

Systems Strengthening Recommendations



Purpose of these recommendations:

The early childhood system as a whole is aligned, sustainable, accessible and values the expertise and leadership of the communities caring for children.

Click on the recommendation below to see the strategies to implement the recommendation; why this recommendation is important to our community; and the action plans for each strategy.

<u>Recommendation 1</u>	Address institutional racism as a root cause and share power with parents and communities
<u>Recommendation 2</u>	Ensure early childhood professionals across sectors are respected, well-compensated, highly trained and reflect the communities they serve
<u>Recommendation 3</u>	Increase resource awareness and create an easily navigable service system for families with young children
<u>Recommendation 4</u>	Facilitate data sharing between agencies and with communities to better understand areas of greatest need, track progress, and promote transparency and accountability
<u>Recommendation 5</u>	Ensure early childhood services are accessible and welcoming to families regardless of immigration status or English language proficiency
<u>Recommendation 6</u>	Expand opportunities for accessible, inclusive, safe and family-friendly enrichment activities and public spaces
<u>Recommendation 7</u>	Advocate for workplaces that understand and support the needs of families with young children

Recommendation 1: Address Institutional Racism as a Root Cause and Share Power with Parents and Communities

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 1.1: Conduct a well-resourced community review process to vet and assess the drafted ECAP for anti-racism, power sharing, equity, and liberation.

STRATEGY 1.2: Engage community-rooted leaders¹ to lead the implementation of the ECAP with institutions and larger organizations supporting them. Invest in capacity building to fund and support community-rooted leaders' work.

STRATEGY 1.3: Create opportunities that promote constant unlearning, re-learning, growth, and mindset shifts around authentic community engagement, power sharing, and institutional and structural racism for community and system leaders.

Why this Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

Communities across the country, including Durham, continue to grapple with persistent disparities in early childhood outcomes. Too often, the solutions that are proposed and funded are developed by people without proximity to the problems they are addressing. They are also often programmatic rather than systemic and do not address the root causes of these disparities like racism. The people most impacted by racism and its consequences lack the power to shape the solutions. See the "Our Early Childhood System" for more details.

Community Voices

"Sometimes in early childhood systems work we avoid addressing the root causes of the challenges we see, like systemic racism and poverty, because we say those are beyond our control and aren't early childhood issues." - ECAP participant

"Too much blame on parents, and not enough blame on system for creating these inequities." - ECAP participant

¹ As defined by [Communities in Partnership](#), "Formal and informal groups that are owned, run, and operated by the people that live and work within their own communities. These organizations are not only run by the most impacted within the community context but they are directly accountable to their neighbors and members. They can operate as a non-profit, for-profit, faith community or other organized formal or informal community group. The main identifier is that the board, staff, and mission and vision were created and owned by those living within the community they are focusing their work on or have been directly impacted by the area or context in which they serve." (Source: Camryn Smith, edited by Niasha Frey, MPH)

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"Because they are easier to implement, we are still often focused on programmatic solutions to systemic problems." - ECAP participant

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"This action plan is imperative to the successful implementation of any of the strategies in the Durham ECAP. These strategies were created to identify specific steps to highlight the community-rooted power that has not historically been prioritized. These are the leaders, strengths, and systems that already exist in our community and are needed for our young children and their families to thrive. It is with the understanding that current systems have not served all of us in the community, have not valued all of us in the community. To be antiracist in the implementation of the Durham ECAP means that we must work to change this pattern by respecting and honoring the lived experiences of our community. It is our intention that conversations and mindshifts must be fostered as a starting place to address the current influence of racism and historic trauma on our current practices. Our steps include: engaging and supporting ideas and solutions of parents and caregivers, establishing community-rooted leadership roles, being transparent about our process, providing equitable funding and compensation, and building a trust-oriented culture of humility. All action steps in the ECAP are accountable to the community and need to be assessed by those who are most affected by the plan." - *Anti-Racism and Power Sharing Action Planning Team*

The Action Plans

STRATEGY 1.1: Conduct a well-resourced community review process to vet and assess the drafted ECAP for anti-racism, power sharing, equity, and liberation.

This strategy aims to build a truly equitable engagement blueprint for ECAP. It is a review process that encompasses more perspectives to identify gaps, expertise, lived experiences, and knowledge that needs to be adjusted or is missing from the Durham ECAP.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify community rooted leaders that the Durham ECAP will most affect.Identify key questions to use in order to assess the levels of antiracism, power sharing, and equity, and liberation in the Durham ECAP.Using those key questions, review and assess the Durham ECAP in the areas of antiracism, power sharing, equity, and liberation through	

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a committee of identified ECAP members and community-rooted leaders. <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Review the Durham ECAP as a community member looking at it for the first time: identify areas that might be confusing, identify jargon that needs to be explained, identify areas that are not presentable to the community.	
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A plan that has been reviewed with a specific lens towards anti-racism, power sharing, equity and liberation● Specific changes and recommendations to bring to the ECAP Steering Committee will be developed	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The Durham ECAP Anti-Racism and Power Sharing team's expertise	
POTENTIAL PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Community-rooted leaders that are already a part of ECAP, grassroots organizations that are not a part of ECAP yet, anti-racism and power-sharing action team	

STRATEGY 1.2: Engage community-rooted leaders to lead the implementation of the ECAP with institutions and larger organizations supporting them. Invest in capacity building to fund and support community-rooted leaders' work.

Community-rooted leaders are representatives of the people who are most impacted by the challenges presented in the ECAP. They are best equipped to engage with their communities because they are from and/or deeply connected to those communities. They literally live amongst the people they serve and in most cases ARE the people who they serve. Therefore, they know the challenges personally and are able to effectively identify and lead solutions. We must invest in their leadership and compensate them for their work. Not all institutions are willing or prepared to shift their engagement strategies, and we must create a plan for them to better support and invest in community leaders. In all of the ECAP, there must be built-in ways to ensure checks & balances and accountability.

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SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Build on the equitable engagement blueprint for ECAP to create engagement strategies to involve (and compensate) community-rooted leaders and members in the implementation process of ECAP.● Determine a community-led process of collaborative conversations where community members can give feedback about the Durham ECAP's implementation.● Collaborate with the Data Sharing and Resource Awareness and Service Navigation teams to share information with community leaders and members to promote agency in their decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Create engagement, communication, and strategy plans for institutions and organizations supporting families, caregivers, and children in the early childhood space. These plans will provide support and accountability for power-sharing.
<h3>MEASURING PROGRESS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Funding and implementation leadership will be flowing to leaders of community-rooted organizations	
<h3>BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The work that community-rooted people and organizations have been leading; community-rooted organizations in Durham that have been engaged in ECAP include but are not limited to, Communities in Partnership, MAAME, HEARTS, Fatherhood of Durham, El Centro Hispano, we are, EPiC, Equity Before Birth, TRY, and more	
<h3>POTENTIAL PARTNERS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The ECAP Steering Committee, community-rooted leaders, Leaders of institutions	

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STRATEGY 1.3: Create opportunities that promote constant unlearning, re-learning, growth, and mindset shifts around authentic community engagement, power sharing, and institutional and structural racism for community and system leaders.

