



Finger Lakes Performing Provider System (FLPPS) awards grant to Children's Institute



Children's Institute is pleased to announce a \$1.4 million grant from the Finger Lakes Performing Provider System (FLPPS) to expand our GROW-Rochester program and screen more children throughout Monroe and surrounding counties. FLPPS is helping to transform the Medicaid healthcare delivery system in our region with 19 hospitals, 6,700 healthcare providers, and approximately 600 healthcare and community-based organizations as partners. Their goal is to reduce avoidable hospital use by 25% and associated costs, increase patient and provider satisfaction, and improve health outcomes while preparing their partners for the transition to Value Based Payment.

"My initial thought when I found out that Gabby did not pass her vision screening was worry and fear that my daughter would have damaged eye sight for life. The exam by the eye doctor helped to pinpoint exactly what was wrong with Gabby's vision. I did not know that she had an astigmatism and that she needed glasses to correct it. When she wears her glasses her behavior seems to be more focused, now she does not need to sit so close to the television, and she seems more interested in school work. I am very thankful for the Early Vision Screening program. Without it my daughter's vision would not have been corrected." –GABBY'S PARENT

GROW-Rochester is presently a functioning comprehensive screening and referral initiative serving primarily 3-year-old children in the City of Rochester. GROW-Rochester provides screenings to identify needs in vision; thinking, language, and communication skills; dental; hearing; movement skills; and social/emotional development. In addition, it monitors follow-up services for

children and their families until developmental needs are addressed. Since its launch in 2015, GROW-Rochester has screened 4,000 children. Among those children screened, up to 27% were identified with potential developmental concerns and referred for rescreening, further assessment, and/or services.

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A note from the director

There are times we all get confirmation that we've made the right decision at the right time. For me, as I transition to a new role as a researcher at Children's Institute, my goal is to ensure that the next director walks into a thriving organization with great potential ahead. With the decision by FLPPS (Finger Lakes Performing Provider System) to award GROW-Rochester \$1.4 million this year, I am excited to see how this program can be scaled up to screen even more children in western New York.

This grant puts in place standards for screenings that have been determined by experts within the community. It will fund an online parent portal where parents can find specific information about their child's screening as well as a source of referral information for needed connections with providers. The funding also includes a vehicle/bus that will allow us to reach rural populations by setting up screening events in their towns—this is an exciting new development for Children's Institute—something we have not done before, but has tremendous potential!

And finally, we are seeing insurance carriers become a part of this program by recognizing the value of screening young children outside of



normal pediatrician visits and paying providers for this service. This will have a significant impact on our ability to screen more children.

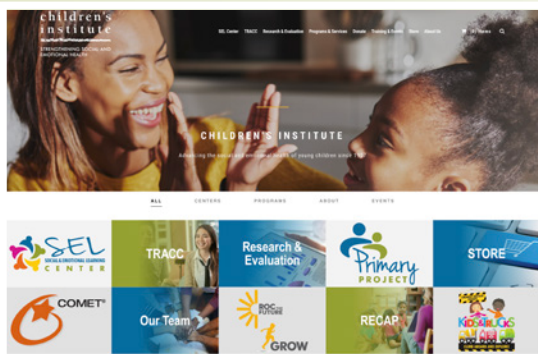
As I look back on my time here at Children's Institute, my hope is that I have left this wonderful organization in a financially stable position, ready to explore future needs in the community. I am sure that our next executive director will hit the ground running and start Children's Institute's next chapter just as I did 25 years ago.

...and on a personal note

As my time as executive director winds down, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped support Children's Institute throughout the years. We have had

some ups and downs over the years but one thing has remained constant—a dedication and commitment to improving children's lives in our community and beyond. I have had the privilege of working with many talented people throughout my career including the staff at Children's Institute as well as numerous others at child-serving non-profits, schools, and government. I will always remember the teamwork that drove results. As I transition to my new role focusing on whole child development and how we can improve the systems surrounding young children's well-being, I look forward to seeing Children's Institute continue to grow under new leadership.

