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Working to change the future of the Bronx through high-quality early child care

Grant Detail

Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp.

Bronx, New York, United States

Improve the quality of home-based child care South Bronx, N.Y., by strengthening providers' earning potential, increasing access to healthy food/activities and strengthening early childhood education and development
Educated Kids

May 1, 2014 - April 30, 2017 | \$770,000



Families in parts of the south Bronx of New York face a host of challenges, including the lowest median incomes in New York City and the highest rates of single-mother-led homes and children living in poverty.

That's why leaders at the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) see that building a healthy, vibrant community requires approaches that address the interconnected needs of families. It's not just about addressing housing and community development to meet families' current physical needs; the future of the Bronx lies in building stronger families and a better future for children.

One of the innovative ways WHEDco is doing just that is with the Home-Based Child Care (HBCC) Training Institute, which addresses multiple needs simultaneously: improving quality and access to early learning and child care for families, providing better nutrition for low-income preschoolers and strengthening the income and economic security of women and families. An investment of \$770,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is now helping them to increase the impact of HBCC.

“We are now able to expand the quality of training and the curriculum and tools we use, as well as reach a wider audience,” said Diana Perez, vice president of child care services at WHEDco. “We are going to be able to expand the capacity of our food program, as well as improve our parent engagement work – helping our providers to better engage parents as partners in their children’s education now and into their school years.”

At its core, HBCC focuses on growing and strengthening the child care microbusinesses that provide essential services to families in the Bronx and nearby boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. The child care providers who are part of WHEDco’s network, mostly minority and immigrant women, receive training that helps them build and grow their business, increasing both their earnings and the quality of instruction and nutrition they offer the children they serve. Trainings cover topics including child development, health and safety, nutrition, marketing, accounting, taxes, family day care regulations, contracts and policies and liability insurance.

"The courses are excellent," said Maryann White, a child care provider in the WHEDco network. "Today, I talked to a tax preparer. Before, I wouldn't have been able to communicate with him at all. Before, I would have nodded my head, walked away and had no idea what he was talking about. Now, as I'm talking to him, he was so surprised at what I knew, that he asked me if I was a tax preparer!"



HBCC provides training to child care microentrepreneurs in personal and business finance (including support for informal providers who wish to earn their licenses and grow their incomes), how to become eligible for increased subsidized child care payments, and how to develop business models that increase their earnings and ability to grow. Child care providers also enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program which supports and subsidizes

providers who offer nutritious foods and encourage physical activity to combat the poor health outcomes frequently faced by low-income children. The collective income of their network of women-run businesses is generating over \$15 million for the local economy. Increased business earnings translate into increased incomes for the women who own these microbusinesses, and in turn puts them on a solid path out of unemployment and/or poverty and toward economic independence and long-term security for them and their own families.

Licensed child care providers earn 35-42 percent more per child than informal providers can receive. And by becoming licensed, they can also triple or quadruple the number of children they serve.

“We helped one of our providers prepare for her licensing exam,” said Perez. “We conducted a home visit to verify that she was in compliance with the standards, offered her access to CACFP and helped her complete 10 hours of training for her exempt provider license. She is now licensed as a group provider running a full-time program serving 12 children during the day, plus four after school, and she has hired staff. She seeks to support those families who are in the shelter system, as she once was, to help them be able to look for work. It’s her way of giving back.”

By improving the quality of child care in the Bronx, HBCC is also supporting positive educational outcomes for children who, studies show, benefit greatly from high-quality early learning over their lifetimes. HBCC’s more than 400 licensed providers are developing home-based programs where children access evidence-based education curricula, nutritious meals and snacks, indoor and outdoor physical activity and reduced screen time and other social-emotional strengthening activities.

Because of WHEDco’s efforts, working parents in the Bronx have increased access to affordable, high-quality care for their children. Additionally, WHEDco helps their providers with training to better engage families in their children’s education, nutrition and preparation for kindergarten and beyond.

Davon Russell, executive vice president of WHEDco, said, “We now know how critical the early years are. Before, some of these kids would have just been in babysitting environments, and now their experience is completely different. They are receiving a rich academic curriculum, nutritious foods and are being socialized well. The parents are benefitting from learning about their child’s development from skilled providers who can assess the child’s progress and relay that information to the parent. This helps the parents tremendously.”

White said the impact of WHEDco's program and staff goes way beyond the benefits she has received from their training. "Yes, the income has changed my life. I don't live paycheck to paycheck. But it's not about the income. There is a lot of love from them that goes way beyond their work. They make people feel great. What they do is just beautiful!"

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