For those who have the privilege of working with families and children, we must provide staff the resources to honor and respect each of their families and children. Having an increased knowledge and understanding of lived experiences will provide families and children with the best care that they deserve.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create and build on a clear, collaborative definition of racial equity in our early childhood system.• Prepare priorities and timelines for conversations and trainings around antiracism, power-sharing, equity, and liberation.• Begin implementing these conversations and trainings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare priorities and timeline for implementation facilitators to actively meet and visit communities to ensure the fidelity of the ECAP, assess changes, receive feedback, and listen to community voices.
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early childhood system leaders and providers taking ACTIONS to dismantle systemic racism• More providers and leaders of color• More community members and parents with lived experience influencing systems-level decisions	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing anti-racism trainings through organizations like we are, Racial Equity Institute through Organizing Against Racism and the Endayo Company	
POTENTIAL PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• we are, The Triangle Black Maternal Wellness Collaborative, The Endayo Company, Equity Paradigm, Organizing Against Racism (OAR), Durham Public Schools Racial Equity Office	

Recommendation 2: Ensure Early Childhood Professionals Across Sectors are Respected, Well-Compensated, Highly Trained and Reflect the Communities They Serve

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 2.1: Raise compensation (including pay and benefits) to attract, recruit and retain highly-qualified teachers in all early learning environments. Seek public and private funding sources aimed at sustainability.

STRATEGY 2.2: Invest in increasing access to the existing culturally responsive, effective and engaging professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce in Durham (inclusive of Family Child Care Homes; Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care; specialist positions) that are funded by public and private sources. Ensure early childhood educators are paid for their time. Include paid training/mentoring models to promote quality classroom interactions with young children.

STRATEGY 2.3: Promote a diverse workforce of providers that serve children and families across sectors by strengthening career pathways, including education and training.

The strategies this action planning team identified were focused on the early childhood education profession, based on the persistent and unique challenges faced by early childhood educators serving children 0-4. In the future, this recommendation could be more broadly focused on early childhood professionals across sectors (e.g. social workers, healthcare professionals, etc).

Why this Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

In order for children to receive high-quality care and education across settings (including center-based care, family child care, and FFN care) in the first few years of their life, it is critical that the early childhood workforce is adequately compensated and valued for their work. Lack of proper compensation and opportunities for professional development leads to undervalued early childhood education, high rates of burnout and turnover, and ultimately a workforce shortage. See the “Overview of our Early Learning System” for more details.

Community Voices

"Child care system rests on the shoulders of a workforce that does not have much agency in terms of power of their voice - underpaid, undervalued, many demands without benefits and pay on par." - ECAP participant

"Let's just strike. Who is going to come in and teach these kids? Sometimes it will take some radical and revolutionary change." - Durham early childhood educator

"Recruit and retain more teachers in ECE and K-3 that have a shared lived experience with Latinx children and students." - ECAP participant

"Programs catered for and led by people of color." - Durham parent

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"The work of early childhood educators is absolutely critical to child development AND to family economic security. Children and families rely on child care providers across settings to provide care and education for their children. This allows parents to work, continue their education and juggle the needs of their families, and provides their children with expert support for learning and playing during a critical time in their development. Children enrolled in child care rely on the highly skilled adults who teach and care for them to provide developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive care and education every day.

Durham can't recover from COVID-19 without investing in our early care and education professionals. Child care providers are entrepreneurs who operate small businesses who are anchors in their community and employ educators who do the vital work of caring for and teaching the youngest children in Durham. Many parents are returning to work and need to have reliable, affordable, high-quality education for their children. Children need access to high-quality learning environments where they can be engaged in their own learning, explore, and play.

The child care workforce is overwhelmed, undervalued, underpaid, and isolated. Turnover is high. Children, families, teachers and child care administrators deserve fair wages and benefits and they can't wait. Child care providers need a boost now. The current system for reimbursing providers for delivering high-quality care and education isn't working.

The values we brought to this work include fairness, equity, teacher wellness, teacher-child relationships, community collaboration, quality child care, children, education, prevention, early childhood research, compassion, and resilience. **NOTHING FOR US WITHOUT US."**

- Cross-Sector Early Childhood Professionals Action Planning Team

The Action Plans

STRATEGY 2.1: Raise compensation (including pay and benefits) to attract, recruit and retain highly-qualified teachers in all early learning environments. Seek public and private funding sources aimed at sustainability.

Early childhood professionals have continued to care for children throughout the pandemic and deserve economic dignity more than ever. Early childhood professionals experience physical and mental trauma as a result of earning low wages for labor intensive work. They must have knowledge in child development and the competence to apply that knowledge into daily activities that support the diverse learning needs and affirm the cultures and backgrounds of the children in their care. They also must skillfully observe, assess, and document children's learning, which requires emotional strength and physical endurance. Educators need to be able to exhibit compassion for self and others, and demonstrate a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence to instill the same in children. These skills and commitments must be appropriately valued and compensated to provide the best possible care. The critical stages of brain development from birth through age five means that there are life-long impacts of the care and education provided to young children, and the skills and labor of the people providing that care should be valued accordingly.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide local, public stimulus for child care professionals in Durham (one-time payment) utilizing American Rescue Plan Act funding (see research supporting this recommended use of federal funding).ⁱ Prohibit the use of quality ratings as a determining factor for eligibility to receive ARPA funds or to condition level of payment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set a much higher minimum wage and salary scale (incentives for infant-toddler teachers, for example) for all staff serving in teaching roles for children in licensed child care settings. Minimum should be \$15 per hour similar to the \$15 floor set for all Durham Pre-K teachers (could be paid quarterly like WAGES supplement), but ultimately, teachers should be making a thriving wage in line with their knowledge, experience, and acknowledging the critical role that their work plays in ensuring healthy child development. Explore opportunities to locally pilot sustainability models used in other states, like childcare funding by slot allocations utilizing contract-based financing, that are reflective of the true cost of child care and protect the supply of child care for people working 2nd and 3rd shifts. Support child care as a business and support policies that promote growth potential for women entrepreneurs.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Advocate that state policy helps “all providers achieve a minimum level of quality by providing resources to meet state licensing requirements and offering support to make quality improvements - not just rewarding providers after they have achieved higher quality.” <u>American Progress</u>● Expand child care pay supplement programs (WAGE\$ and Infant Toddler AWARD\$) to increase access (make available to providers of school-age care too), eliminate the waitlist, and increase supplement amounts. Consider alternative funding streams for salary supplements - e.g. corporate funding, fundraising, lottery fund allocations, tax credits for educators.
<h3>MEASURING PROGRESS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lower poverty rates for early childhood educators● More early childhood educators with benefits like health insurance● Improved overall well-being of persons who work with young children and of the children in their care● Reduced turnover	
<h3>BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● WAGE\$, Infant Toddler AWARD\$, and Child Care WAGE\$ Program that is administered by <u>Child Care Services Association</u>● <u>NC Early Education Coalition's</u> Worthy Wages Campaign (note: Advocate that FCCH be included in the coalition’s targets)	
<h3>POTENTIAL PARTNERS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Durham Workers’ Rights Commission, National Domestic Workers Alliance, The Build Initiative, Think Babies, NC Early Education Coalition, Opportunities Exchange, County Commissioners, City Council, Duke University, NC Central University, Child Care Services Association (CCSA), Durham Tech Early Childhood Dept, Durham Partnership for Children (DPfC), early childhood educators (including family child care, private for-profit, non-profit, national chains), Durham Head Start/Early Head Start programs	

STRATEGY 2.2: Invest in increasing access to the existing culturally responsive, effective and engaging professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce in Durham (inclusive of Family Child Care Homes; Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care; specialist positions) that are funded by public and private sources. Ensure early childhood educators are paid for their time. Include paid training/mentoring models to promote quality classroom interactions with young children.