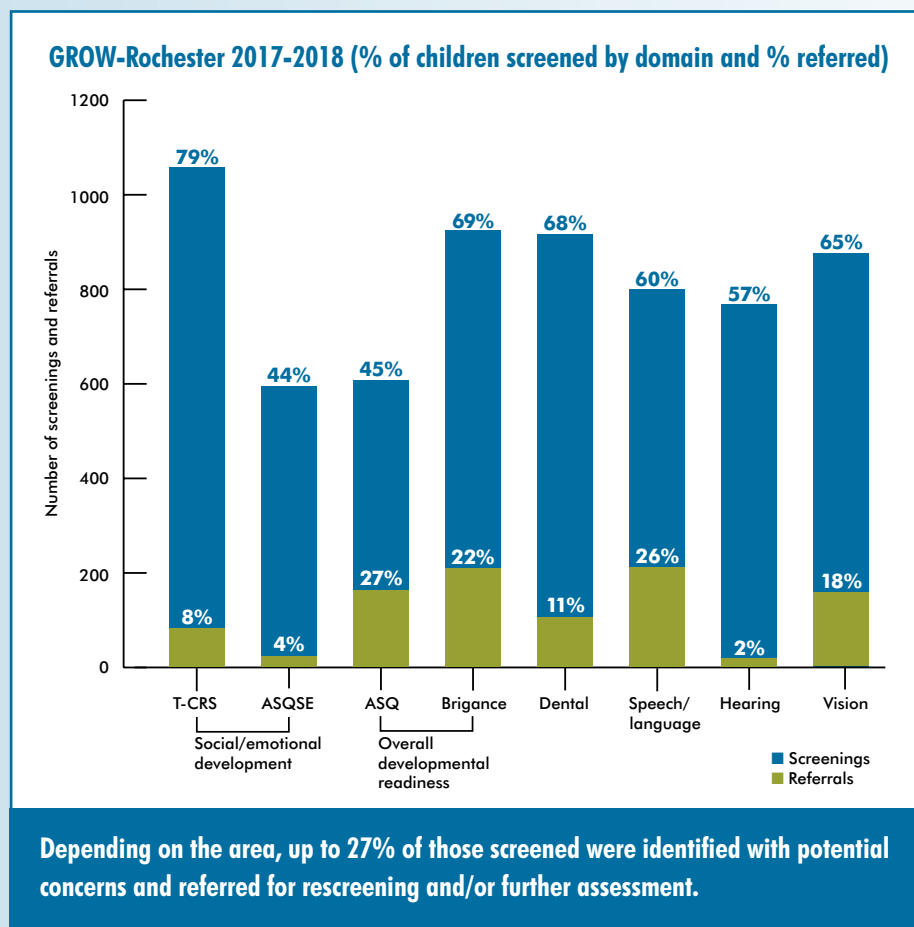
—A. DIRK HIGHTOWER, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Our website has a new look!
Please visit us at
www.childrensinstitute.net
for the latest news, events,
and blogs.**



St. John Fisher College recently announced that Dirk Hightower is one of this year's President's Medal recipients for his strong leadership in our community and the broad impact of his work. This award will be presented at their upcoming graduation ceremony.



With the support from FLPPS over the next year, GROW-Rochester will now be able to offer parents more information with an online parent portal through the COMET website; improve the functionality and availability of data to support treatments, insurance

GROW-Rochester community partners:

- Action for a Better Community
- Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- City of Rochester
- Early Childhood Education Quality Council (ECEQC) Centers
- Greater Rochester Health Foundation
- Greater Rochester Quality Council
- Hillside/Family Resource Centers
- Nazareth College
- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- Rochester City School District
- Rochester Hearing and Speech
- Rochester Regional Health
- St. John Fisher College
- The Children’s Agenda
- United Way of Greater Rochester
- University of Rochester Medical Center

needs, and participants; reach out to more families through a targeted campaign; and bring screenings directly to difficult-to-reach populations through a customized vehicle.

These efforts will allow for expanding the reach of GROW-Rochester and the number of children served—up to 20,000 children a year. We anticipate that this initiative will create cost savings for the healthcare industry, community, and families because of the value of prevention and early identification of needs and coordination with existing service providers to deliver timely services.

Some common questions from parents include:

“What is “screening?”

Screening is a simple check of how each child is growing and developing. In addition to identifying children’s skills and strengths, screening finds possible health or learning concerns. When concerns are

GROW-Rochester has recently joined ‘Help Me Grow,’ a national organization working with a coalition of states, communities, and individuals invested in early childhood systems that optimally serve all families and children.

identified, children can get the help they need before they start or continue in pre-kindergarten.

“Why would my child need to be screened—we go to the doctor?”

Birth to age five is a time of rapid growth and learning for young children. Screening is done in addition to regular visits to the doctor. With the parent’s signed permission, we share screening information with the child’s doctor to support each child’s healthy development.

“How much does this cost?”

Screening by GROW-Rochester is free to parents.

One of the more visible aspects of this grant will be the vehicle purchase and customization. Many other organizations, such as the Red Cross Bloodmobile, use customized buses to offer easy access to their services and reach hard-to-serve communities. We are continuing to look at the various screening needs for children within the 13 counties surrounding and including Monroe County to determine the specifications for this vehicle and hope to have it on the road by fall, 2019.

Children’s Institute’s pursuit of positively impacting the social and emotional health of children in our community through our GROW program is a natural fit with FLPPS and we are excited to scale up our efforts and screen children throughout Monroe and surrounding counties. It is our strong belief that this will promote significant system transformation of preventive health services for our youngest children.

