for your steadfast dedication to New Jersey's children and for your generous donations to ACNJ in 2019. Our work would not be possible without you.

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