There are many opportunities for professional development for our early childhood professionals in Durham, but teachers need to have paid professional development time so they can participate. The development of young children happens in real time, so modeling skills are necessary in establishing quality learning environments.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify online educational opportunities in NC (e.g. Moodle, Friday Center).Advocate for public and private funding to compensate teachers for their time, provide funding for classroom substitutes, and ultimately incentivize completion of training.Partner with local agencies for technical assistance and mentorship to pair with evidence-based teaching strategies.Support alternative training and certification pathways (such as the CDA credential) for educators who do not want to or face barriers to advancing their professional qualifications through traditional higher education paths.	
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">More educators with access to professional development opportunitiesIncrease quality in learning experiences for young children through their interactions with skilled and trained practitioners to optimize development during the critical early years	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">North Carolina Central University (NCCU) and Durham TechChild Care Services Association technical assistance, professional development, and educational scholarshipsExchange Family Center professional workshops for early care and education, social service, and community service professionals. EFC's EChO project also provides coaching,	

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training and consultation for child care providers specifically working with children with challenging behaviors.

- [Durham's Partnership for Children](#) offers training and resources for professionals who work with families with young children
- [The READY project](#) has provided trainings on a trauma-informed method for adults to interact with children (CARE)
- [Durham PreK](#) offers weekly on-site coaching and technical assistance for early childhood educators
- [Duke Integrated Pediatric Mental Health](#) offers targeted group and individual training for professionals working with youth from infancy to age 24
- There are a number of models for supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers across the country, including [Arizona's Kith and Kin Project](#) and [Colorado's PASO](#) (Providers Advancing School Outcomes)

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Child Care Services Association, ProSolutions, Friday Center for Continuing Education, County Commissioners, City Council, Duke University, NC Central University, Durham Tech Early Childhood Dept, Durham Partnership for Children (DPfC), early childhood educators (including family child care, private for-profit, non-profit, national chains), National Domestic Workers Alliance - Durham Chapter, NC Early Education Coalition

STRATEGY 2.3: Promote a diverse workforce of providers that serve children and families across sectors by strengthening career pathways, including education and training.

A critical part of providing culturally-affirming, inclusive care is to ensure that the early childhood workforce reflects the communities they serve. The early childhood workforce should be diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, language, ability, gender identity, and more. We are missing opportunities to promote equity and inclusion as children are developing a sense of self. If their identity and culture are not affirmed, they may feel marginalized, unsafe, or that they don't belong. Promoting a diverse workforce will also help disrupt the preschool to prison pipeline.ⁱⁱ There is an opportunity to build on the racial equity work happening in Durham to incorporate the early childhood professions.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building on what we are already hearing from communities closest to the	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create early childhood career pathways for native speakers of Spanish and

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<p>problem, identify and address barriers to accessing community college courses and professional development for bilingual and BIPOC communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create stronger and more accessible supports for early childhood professionals who are interested in learning or improving their skills in a language that is commonly spoken in Durham.• Use Center of Excellence (CoE) for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)'s Racial Equity Toolkit to create organizational or systems plans to diversify the organization's workforce.• Advocate for considerations to continue engaging the 18-21 year olds who have received early childhood education credits in high school, but are not yet able to be left alone with children until age 21.• Identify educational consultants that provide evidence-based techniques to prepare a quality teaching workforce.	<p>other languages commonly spoken in Durham.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create recruitment and career development pathways for parents to become early childhood educators, peer navigators, developmental screeners, community health workers, etc.• Identify and address barriers to BIPOC communities in specialization or technical assistance professions within early childhood fields.• Invest in programs through public universities, community colleges, and historically black colleges and universities that build and maintain early childhood profession pipeline programs for students of color.• Provide scholarships for BIPOC students who commit to serving in Durham for a set period of time.
<h3>MEASURING PROGRESS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More early childhood professionals who speak languages other than English• A more diverse early childhood workforce	
<h3>BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five-year teacher residency project – called “Diverse and Resilient Educators Advised through Mentorship,” or UNC DREAM – is a \$4.8 million grant to recruit, educate, and place 40 diverse teachers (with a focus on Latinx teachers) into high-needs schools in Durham and provide them with a unique set of mentoring and other supports to help them thrive during their first years and then persist in the profession• Governor Cooper convened the DRIVE taskforce focused on diversifying educators in K-12 settings, and the final report with recommendations was released in 2021• LUNA is a Spanish-language platform focused on supporting Latinx early childhood	

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educators
POTENTIAL PARTNERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● NC Central University, Duke University, Durham Tech Early Childhood Department, Durham's Partnership for Children, early childhood educators (including family child care, private, for-profit, national chains), UNC System, Friday Center, Partnerships for Inclusion, EChO, Child Care Services Association, racial equity leaders (Triangle Black Maternal Wellness Collaborative, The Endayo Company, we are, Village of Wisdom, The Equity Paradigm, Racial Equity Institute)

Recommendation 3: Increase Resource Awareness and Create an Easily Navigable Service System for Families with Young Children

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 3.1: Develop a Peer Navigation program for parents of young children accessing community resources and services.

STRATEGY 3.2: Provide geographically diverse single-stop locations accessible and welcoming to families with young children.

Why this Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

Durham has a variety of resources available for families with young children that are not well-known or accessible because the systems of care are complex and often siloed. Families shared how hard the system of services (related to early care and education, the K-12 school system, housing, food, healthcare and more) is to navigate. This was even more of a challenge for non-English speaking families, lower literacy populations, and parents supporting a child with a developmental delay or disability or complex healthcare needs.

Parents surveyed during the ECAP process suggested having existing community resources better integrated to improve service navigation and to increase awareness around the resources available through a centralized place or resource.

Community Voices

"I think there's plenty of resources out there for families but if we could get the word out more so these resources will be acknowledged and utilized more." - Durham parent

"Make support services more affordable, more accessible, and the application process easier." - Durham parent

"I don't know. I think the big problem is that everything is so scattered and it's hard to understand procedures and orders of things. It'd be nice if there was like a Durham one call but for parenting and health and school questions." - Durham parent

"One website for all available resources." - Durham parent

"Providing more assistance for completing forms." - Durham parent

"There should be options based on interest not just economic need. If you are really

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interested in that service you should be able to access it for your child. There are so many requirements and paperwork, as a parent you get kind of worried/scared off. And as a result, our children suffer. That is not fair." - Durham parent

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"Parents of young children have many demands placed on them, many of them are working and 40% of parents living in Durham are single. The multifaceted needs of young children require parents to rely on many, often unknown, resources throughout the community. To ensure their child's needs are being met expeditiously, parents should access identified single-stop locations (web-based, phone, and in-person) they can rely on for connection to services. Providing this service lessens the frustration for parents but more importantly, ensures the child receives the care or support they need.