The impact of our work

In a randomized controlled study in a mid-size urban school district, children with poor attendance history who received Primary Project had a superior attendance rate at the end of the school year than comparable peers who did not receive Primary Project.

Educators and school personnel report the following for

students

who participate in Primary Project:

- Improved attendance
- Better ability to focus and participate in class
- Improved confidence and social skills

Educators and school personnel report the following for

classrooms

that participate in Primary Project:

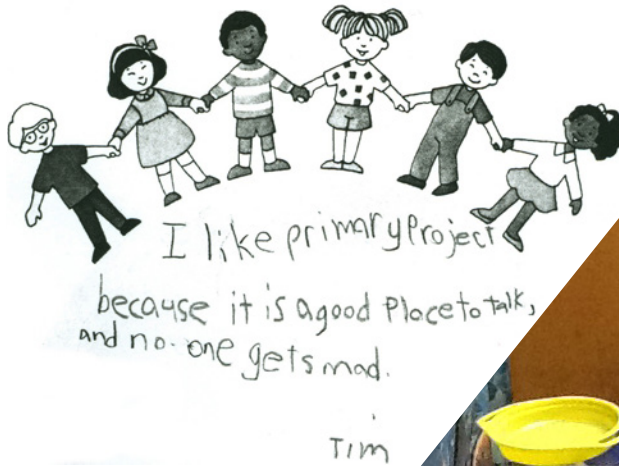
- Improved classroom operations
- Increased time for educational activities due to a decrease in behavioral needs requiring attention
- Fewer disciplinary incidents

All children need social and emotional skills to succeed in life

Children's Institute is grateful for the ongoing support from New York State legislators for Primary Project. There are currently 134 elementary schools across New York State that offer Primary Project to their students with many others interested in learning more. Children's Institute's expertise in early childhood development helps young children across New York State strengthen their social and emotional health through effective prevention and early intervention programs. For over 60 years, Children's Institute has been a champion of children's well-being.



Increased focus on social and emotional learning improves student and school outcomes.



"Our Primary Project program is a strong component of our social-emotional services.

Without the use of para-professionals/trained child associates, students who have mild to moderate present and emerging school adjustment concerns would simply not be served if we did not have this program. Seeing students who were very uncomfortable and not able to fully participate in school activities or who were unsuccessful interacting with peers or adults evolve into fully engaged and happy, confident students is very rewarding. Primary Project is engaging children in developmentally appropriate child-centered play, often their only opportunity to receive such individualized attention to meet their specific needs."

—PALMYRA-MACEDON PRIMARY SCHOOL



For more information, contact:

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Staff news

Children's Institute staff provided 50 training/professional development offerings to local, state, and national program partners. A variety of programs and topics were attended by 904 individuals.

Ashli Bifulco has been promoted to Information Analyst. Ashli shared that she has found a new love of analyzing data and is grateful for this opportunity to advance her career. Her previous position was as a substitute teacher in the Pavilion School District.

SEL Center director **Elizabeth Devaney** was recognized for her role in helping to develop new guidance and resources, now available to help NYS school districts implement policies and programs that promote Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

Elizabeth Devaney and **Chris Merle** presented at the New York State Coalition of Independent and Religious Schools conference as workshop presenters and the keynote speaker.

Kathleen Embt has been promoted to Information Analyst II. Her main job responsibilities are database management, COMET support, and training for RECAP. She also has recently started doing some qualitative analysis for SEL and TRACC. When RECAP started using a new family measure (Family and Teacher Relationship Quality questionnaire, developed by the Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation) in the fall of 2016, she designed 1) the forms given to caretakers, teachers, and

directors, 2) the process for preprinting and distribution of the forms, and 3) the databases for summarizing the returned information including the reports sent back to teachers, directors, and the executive director of the preschool program. Since 2016-17, she has analyzed the data and written the narrative for the family perspectives section of the RECAP annual report.

Craig Maurer joined Children's Institute as Systems Administrator. He brings many years of experience in the IT world ranging from classroom training to working in eLearning on both the platform and content sides of the house. He has worked in various technical and leadership roles. He most recently spent time working at Seabreeze Amusement Park as a systems administrator. Craig has a 4-year-old son and brand new twins in addition to a 10-year-old dog named Cooper.

Research and evaluation director **Guillermo Montes** authored an article titled, "Having older siblings is associated with lower rates of depression, ADD/ADHD, anxiety, and behavior problems among children with ASD" in the *Maternal and Child Health Journal*.

Primary Project co-directors **Lynn Smith** and **Shelley M. Sanyshyn** authored an article titled, "Improving mental health outcomes for young children through the implementation of the Primary Project" in the *Journal of School-Based Counseling Evaluation and Policy*.

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