

EARLY EDITION

Early Stages Newsletter



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CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF EARLY STAGES

by Elizabeth Rihani, Director, Child Find

One of my favorite TED talks is “Everyday Leadership” by Drew Dudley. I’ve watched it dozens of times over the years and recommended it to others even more often. In it, Dudley describes moments where something seemingly small that you do or say changes the path of someone else’s life forever and for the better – and you’re exceptionally lucky if you ever find out you had that effect.

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CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF EARLY STAGES

by Elizabeth Rihani, Director, Child Find

As the Director of the Child Find team at Early Stages, I've been fortunate enough to witness so many of those small but important moments over the last 10 years. Sometimes we hear success stories from parents or teachers, and we get to see how early intervention can change lives for the better. Even when we don't hear those stories, though, our work connects us with parents and families who are their children's greatest champions. In transition meetings, evaluation and eligibility appointments, parent workshops, or professional development trainings, we can tell when the information we share has made a difference.

As we embark on another decade of serving children and families, we continue to build the network of support for all children in DC. Throughout this issue of the Early Edition, you will hear from some of the partners we are fortunate enough to work with to make our vision of equitable education for all a reality across the city. I hope you'll join us in our mission to strengthen and build upon these partnerships. Together, we can ensure every child has the resources they need to have a great start in school.

Happy 10th Anniversary, Early Stages!

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sean Compagnucci

As we approach the 10th Anniversary of Early Stages, I remain so proud to serve DC's youngest learners in a city that has grown profoundly in its commitment to young children.

I've been with Early Stages since 2009 and a lot has changed since we opened our doors. Back then, we were working to create new relationships with childcare and medical providers, social workers and community leaders. Now, after a decade of commitment to the community, we have built a vast network in support of our city's children and evaluated over 1,000 children every year, connecting them to services that will help them thrive in school.

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Being part of creating such positive change in my own city has been the greatest professional experience of my life.

Working firsthand with the many dedicated professionals who are committed to DC's young children is continually inspiring to our staff. Serving families from across the entire city and being part of supporting their wonderful children keeps us smiling and focused on our important mission. And for me personally, being part of creating such positive change in my own city has been the greatest professional experience of my life.

We still have a lot we want to achieve and will be looking to you, our families and colleagues, to help us grow and evolve. Your partnership and feedback are essential to us as we embark on our next decade of ensuring that D.C. is a city where all children receive a strong start to school.

New at Early Stages

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Early Stages website. On the left, there is a logo for the 10th Anniversary of Early Stages. To the right of the logo, there are navigation links: 'MAKE A REFERRAL' with a person icon, 'NEWSLETTER SIGNUP' with an envelope icon, and a hamburger menu icon. Below the navigation bar, there are four blue buttons with white text, each accompanied by a small image: 'WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?' (image of a woman and child), 'FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS' (image of a woman hugging a child), 'DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES' (image of a child on a playground), and 'UPCOMING EVENTS' (image of a child with colorful hands). At the bottom left of the screenshot is the District of Columbia Public Schools logo.

Early Stages has a new website!
Some of the things you can do include:

- Make an online referral
- Learn about developmental milestones
- View our open job postings
- Arrange a professional development workshop for your organization
- View important information in five additional languages
- Invite your colleagues and friends to sign up for our newsletter

Work with us

Evaluation Coordinator

We are currently conducting a nationwide search for an Evaluation Coordinator. The Coordinator functions as part of a multi-disciplinary team that collaborates to determine eligibility for special education services. This person will also be responsible for composing Individual Education Programs for children with disabilities.

The Evaluation Coordinator position requires a Master's in Special Education and an OSSE Special Education Teacher Certification. To apply, please send a resume and cover letter to info@earlystagesdc.org.

A PEDIATRICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

by Dr. Chloe Turner, MD, FAAP

As a primary care pediatrician, it is my privilege to engage closely with families to support the health and well-being of all children. The first five years of a child's life serve as a critical period for a child's development. During those early years, children have frequent visits to the doctor for their well child check-ups, in which we focus on how they are growing, learning, playing, and interacting with their world.

When a caregiver of a child shares concerns with me about their child's development, behavior, and learning, or when I suspect that a child isn't meeting their age-appropriate developmental milestones (related to language/communication, social/emotional, physical, and cognitive skills) it is my responsibility to help advocate for and connect the family with appropriate support. Early Stages is a vital resource and trusted partner in this process. I explain to families that Early Stages is a program of DC Public Schools and provides free developmental screening and evaluation for children between the ages of 2 years 8 months and 5 years 10 months and the evaluation process will be beneficial for the child and the family. It is incredibly easy to refer online or fax in a paper referral.