Additionally, navigating community resources can be daunting for anyone, it can be truly overwhelming for someone without any prior knowledge. To ensure the parent feels confident, peer navigators should be provided, to help parents navigate community resources and services that they have already used and are quite familiar with. There is state supported and clinical research to support the effectiveness and importance of Peer Navigation to assist vulnerable populations.^{iii iv v} Using those with lived experiences to serve as peer navigators is not only practical, it is a best practice."

- Awareness & Navigation Action Planning Team

The Action Plans

STRATEGY 3.1: Develop a Peer Navigation program for parents of young children accessing community resources and services.

Peer navigation is a proven, powerful model for using the lived experience of community members to build up and support those facing similar needs or adversity. These navigators would be housed within one or more agencies, but would have the ability to meet with families in a location they prefer. Parents of young children with lived experiences accessing resources and services will assist families working to gain access to similar resources and services.

<i>SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)</i>	<i>LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess agencies already in existence and engaged with this work to determine their interest in scaling or expanding their peer navigation work in alignment with this program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess the training, certifications, and latest research available for this work and ensure that lived experience and cultural competence is central and that

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Assess existing service navigation programs in Durham to explore opportunities to integrate a peer navigation component or partnership.● Identify one or more agencies to implement the peer navigation program with a focus on those already engaged in the work who understand the need for utilizing space that is accessible and not associated with stigma or trauma.● Identify and gain input from partners to support the agency /agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● peer navigation is available in multiple languages.● Research best practices and approaches in existence to help inform the pilot (e.g. Family Success Alliance, Orange County).● Identify funders and consider sustainable funding sources including Medicaid billing for this service.● Formalize the program and begin recruiting Peer Navigators.
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MEASURING PROGRESS

- An increase in the number of families completing applications for community resources and services.
- Pre- and post-surveys completed with program feedback to understand what is effective and get a sense of the number of people utilizing these resources, although surveys are not comprehensive.

BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK

- Community Health Workers at Durham Tech, Health Department, [Together for Resilient Youth \(TRY\)](#)
- [2020 Mom has an Issue Brief](#) on Certified Peer Specialists that outlines steps for scaling and funding this type of work
- [Get Ready Guilford Initiative](#) is developing navigation from prenatal through early childhood
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) has program to educate, support, and empower parental leaders around this work

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Family Success Alliance (as a model) in Orange County, all organizations listed under “what work can we build on”, NCCARE360, Alliance Health, MAAME, Durham County Libraries, Durham Children’s Initiative, Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH), Care Coordination for Children (CC4C), Family Child Care Homes and child care centers, El Futuro, El Centro, NCInCK, Healthy Steps, NC Department of Health and Human Services, Faith Communities

STRATEGY 3.2: Provide geographically diverse single-stop locations accessible and welcoming to families with young children.

Single-stop locations increase access and usage of important early childhood services. They are critical to healthy child development. This will allow families with young children to meet with peer navigators and seek support for all the services they need.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with Family Success Alliance through Orange County Health Department to determine the ability to replicate a version of their strategic plan in Durham County. Facilitate a community-wide assessment to determine the interest and need for single-stop locations and affiliated partners. Ask questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What resources will they need these locations to be informed about? What spaces will be most welcome and accessible to families? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify funding which will help determine which partners need to be at the table. Identify the lead organization and ensure we include parents as a part of the advisory board.

MEASURING PROGRESS

- A plan of next steps needed to take the Family Success Alliance model or another model and customize it to Durham
- Through a representative sample of Durham community members sharing their feedback through the community-wide assessment, we will hear that families are feeling more connected and have improved their knowledge of early childhood supports

BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK

- Utilize existing community locations with the intent of connecting families with resources, such as public libraries, CC4C
- [Network of Care](#) website
- [Healthy Steps](#) at Duke Pediatrics embeds support for resource connects and information about child development at the pediatric medical home
- [NCCARE360](#) is the first statewide coordinated care network to electronically connect those with identified needs to community resources and allow for a feedback loop on the

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outcome of that connection. There are plans to have call center navigators

- [Nurturing Durham](#) is a Durham-focused web platform developed by the Early Childhood Mental Health Taskforce and the READY Project. It helps parents learn about and connect with resources and programs that support social-emotional health in young children
- [NCInCK](#) is aiming to integrate services for children, including physical and behavioral health, food, housing, early care and education, Title V, child welfare, mobile crisis response services, juvenile justice, and legal aid

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Durham's Partnership for Children, Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH), Exchange Family Center, Durham County Social Services (DSS), YMCA (potential locations), Durham County Libraries (potential locations), Boys and Girls Club (potential location), school social workers, child care centers and family child care, Family Success Alliance, Durham Children's Initiative (DCI), pediatric clinics, El Futuro, El Centro, World Relief Durham, NCCARE360, Network of Care, NCInCK, Faith Communities

Recommendation 4: Facilitate Data Sharing Between Agencies and with Communities to Better Understand Areas of Greatest Need, Track Progress, and to Promote Transparency, Accountability, and Systems-Building

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 4.1: Convene a set of community conversations and identify an ongoing community oversight structure to address opportunities and concerns related to early childhood data sharing and inform future data collection and data sharing efforts.

STRATEGY 4.2: Address barriers to data collection and sharing across agencies and age groups so that community stakeholders can continue to identify the areas of greatest need, to track progress in these areas that have been identified as a focus, and to generate funding for strategies that are creating promising results.

STRATEGY 4.3: Pilot data sharing initiatives that support data collection to report on ECAP indicators that are not currently available at the county level and share that data transparently to increase community accountability.

Why this Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

ECAP goals and outcomes are interconnected and not happening in silos, so data must be shared across agencies to monitor collective progress and continuous improvement. Equity is the cornerstone of the ECAP, and similar initiatives nationally committed to racial equity use data to make decisions as a community. Those efforts have led to consistently improved outcomes for children (see [The Road Map Project](#)). Sharing data about who is being served and how, what the outcomes are, and what barriers or gaps are present will enhance continuous improvement and allow all stakeholders to adjust strategies for the child's success.

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"Community driven data collection improves service provision to families and children in areas of health, education, emotional wellbeing, and finances. The Data Sharing team values the ethical and unified collection and use of data for collective impact. Specifically, we emphasized the need to build trust & understanding, increase funding, and close gaps in service delivery. "

- *Data Sharing Action Planning Team*

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The Action Plans

STRATEGY 4.1: Convene a set of community conversations and identify an ongoing community oversight structure to address opportunities and concerns related to early childhood data sharing and inform future data collection and data sharing efforts.

There are significant community concerns with data sharing that must be heard and addressed. Some of these concerns relate to privacy, the use of predictive analytics that can flag someone as at risk for needing or doing something in the future (and treating them differently now), and to the history of research and studies that have been harmful to marginalized communities.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with trusted community partners to develop a plan for the community data conversations.• Hold community data conversations, documenting concerns and interests related to data collection and sharing.• With stakeholders, identify the best structure/coalition for community oversight over early childhood data sharing plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch the community oversight coalition.• Begin sending quarterly update newsletter in spanish and english (e-news) to all stakeholders who request it.• Begin quarterly or biannual “ask me anything” and outcome updates meetings (social data sharing events).• Create opportunities for parents and community members to develop research questions and lead or participate in data collection, analysis, and reporting.
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased public trust for the use and sharing of data• Improved community storytelling• Collective, cooperative participation of community partners in data sharing	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Works Neighborhood Compass, NC InCK’s Family Leadership Committee, Village of Wisdom’s Parent-Led Research efforts	
POTENTIAL PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Duke Office of Community Affairs, Durham Public Schools (DPS), Data Works, EngageDurham, parents, community-rooted leaders, Faith Communities	

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STRATEGY 4.2: Address barriers to data collection and sharing across agencies and age groups so that community stakeholders can continue to identify the areas of greatest need, to track progress in these areas that have been identified as a focus, and to generate funding for strategies that are creating promising results.

ECAP stakeholders identified a need to utilize data to better serve families and to ensure that organizations that are culturally affirming and having a strong impact have the evidence they need to generate funding.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Based on learnings from Strategy 4.1, meet with local agencies to identify and discuss challenges to data collection and sharing; identify where technical assistance and support will be needed to begin or improve data collection and sharing.• Develop a plan to provide technical assistance so that groups who are interested in building their capacity for data collection and sharing have the support they need to do so• Identify and use existing data use agreement templates to begin developing a unified agreement for data sharing across groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a unified, HIPAA compliant, opt-in, common data use agreement and database for the collection and dissemination of outcome data. The design of the data use agreement and database should be grounded in addressing the concerns shared by community members in Strategy 4.1. This work will need to be complementary to the databases currently in use or in development by NC Care360, NC InCK, and others.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Identify an appropriate vendor or software platform or entity to house/collect data OR contract a private entity to build a unified data based.○ Contract/Hire “in-house” an entity to manage and maintain data.
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public trust for the collection and use of data increases• Improved capacity for data collection in our community• Centralized data collection to shape policy and improve service delivery• Improved funding for effective programs and policies• Improved research studies on cost efficacy, effective program services, and policy analysis• Improved program services across the county	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	

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- [NCCARE360](#), [NC InCK](#), [NC Early Childhood Integrated Data System](#), NC Early Childhood Foundation's Pathways to Grade Level Reading [Data Dashboard](#)
- Earlier work by multiple Durham partners to develop the [Durham Children's Data Center](#)

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Partners to consider for housing the data
 - Duke Center for Child and Family Policy, Partnership for a Healthy Durham, Durham Partnership for Children, NC Early Childhood Foundation, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
- Partners to consider for collecting data from and agree to the unified user agreement (UUA)
 - NCCARE360, NC INcK, DPI, Durham County Social Services (DSS), Family Connects Durham, Health Care Providers (Lincoln Community Health Center, Public Health, Private Providers—both pediatrics and perinatal providers)
- Smaller, community-rooted and community-based organizations that would like support on data collection; researchers or groups that are interested in providing that kind of support or technical assistance

STRATEGY 4.3: Pilot data sharing initiatives that support data collection to report on ECAP indicators that are not currently available at the county level and share that data transparently to increase community accountability.

There are many ECAP indicators from the statewide plan that cannot currently be collected in a consistent way at the county-level. There are opportunities to work together across agencies to better share data to be able to understand our population-level early childhood data here in Durham County. A critical part of this strategy is prioritizing sharing outcomes with the community on a routine basis to hold ourselves accountable as a community to improving early childhood outcomes.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identify the ECAP measures that are not currently available at the local, population-level, and determine opportunities for additional data collection and/or data sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Begin collecting or sharing data against the new indicators.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create MOUs or other data agreements to facilitate collection and sharing of data related to these new indicators.	
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public trust for the use and sharing of data increases• Reduced racial disparities in data analysis• Improved program services across the county• Collective cooperative participation of community partners in data sharing	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCCARE360, NC InCK, NC Early Childhood Foundation's Data Workgroup reports on Social-Emotional Health and Child Development at Kindergarten Entry	
POTENTIAL PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community members, Durham Public Schools (DPS), Durham County Social Services (DSS), early care and education directors, Durham Partnership for Children (DPfC), NCCARE360, Duke Center for Child and Family Policy (CCFP), Partnership for Healthy Durham, NC Child• Family Connects Durham, health care providers (Lincoln Community Health Center, Durham County Health Department, private providers - both pediatrics and perinatal providers), early care and education directors, doulas, parents, child care educators, K-3 teachers, housing and shelter providers, home visitors, social workers, and other early childhood providers	

Recommendation 5: Language Justice

Ensure Early Childhood Services Are Accessible and Welcoming to Families Regardless of Immigration Status or English Language Proficiency

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 5.1: Center language justice in all services, supports, and programs offered to young children and their families in Durham.

STRATEGY 5.2: Improve service coordination and partnerships among stakeholders to comprehensively address the health needs of people whose native language is a language other than English, people with different levels of schooling, and people who primarily rely on forms of communication that are not written.

STRATEGY 5.3: Expand early learning support in all settings to non-native English speaking families.

Why This Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

All families need clarity in their communication about their children regardless of their literacy level or native language. There is a wide diversity of languages spoken in children's homes in Durham. For example, as of April 2021, Durham Public Schools has 9,161 students enrolled whose home language is Spanish and 749 students enrolled whose home language is not English or Spanish.^{vi}

There are a wide variety of services offered in Durham, but they are not fully benefiting the communities who do not speak English as their first language or who have a lower literacy rate. Many families shared their frustration with finding a counselor or caseworker who speaks their language to help them navigate the services available. This is also a challenge for students and parents in school as there are not enough interpreters to assist families.

There are also eligibility barriers for parents who are undocumented and therefore do not have access to the early childhood supports and services that documented families do.

Families and caregivers with young children emphasized how difficult early childhood health, education, and other support services are to access because of language and cultural barriers. This was true of early childhood services as well as support for caregivers of young children who are immigrants (documented and undocumented), refugees, non-native English speakers, or

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lower literacy populations. Parents expressed that language access also needs to be paired with cultural understanding and humility. Just because someone speaks Spanish, for instance, does not mean that they are the best messenger with Latinx families.

In Durham, we want to focus on not just language access, but language JUSTICE. "Language justice creates spaces where people are invited to bring their whole selves, and the whole range of their perspectives and experiences, into the room. It demonstrates a commitment to creating a space where no one language is dominant; rather, every language in the room holds equal footing, and all participants are respectfully committed to a process of open communication and transparency."^{vii} Creating spaces where language justice is centered requires funding, staffing, support, and deep mindset shifts.

Community Voices

"Fewer obstacles when requesting help, more information on the programs in the clinics and more bilingual people." - Durham parent

"Create more help with different languages in all schools so that the family is involved with everything school." - Durham parent

"Whenever conferences have been offered, sometimes the parents who speak another language don't come or engage as much." - Durham Public Schools K-3 Teacher

"It's so hard for families who speak languages other than English to enroll in [PreK and Head Start]." - Durham parent

"Lack of support for ELL [English Language Learners] in schools." - Durham parent

"The interpreter they provided was really a service navigator who only spoke English and didn't ensure I had support at all steps when it was all so foreign to me." - Durham parent

"Those of us are trying to get our citizenship papers in order, they told us not to ask for any state assistance. Bc then it will look poorly on us when they review our cases. Idk if it's true or not that it will affect my status BUT I am afraid." - Durham parent

"They need to look at the population size and determine how much support is needed for interpreters based on that. E.g., the schools with 50% Spanish-speaking need more than one." - Durham Public Schools K-3 Teacher

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"Many families in the Latinx community and other language minority communities are unable to access early childhood education services or get support from other key support services in Durham due to language barriers. The lack of access to these services has long-lasting effects on children that will continue to impact them for years to come. We need to close this gap. Our team continuously emphasized the unnecessary difficulty and hardships that families with limited English proficiency continue to face and the critical nature that language justice must have in a variety of services that support children. The values that were critical to our team

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throughout our discussions were equity and inclusion for all of Durham's children and families."