Then, a Child Find coordinator reaches out to the family in the family's preferred language to obtain permission, answer all questions, and move forward with the process to schedule the evaluation. At the community health center where I work, we are fortunate to have a dedicated and friendly Child Find Field Coordinator, Maria-Fernanda (Mafe) Jackson, at our site once a week. A team of specialists engages in play activities to evaluate the child, and they make sure the child feels comfortable and the parent understands the process. If the child is deemed eligible for support services, Early Stages works closely with the family to help coordinate special education services and school placement.

Connecting children with early intervention services is an overwhelmingly positive experience for children, families, and communities. Parents and caregivers are children's most important early teachers, and early intervention services can equip caregivers with necessary tools for supporting their child's development at home and help create a supportive environment for the whole family. I am grateful to be able to easily connect families with such a beneficial support resource, and it is a pleasure to see children and their caregivers grow and learn together.

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- Dr. Chloe Turner, MD, FAAP



About So Others Might Eat

SOME is a community based organization that exists to help the poor and homeless of our nation's capital. We meet the immediate daily needs of the people we serve with food, clothing and health care. We help break the cycle of homelessness by offering services such as affordable housing, job training, addiction treatment and counseling, to the poor, the elderly and individuals with mental illness.

Learn more: www.some.org



Partner Organization Highlight: So Others Might Eat

An interview with Jennifer Fox-Thomas,
Director of Education and Engagement

HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

So Others Might Eat (SOME) has eight family services community/living sites serving over 200 families and 400 youth. We offer after-school programs at all of our sites. All families are supported by a Program Manager who oversees the operation, a Case Manager-Adult Services Coordinator, a Case Manager-Youth Services Coordinator, and a Program Assistant who runs after-school program at each of the sites, and a Night Manager to support in non-business hours. Our after-school programming focuses on supporting the academic growth of our youth with a focus on homework help, reading and enrichment activities. Through our work in the Education and Engagement program, we seek to address the needs among our families for education support, parent empowerment in the educational system and college preparation.

WHAT DOES YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH EARLY STAGES LOOK LIKE?

We have a strong collaborative focus with the Early Stages Child Find team and work together to identify as many children as possible who may need services. Together, we work with families to identify important developmental milestones and issues and support families to take intervention steps. Early Stages and Strong Start provide trainings for our Case Managers and Program Managers so they better understand developmental milestones, how to identify signs that a child may need services, and how to administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Thanks to our partnership, many of our SOME families are identifying developmental issues in their children and seeking early interventions!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Early Stages offers a variety of professional development workshops certified by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). To schedule a workshop, please contact us at education@earlystagesdc.org.

- Addressing Challenging Behavior
- Developmental Milestones for 3-5 year olds
- How to Administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and Social Emotional (SE-2))
- Implementing a Screening Program Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Overview of Special Education
- The Importance of Early Intervention and Overview of Early Stages
- Trauma and Resilience: Building Strength in Children
- The Importance of Family Engagement: Engaging Families for Student Success



There are many ways to partner with Early Stages

Join us by:

- Booking a professional development workshop
 - Inquiring about donating toys, books or other goods and services
 - Applying for a job with us
 - Spreading the word about making referrals
 - Offering professional development opportunities for our staff
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Q & A WITH DR. NIA BODRICK, MD, MPH, FAAP

*Children's Health Center at THEARC,
Children's National Health System*

How would you describe your experiences referring families to Early Stages?

My experience with the Early Stages referral process is that it has been consistently well-coordinated, with timely follow-up. The referral form is succinct and written at an appropriate literacy level for my patients. After the application is processed, I receive a timely response from an Early Stages staff member updating me on the status of the application. If a patient is connected to services, I receive details on the child's individualized plan of care.

How has Early Stages benefited your patients?

Early Stages provides an essential benefit to children who need it most: family centered services and supports for children at risk for and diagnosed with developmental delays and disabilities. The cornerstone of well child care is preventive health and wellness, which is integral for a medical center. As a primary care provider, I monitor a child's progress, including growth, developmental, psycho-social/behavioral assessments, and family interaction. When there is a delay or a concern in any of these areas, Early Stages ensures my patients have access to needed services such as speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and close monitoring and support. In a previous capacity, I especially appreciated my working relationship with my in-house Child Find Field Coordinator, Drena Lopez Duran, who truly made the referral and intake process seamless!

In your opinion, how do evaluation and early intervention services set young children up for success in school?