- *Language Justice Action Planning Team*

The Action Plans

STRATEGY 5.1: Center language justice in all services, supports, and programs offered to young children and their families in Durham.

It is important that all children have access to the wide variety of services offered in Durham. This includes critical logistical information that is easy to access in their native language such as how to register for public services, school and bus route information, and information on how to access online learning tools. Whether it is on public display, online, or sent home, it must be available in the community's native language.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prioritize funding for interpretation services.● Increase the number of bilingual/multilingual personnel in schools, Headstart, daycares, and other educational settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ensure that there are always interpreters available to facilitate communication between staff of early childhood-focused services (including school personnel) and non-English speaking people.● Expand language education programs in schools (for example, Spanish, Mandarin), so that children improve proficiency in native language to strengthen the next generation of leaders.

MEASURING PROGRESS

- Increased funding for interpretation services
- Increased number of bilingual and multilingual personnel in settings with young children
- Increased funding for language education programs
- Higher ratio of interpreters to non-English speaking students throughout Durham Public Schools

BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK

- Durham Public Schools has a partnership with the [Tilde Language Justice Cooperative](#) and created a [Multilingual Resource Center](#) to provide interpretation and translation services to families and schools
- The work already being done by the implementation partners listed below who support non-English speakers

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- [Refugee Community Partnership](#) has an interpreter bank where refugees can request interpretation and then show up at appointments and navigate needed services with their interpreter; they also support native speakers of languages other than English with funding for interpretation training

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Tilde Language Justice Cooperative, Boston Basics, El Centro Hispano, Catholic Child Care, ISLA NC, Refugee Community Partnership, Durham Literacy Center, Durham Tech English as a Second Language, World Relief, Church World Service, Durham Public Schools Multilingual Resource Center, NC Society of Hispanic Professionals, The Town of Chapel Hill

STRATEGY 5.2: Improve service coordination and partnerships among stakeholders to comprehensively address the health needs of people whose native language is a language other than English, people with different levels of schooling, and people who primarily rely on forms of communication that are not written.

Schools, healthcare clinics, social services, and other key city services (especially transportation systems) do not adequately support families that speak other languages. Often information isn't available in languages other than English, and there aren't enough interpreters available for families that are navigating difficult situations.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that everyone answering phones at healthcare clinics, schools, social services, and other key city service settings (especially 911 dispatchers) are trained in how to quickly connect a person to the language they need through a person on staff or interpretation services.• Ensure any written material in these settings is available for language minority populations in Durham. It is imperative to ensure the translations are	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in a Durham County community-owned interpreter bank where non-English speakers can go to request interpretation and then go with their interpreter to appointments and other services.• Conduct cultural sensitivity training for workers in these organizations to improve awareness of how language barriers and cultural issues affect people's experiences in these institutions. Incorporate the Refugee Community Partnership model for language barriers.• Invest in community-based organizations that provide community health workers who make the, oftentimes complex, language of health information and data into more accessible

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correct and appropriate, including navigation signage.	language, particularly for parents and families with lower levels of literacy.
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MEASURING PROGRESS

- Written material at every health clinic, social service site, school, and other county public service locations, including transit and open spaces, in multiple languages to reflect the main languages spoken in Durham
- A larger number of interpreters and community health workers at public service buildings who speak the main languages spoken in Durham and a reduction in waitlists for Spanish-speaking providers

BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK

- [Refugee Community Partnership's](#) model for community-supporting interpretation, and their technical assistance at health care sites to build capacity for language justice
- The efforts that are already underway from community organizations and advocacy groups such as [El Centro Hispano](#), [El Futuro](#), [Latin-19](#), [Local Access to Coordinated Healthcare \(LATCH\)](#), and the [Lincoln Community Health Center](#) to improve language access
- Programs that provide one-on-one health support to families with young children, such as [Healthy Steps](#), [Family Connects Durham](#), [Exchange Family Center](#), and [El Futuro](#)

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- LEAP, la escuelita, Boston Basics, Refugee community partnership, El Centro Hispano, El Futuro, LATCH, Catholic Child Care, ISLA NC, Child Care Services Agency, NC Society of Hispanic Professionals, Durham County, TILDE Language Justice Training, Faith Communities

STRATEGY 5.3: Expand early learning support in all settings to non-native English speaking families.

Early education is critical to the academic and social development of our children. Durham has many early childhood resources, but information is limited in regards to registration/costs and the benefits.

We need to work on building and fostering inclusive learning environments where all children of all backgrounds feel included and celebrated. Children from immigrant families are often excluded and targeted for not speaking English or being low-income.

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SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct workshops to inform parents about the various early childhood education opportunities in Durham, including the registration process.Coordinate a series of meetings with key decision makers for signage in outdoor and transit locations, public service sites, and any community resource centers. Connect with the ECAP transit and resource awareness and navigation teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partner with educational institutions and other community organizations to offer employees in these places second language education.Ensure that forms, signage and other information is available in Spanish and other key languages spoken in Durham, and includes pictures and images wherever possible.Create communications campaign in languages most spoken in Durham to raise awareness of early childhood programs via outreach through radio, television, and social media channels.
<h3>MEASURING PROGRESS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workshops are scheduled, attended by parents, and lead to an increase in registrations for key servicesConversations happen that lead to a formalized plan with a date for distributing multilingual resources and launching a multilingual communications campaignSecond language education programming is piloting in at least one educational institution or community organization that can serve as a model for others	
<h3>BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bilingual child care options, including LEAP and Durham Children's Initiative LEAP Academy and Durham PreK's culturally-affirming practicesPrograms like Book Harvest Book Babies, Healthy Family Durham, Early Head Start, Durham Children's Initiative's Early Childhood Advocates and story hours, Welcome Baby, and Exchange Center Family Support Program all support early learning in Spanish-speaking home environments and empower families with the tools to support early learning	
<h3>POTENTIAL PARTNERS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Boston Basics, Refugee Community Partnership, El Centro Hispano, Catholic Child Care, ISLA NC, LEAP, other partners who are bilingual or who work with the Latinx/Hispanic community, Mother and Father Read, Child Care Services Association (CCSA), as well as all the programs listed above, Faith Communities	

Recommendation 6: Expand Opportunities for Accessible, Inclusive, Safe, and Family-Friendly Enrichment Activities and Public Spaces

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 6.1: Enhance Durham’s public spaces and local developments to become more family-friendly, safe and inclusive of all of Durham’s residents and to encourage playful learning throughout the community.

STRATEGY 6.2: Invest in programs and activities that already exist to improve marketing/promotion and reduce barriers to access (e.g. transportation).

Why this Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

Children spend much of their time out of formal learning environments, so the role of parents, communities, and public spaces in early childhood learning and brain development cannot be understated or undervalued.^{viii} As a community, we must do more to promote play and support healthy brain development in public spaces and enrichment programs outside of scheduled school time. These opportunities for play and engagement in public spaces can also support healthy social-emotional interactions for children and their families.

Parents and caregivers across Durham expressed a desire for better access to Durham’s public spaces and for those spaces to be safe and inclusive. As Durham grows, there is an opportunity to intentionally create family-friendly, safe, and inclusive public spaces where more families can interact and see their families reflected.

Durham can also learn from examples in other cities to incorporate opportunities for parent-child interactions and “[playful learning](#)” in public spaces which enhances children’s cognition and social development. For example, in Philadelphia, community organizations came together to enhance a bus stop into a stimulating environment with story art, a puzzle wall, and more.

Community Voices

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"Better access to parks and playgrounds for children with disabilities." - Durham parent

"More child friendly areas downtown!" - Durham parent

"More locations that are multi-purposeful (play area, coffee shop, car mechanic, etc. all in one place)." - Durham parent

"There is a lot of buildings and I see they build a lot of buildings. And I see they build parks. But it's not large enough when they build the parks. It's always the same types of games. And sometimes the ground they put it on is rocky and dangerous." build parks, but it's not large enough. It's always the same type of games. And the type of ground they put on can be rocky and dangerous." - 9th grader at Durham Public Schools

be rocky and dangerous." - 9th grader at Durham Public Schools

"More parks and playgrounds! My kids love them and I think that as our city grows, we need to revamp the parks that we do have and add in more family friendly outdoor spaces." - Durham parent

"More splash pads, more parks, more green open space, more public swimming pools." - Durham parent

Families shared how important it is for them to have access to free and low-cost enrichment activities for their children to participate in. Parents with children under age 5, in particular, expressed a desire for more opportunities to connect with other families in public spaces.

"Lower cost programs. No income to low income families having access to these programs." - Durham parent

"Wider range of programs that are free or have the scale for reduced cost be wide - Especially need free after school care, camps & tutoring." - Durham parent

"I wish they would provide affordable resources for other programs like karate, ballet or soccer. These kinds of sports are not affordable...it would cost you a two-week paycheck to pay for them. You would have to work 80 hours to pay for 4 hours of these programs. It is not something affordable and I wish they would change that." - Durham parent

"Having group activities for children between the ages of 2-5." - Durham parent

"More activities for 2 year olds, they seem to be forgotten." - Durham parent

"More free or low cost options for entertainment for kids under 3." - Durham parent

Parents recognize there may be activities available, but do not have an easy way to see all that is available for their kids.

"More advertisement for free/low cost things in the area." - Durham parent

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"More awareness of community events, sports, etc" - Durham parent

More information can be found in the Durham ECAP Report "Our Early Learning System: Early Learning at Home and in Community."

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"This recommendation is important to the team because we learned from the initial survey that many of our community members do not feel welcome in public spaces, do not know about early childhood learning events within our community, and desire to have more free options to learn with their children in a safe and fun manner. We wanted to ensure that we created strategies that would include ALL of our community members and would remove barriers to accessing opportunities to enrichment activities. We worked to center equity and inclusion as we created this action plan."

- Family-Friendly Public Spaces and Enrichment Activities Action Planning Team

The Action Plans

STRATEGY 6.1: Enhance Durham's public spaces and local developments to become more family-friendly, safe and inclusive of all of Durham's residents and to encourage playful learning throughout the community.

A lot of parents don't feel like they have spaces to gather and interact with other families with young children. Many parents also expressed feeling like they no longer belong in downtown Durham.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct an assessment, in partnership with families, Durham Parks and Rec, and others, of where family friendly spaces are and are not in our community and identify the areas in most need of family friendly public spaces.Connect with Durham's Community Safety and Wellness Task Force and other partners to engage in efforts to promote community safety and wellness in our public spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">With the leadership of communities and parents, enhance existing spaces and transform to playful, culturally-inclusive, learning spaces (i.e. laundromats, bus stops and Downtown bus terminal).Ensure that equipment at parks is updated, age-appropriate, and accessible to children with differing physical abilities.
MEASURING PROGRESS	

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- Increase in the number of families using available spaces and feeling more welcome
- Number of parents involved in community-driven projects to enhance Durham's public spaces
- Follow-up survey to ask about satisfaction with Durham public spaces

BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK

- Durham's Comprehensive Planning process has highlighted several aligned objectives including, "[Affordable and intentional Activities and Events](#)," "[Welcoming, Inclusive, and Celebratory Public Spaces and Events](#)," and "[Equitable and Safe Access to Public Spaces](#)"
- [Office on Youth Listening Project](#) included recommendations related to welcoming places
- Local programs that encourage playful learning and accessible enrichment activities, like [Book Harvest](#)'s story hours in local Laundromats and [Bouncing Bulldogs](#) Community Center outdoor area and trail
- Local business who have created family-friendly spaces focused on community-building, like [Nolia Coffee](#) and [Rofhiwa Cafe](#)

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Families of young children, Durham Rotary, Durham Parks and Rec, City Planning Officials, Urban Ministries, Community Safety and Wellness Task Force, Book Harvest, Museum of Life and Science, Durham County Library, H.E.A.R.T.S, Durham Public Schools, Bouncing Bulldogs

STRATEGY 6.2: Invest in programs and activities that already exist to improve marketing/promotion and reduce barriers to access (e.g. transportation).

Parents recognize there may be activities available, but do not have an easy way to see all that is available for their kids.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Partner with schools and other family-serving organizations to share information about low-cost, age appropriate enrichment activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Tailor activities to young parents who may still be in school and working parents, especially parents working on weekends or night shifts.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide dual-language materials and partner with organizations that provide translation services.● Use public spaces to promote parent awareness of early childhood programs in Durham and to promote public awareness of the importance of the early years (see strategy 18.2).	
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● More families able to access early learning and enrichment activities	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Transit Plan Update data● Transit Equity Campaign transit stories● Neighborhood Compass public data visualizations● Nurturing Durham resource guide	
POTENTIAL PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bull City Bulldogs, Black Families Meetup (Joy Lampkin Foster), EMPOWER Dance Studio, Durham Public Schools, Durham Public Schools Multilingual Resource Center, El Centro Hispano, Reach Out and Read, Welcome Baby, Child Care Services Association (CCSA), Durham's Partnership for Children (DPfC), Durham County Library, Book Harvest, Head Start, H.E.A.R.T.S, GoTriangle and GoDurham, Bouncing Bulldogs, Durham Children's Initiative, Durham Parks and Rec, Museum of Life and Science, etc.	

Recommendation 7: Advocate for Workplaces that Understand and Support the Needs of Families with Young Children

The Strategies to Implement This Recommendation

STRATEGY 7.1: Build a coalition of Durham businesses, families, early childhood experts and labor groups to promote, advocate for, and build awareness about family-friendly workplaces in Durham.

STRATEGY 7.2: Advocate for state and federal family-friendly workplace policies and implement financial incentives for existing/new policies.

STRATEGY 7.3: Empower families with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for family-friendly workplaces.

Why this Recommendation is Important to Our Community

Overview

Family friendly workplace policies “improve children’s health and well-being and keep North Carolina’s businesses competitive.”^{ix} Unfortunately, many families, particularly BIPOC families and families with low incomes, lack access to family-friendly workplace policies in their jobs. Nationwide, 40% of parents say they have left a job because it lacked flexibility.