The benefits of early intervention are well documented. The human brain undergoes rapid development in the first 3 years of life. When children receive needed services at this early age, there is a positive effect including increased school readiness, early identification of developmental disorders and increased likelihood for improved academic outcomes.

What advice would you give to parents and families first beginning their engagement with Early Stages?

Every child has unique gifts and abilities and will develop at their own pace. However, there are universal developmental milestones that every child should meet within a recommended age. When there are concerns in these areas, it is better not to "watch and wait." Per the CDC motto, "Learn the Signs, Act Early."



Homeless Children's Playtime Project

Jamila Larson, LICSW, Executive Director with the Homeless Children's Playtime Project, talked to us about her experiences with Early Stages

What is the Homeless Children's Playtime Project?

We provide play spaces in family homeless shelters in 4 locations – Days Inn, Quality Inn, Turning Point, and DASH. We provide safe and trauma-informed spaces where children can play and build positive relationships with adults and each other. Child development is not going to wait until we solve the affordable housing crisis, so we work hard to protect children's right to play wherever they live.

What has your experience referring families to Early Stages been like?

Our social worker provides referrals to Early Stages of children we notice with potential developmental delays or whose parents are concerned with their child's development. Hosting screening events and providing referrals is helpful for parents because it reduces barriers to their children receiving services. When we know someone has an appointment coming up and what the next steps are, we can better support the family in their process.

It's also helpful for shelter case management teams to be involved so services aren't siloed. Since we have relationships with parents, when we know a child has an IEP, we can be another advocate to help bridge the gap between housing services and other services for children with a delay or disability.

What other ways have you partnered with Early Stages?

Our Child Find representatives Rebeca Aulie and Tatum Byfield provide trainings on developmental stages and early intervention for our staff and social work interns. That's been so helpful in educating us about what's age-appropriate and when we should be concerned and make referrals. We've scheduled several screening events at the shelters we serve and encouraged families to participate because we know how critical early intervention is! We are grateful for our partnership and appreciate their approach to making the process accessible for the families we serve.

Learn more about the Playtime Project at
www.playtimeproject.org



Thank you!

Our Early Stages staff, partners, and supporters make our work possible every day. We appreciate your commitment to DC's youngest learners and their families, and look forward to many more years of working together.

Child Development Word Search

C D H D I B G W C D H D I B G W C D H D A T E R
H B M I L E S T H B M I L E S T H B M I Y T T G
P M P P S O T C P M P P S O T C P M P P B N V N
T E T N I F L W T E T N I F L W T E T N E Y L I
A G A M Y T N O A G A M Y T N O A G A M G C R N
G H E A L T H Y G H E A L T H Y G H E A S M A R
V E M O T I O N V E M O T I O N V E M O N R F A
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D A M R E L D D D A M R E L D D D A M R L H I H
D K N D V S B P D K N D V S B P D K N D F U W T
S K D G T S G G T U M D D G R G A N U E V O L W
H S C T U V P O K P F E P O O H E T R L A R P O
O Y S R H A M E O M G V T F E M C G A P C S I R
K M Y E A E G L E A C O I B H E O H O O A I H G
F S N A N W E E U C M L L C L E C C G D D U S N
N M E I L V L G P S H A A L H Y R N Y N L O N A
Y E F Y E P N C S L I T E V L H I G B U Y L O M
S S W D E A V O R C T T D E G T D R E R P B I U
V O W B L A R W O A N E R T I F H A C T L G T H
M C G R O G V S H I G N A V K V O T A U H N A U
F I U W D R C G N I R A E H D S P K Y R H E L B
P A O I M W N D I T N A F N I K Y Y T E W I E G
H L N O I T C A R E T N I L F T O D T V P H R V

LOVE
NURTURE
SPEECH
LEARNING
PLAY
INFANT
PHYSICAL
COMMUNICATE

HEALTHY EATING
INTERACTION
ATTACHMENT
NEWBORN
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL
HUMAN GROWTH
SMILE

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR
DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY
FINE MOTOR SKILLS
VISION
COGNITIVE
INTELLECTUAL
MILESTONES

HEARING
LANGUAGE
GROSS MOTOR SKILLS
RELATIONSHIP
TODDLER
EMOTIONAL
CRAWL

Activities on the Go

- Read the words on the foods in your cabinets or while grocery shopping
- Count as you go up and down steps
- Identify the different colors of your surroundings
- Incorporate songs into your everyday activities and routines:

"Clean up! Clean up! Everybody, everywhere. Clean up! Clean up! Everybody do your share."

10TH
ANNIVERSARY
EARLY
STAGES

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