As North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation’s Guide to Family Friendly Workplaces identifies, family friendly policies include:

- **Paid Leave:** Parental leave (for birth, adoption or foster placement), sick and safe leave, and family and medical leave.
- **Flexible Work and Scheduling:** Flextime, working from home or telecommuting, job sharing, part-time work, and predictable scheduling.
- **Child Care Solutions:** Backup and emergency care, child care referrals, on-site child care, child care consortiums, and subsidized or reimbursed care.
- **Accommodations and Support:** Accommodations and support for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and people, and babies at work initiatives.
- **Health Benefits and Flexible Spending Accounts:** Health insurance, wellness benefits, and flexible spending accounts

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Family-friendly workplaces would move the needle on so many of the ECAP goal areas from enabling parents to take time off for prenatal and well-child visits, to increasing breastfeeding rates, to enabling parents and children to spend more time together in the developmentally critical months and years of a child's life.

Providing family-friendly policies is also a worthwhile investment for businesses as it improves employee recruitment, employee retention, workforce diversity, and employee productivity.^x The Human Resources Director of a major manufacturing company in North Carolina testifies that providing accommodations for families at work is "much easier than you think it is. There's no question that healthier employees are more productive. This is just the right thing to do."^{xi}

Community Voices

"Feeling safe as a nursing mother." - Durham parent

"PAID PARENTAL LEAVE FOR BOTH PARTNERS FOR 6 MONTHS." - Durham parent

"I think we primarily need broad systemic change that allows for more family leave and lets parents better balance careers and parenting." - Durham parent

"I had to go back to work after three months, so my child started off with my parents. My child was born with congestive heart failure and had developmental delays as a result, which was a concern since my parents first language isn't English." - Durham parent

Voices of the Durham ECAP Action Planning Team Who Worked on this Recommendation

"Parents know how much of a difference family friendly workplaces can have in improving someone's experience of early parenthood, setting us up for healthy families. There is a huge difference between benefits offered to parents with lower paying jobs vs. higher paying jobs. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty for children, starting from before they are born and widens disparities and infant mortality. It serves in the best interest for business owners, employees, and children to prioritize family friendly workplaces; it is a basic human necessity to have our immediate needs met and the creation and implementation of universal family friendly workplaces sets up a positive chain reaction that impacts us all."

- Family-Friendly Workplaces Action Planning Team

The Action Plans

STRATEGY 7.1: Build a coalition of Durham businesses, families, early childhood experts and labor groups to promote, advocate for, and build awareness about family-friendly workplaces in Durham.

The key objective of this strategy is to influence business practices and create a culture shift.

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SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Build a team of paid community workers to promote family-friendly workspace requirements that are already both suggested and required by law.Adopt criteria to become an official family friendly workplace in Durham (recommend using the Family Forward NC guidance).Create a logo/award program and recruit businesses.Create content and presentation for businesses that is easily digestible.Learn from business leaders (large and small) to hear about the barriers and opportunities. Showcare local case studies of business who are family-friendly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Confirm compliance amongst designated “family friendly workplaces” to extend designation year after year.As new businesses are licensed to operate in Durham County, advocate that those businesses become official family friendly workplaces in Durham.Work with business review platforms to market companies as family friendly employers.
<h3>MEASURING PROGRESS</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Within 1 year, make contact with 90% of Durham businesses that have employees and are registered with the secretary of stateConfirmation of understanding from 25% of businesses of steps the business can take towards family friendly workplacesIncrease in the number and percentage of family friendly designated and compliant workplaces in Durham	
<h3>BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Breastfeed Durham and Improving Community Outcomes for Maternal and Child Health (ICOMCH) are working on the “Breastfeeding Welcome Here” project to support lactation spacesNorth Carolina Early Childhood Foundation’s Family Forward NC initiativeNorth Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition has the Breastfeeding-Friendly Employers & Community PartnersDurham’s elected and appointed leadership’s written statement supporting family-friendly workplace policies that is routinely shared via all local media outlets, including newspapers, radio, television, and social media	
<h3>POTENTIAL PARTNERS</h3>	

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- NC Center for Nonprofits, Health Department, Chamber of Commerce, Breastfeed Durham, Duke Fuqua School of Business, Faith Communities

STRATEGY 7.2: Advocate for state and federal family-friendly workplace policies and implement financial incentives for existing/new policies.

Policies would include: Scheduled breaks to meet biological needs including lactation, menstruation, natural rhythms, etc. without loopholes for businesses with a small number of staff. Publicly or privately funded family friendly benefits provided to individuals who are working on a sliding scale + higher salary inclusion: child care, WIC, breastfeeding consultation, minimum 12 weeks of paid parental leave, paid sick leave for ALL employees working in Durham (including teachers). Incentives for successful implementation would include a sliding scale/increased reward for continued successful implementation.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build a local team of experienced advocates, lawyers, and law students to create an advocacy agenda.• Use existing community data to identify gaps in policy and propose legislation to address the gaps.• Identify and lobby sponsors to introduce legislation.• Explore opportunities to incentivize local businesses to comply with existing policies.• Identify state and national advocacy efforts that Durham's coalition can join; bring local legislators in to the conversation	
MEASURING PROGRESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family friendly workplace requirements are legally and universally mandated	
BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NC Families Care Coalition is advocating for paid leave at the state level• Advocacy of the North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition	
POTENTIAL PARTNERS	

Grown in Durham: Durham County's Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP)

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- MomsRising NC, US Breastfeeding Committee, The Center for Reproductive Rights, North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, Equity Before Birth, MAAME, Breastfeed Durham, local legislators in Durham

STRATEGY 7.3: Empower families with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for family-friendly workplaces.

Equip families with the knowledge needed to improve systems. Information is power.

SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS (1-2 years)	LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS (2+ years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distribute materials produced by the community workers through community and faith-based organizations to share information about parents' rights in the workplace. Ensure the materials are reflective of the Durham population and culturally appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthen community leadership to join the family friendly workplaces coalition (see strategy 7.1) as advocates and community workers.

MEASURING PROGRESS

- Families know what it means to have a family friendly workplace and they can identify gaps in their employment system
- Number of parents who have a list of family friendly workplaces
- Parents will receive education and support from the healthcare facilities.
- Businesses that sell or promote commercial infant formula agree to offer pamphlets on the benefits of a family friendly work space and the [NC Making It Work Tool Kit](#)
- Non-locally controlled groceries, food markets, convenience stores and local pharmacies display information near infant foods and commodities

BUILDING OFF EXISTING WORK

- Breastfeed Durham's [Ten Steps](#) towards breastfeeding family-friendly communities
- NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health. 2020. [Making It Work: Employers Supporting Breastfeeding Families](#). Raleigh, North Carolina
- North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation's [Family Forward NC](#) initiative

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POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- NC Center for Nonprofits, Family Forward NC, La Leche League, WIC (administered locally by Lincoln Community Health), Health Department, Chamber of Commerce, Breastfeed Durham, Faith Communities

For questions about this report, please contact Bonnie Delaune at bonnie.delaune@dci-nc.org or Cate Elander at [celander@dconc.gov](mailto:clander@dconc.gov).

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